

Ethnic Group: Chinese
 Interview number: 2
 Date: July 11, 1991
 Place: Toronto
 Language of Interview: Chinese

Demographic Information

Gender: couple, Mr. and Mrs. Chnjia
 Ages: Mr. Chnjia=31; Mrs. Chnjia=36
 Place of Birth: China
 Religion: none
 Marital Status: married
 Education: Mr. Chnjia - M.Sci.
 Occupation: hospital lab technicians
 Children: son, age 3; expecting second baby
 Year of Immigration to Canada: 1988

Interviewer's Notes:

When I helped a friend of mine to get some information about her lab in a hospital, Mrs. Chnjia, a technician, was introduced to me. Through her, I met and knew her husband who was a MS student at that time and now is a technician in another hospital.

I passed on a message to Mrs. Chnjia through a student in her lab to ask her to be a subject. She agreed without hesitation. Before one hour when I visited them, I phoned their home. Mrs. Chnjia picked up the phone. I briefly explained the purpose of the project to her. This couple with their 3-year-old son live in a rented 2-bed-room suite in a downtown apartment building.

INTERVIEW

(When I knocked the door, Mrs. Chnjia opened the door for me. Her husband was doing something in the kitchen together with their son. I initially interviewed Mrs. Chnjia.)

Interviewer (I): Let's begin the interview. When did you leave China?

Wife (W): I left for US in April of 1986, holding a student visa (F1). My husband went to US as a visiting scholar, holding J1 visa, in August at the same year.

I: Did you two work at the same place?

W: No. I was studying in Kansas and he was in Harvard. He first joined me in Kansas. We married there on August 5, 1986.

I: How did you know each other? Through the third party?

W: We know each other before we come abroad. We worked in the same hospital in Shanghai, China.

I: So you did not live together with your husband in US, did you?

W: I moved to Boston in 1987 because I was pregnant. I quit school.

I: When and where was your son born?

W: On August 4, 1988. At Boston.

I: When and why did you come to Canada?

W: My husband came to Toronto in September of 1988. He was accepted in the MS program. Because his J1 visa would expire, he had to leave US. If he wanted to re-enter US, he would have to go back to China and to serve the government for two more years there, according to the China-US educational and cultural exchange treaty. I came to Toronto in March of the next year.

I: Why didn't you come with your husband?

W: I was working as a research fellow and was applying for the US green card. I have invited a lawyer and paid fees.

I: So you have the US green card now.

W: No. I gave up my application. My husband was disallowed to enter US from Canada. It is no use for me to have the US green card. After I arrived at Toronto, I also looked for lawyers to apply for the independent migration. I was told it cost CA\$10,000. But later on, because of the June 4th Tiananmen incident, the Canadian

government launched the special immigration program based on humanitarian and compassionate considerations. We applied for that program.

I: Have you been accustomed to the life in Toronto?

W: Yes. I enjoy it very much. Because I have already lived in the States for years, I have not felt any change or culture shock here.

(The kid goes to bathroom to take a bath. Mr. Chnjia comes to join us.)

Husband (H): What is this study for?

I: (After a brief explanation) Have you been accustomed to the life here?

H: No. I has not yet been accustomed to the life here. I like Chinese food. I don't like the western style.

(Their son shouts in the bathroom. Mr. Chnjia leaves.)

I: Is there any hardship after you have arrived at Toronto?

W: Looking for job.

I: Oh? You did not find job here before you came, did you?

W: No. I did not start my current job until June of 1989.

I: How did you look for job?

W: I sent out 4 or 5 CVs to labs at U of T. I also phoned some companies.

I: Did you get help from your friends here?

W: No. I have just arrived at that time.

(Their son calls Mom. Mrs. Chnjia goes to bathroom and Mr. Chnjia comes back.)

I: Just now, you said you haven't been used to the life here.

H: Besides food, I always feel I am an outsider, although the ethnic discrimination is not obvious. Competition is not fair-playing. It is better on campus than in general society. It is terrible in lower class.

I: How do you know the situation in lower class?

H: I served as a bartender in a bar for about one year. I perceive some pressure.

I: What is it?

H: I can't tell you exactly what it is. Just a perception.

(Mrs. Chnjia comes with a water-proof picture book for children who can read it when they take bath. She asks her husband the meaning of the English word, YACHT. He does not know.)

I: When did you work in the bar?

H: 1989-1990.

I: Why did you work in the bar?

H: Financial reason at first. I have a kid. My wife's younger sister lived with us. I need to support the family.

I: Have you got any money from school?

H: I had fellowship merely in the first year. My program is an one-year program. Then my "boss" (his supervisor) paid me some.

W: Only \$500 per month. But just for several months. Then nothing at all. (She leaves to take care of her son)

H: Another purpose to work in the bar is for fun. I want to understand this society.

I: You planned to have your son in 1988, didn't you?

H: No. The pregnancy is unexpected. But once we knew the pregnancy, we decided to have it without hesitation.

I: Why do you want to have a child?

H: As you know, we Chinese have an idea that children are continuators of our life. After the kid was born, I find it is far beyond this. There is a lot of enjoyment. Children also give a man a certain kind of push. I have started to think about what I will leave for my child and further for this society. My son also changes my personal life. For example, my time budget. I need to think how many hours

are assigned to my study, to my work, and to my son.

(Mrs. Chnjia come to join us. Their son also come to the living room to play some toy. He is waving an adult baseball bat. Another kid baseball bat lies on the floor. Some toy cars are around.)

I: Is there any conflict between you two?

H: Sometimes we quarrel, but it is not severe enough to hurt our feeling. Migration gives a man a great pressure. As a new immigrant, I would compare with the local people. Say, supply for child, house purchase. But we come to north American with empty pocket.

I: How do you think about your social standing here? Is it higher or lower than what you had in China?

H: I was a medical doctor and she was a faculty member in a university in China. We had a relatively high social positions. But here, we have nothing.

I: Even so, you have still applied for PR. Why?

H: Well, comparing the mainland of China, we have more freedom. Living conditions are better. However, social standing and personal relations are better in China.

I: Do you have confidence to have a happy life here in future?

H: Sure. I have just now mentioned that my son brings me a "positive thought" (He speaks 'positive thought' in English.) That is, I hope that my son will have what I can not have all my life. Although we come abroad late, we are better than those aged 40-50. Our English is better than theirs. Children are important to maintain family ties. To new immigrants, as values change, feeling between spouses may change, especially to those who married in China. Wives' values change and they will cold-shoulder their husbands because it is difficult for men to be fast promoted in a new environment. As children grow up, the sharing between spouses becomes less. Children will take important role at this moment.

W: If you have children, you will find them very funny.

H: You pay and gain. I feel I myself become important and can receive respects from my kid.

W: Children can accompany you.

I: Now you will have the second child. (Mrs. Chnjia has been pregnant for several months.) Why do you want the second one?

H: Comparing to myself, I think my son is too pitiful. When I was a child in China, I had many kid friends in my neighbourhood. There is no habit of dropping in neighbours here. So my son can not find enough kids to play with. Although we try to play with him, I think he cannot fully enjoy himself because of the age difference between us. Therefore we take any chance to invite kids from next doors, sometimes together with their adults, to our home. We cook for them and buy them presents. We try to contact the local people to let our son learn their expressions and habit.

I: Is there any non-Chinese among them?

W: Yes, many whites kids.

I: Before you had your son, which one had you preferred, boy or girl?

W: Boy. We planned to go back to China to reside. My child would also go abroad in future. A boy makes us less worried than a girl.

I: How about the second one?

W: Now that we already have a boy, I wish a girl naturally.

I: (To Mr. Chnjia) What is your opinion?

H: No idea. But after I have son, I find that the boy is simple, straightforward and, therefore, is easy to be brought up. In this sense, I like boy.

I: What are your division of care of your son?

H: I send my son to baby-sitter's home in the morning and she takes him back in the afternoon. I take care of his education.

W: The kid follows him and doesn't obey me. The baby-sitter is a Bangladeshi and our two families have very good relationships. We choose the baby-sitter with fee of \$400/mo plus food, rather than day care with much less payment.

I: Why?

W: Because there exist sexual harassment and child abuse.

H: It was frequently reported in US. I don't know if it is true in Canada, but just in case.

W: We are willing to spend money on child.

(Their son tumbles and cry. Mr. Chnjia holds his son in his arms and places him in sofa to examine if his son is wounded. Mr. Chnjia begins to read a story to his son in English.)

I: When your husband has moved to Toronto, did you independently look after your son?

W: No. His mother went to US to give me assistance for 4 months. Then she brought her grandson to China. My son stayed in China for 9 months. After I joined my husband in Toronto, my son was sent to Toronto.

I: Do your son often speaks Chinese or English to you?

W: Mixed. Sometimes in Chinese, and sometimes in English. He always call English names of his toys.

H: He also understand Bangladesh language.

(Their son turns on the TV to watch.)

I: Does he like to watch Disney?

W: No. He dislikes cartoons. He likes to watch The Sesame Street and the Turtle.

I: Do you often speak Chinese or English to your son?

W: Mostly, Chinese. But I speak English when he is with other children.

I: Have you consciously taught your son Chinese?

W: We have. I have asked my mother to mail Chinese story tapes to us, but the kid does not like to listen. He likes to listen to English tapes.

I: Which language ability of his is better, Chinese or English?

W: Almost the same.

I: I know your younger sister is living with you. When did she join you?

W: She has moved out in May because she attends a college since May. She sent my son to Toronto from China two years ago. She helped me to look after my son for several months.

I: Did you pay her for this?

H: Not formally like a baby-sitter.

W: We just gave her some pocket money. Her living and eating are free. Then she attended a language school to learn English. She found a job in a laundry store, earning about \$1,000 each month.

I: Did she pay her living and eating after she has found job?

W: No. Everything is free. She has started her 3-year program in designing and drafting in a college since May and lives in the dorm.

I: Why does she move to college?

W: It is more convenient for her study. She can use computer there at midnight. Besides, she just ate without doing housework and could not help us anything when she stayed here. She would feel a great pressure.

H: She does not do housework. I am in charge of laundry and my wife cooks.

I: How old is your sister? What was she doing in China?

W: She is 34 years old. She was an engineer of machinery design after graduated from a university.

I: Why doesn't she attend a university, rather than a college here?

H: Because she does not want to take TOEFL. She can not concentrate on preparation for TOEFL. Thus she can not enter graduate school.

I: Did she often attend the collective activities of your family?

W: Sometimes. Say, a family party. She helped me to prepare for food. But she seldom takes a walk with us.

H: She knows all ours friends.

I: Have you ever had disagreement on family affairs? Who usually makes the final decision?

H: It is impossible not to have disagreement. But I usually do not insist my opinion. I follow her (his wife) about

80% of affairs because she knows much more than I do.

W: For example, shopping. I have more information. I make the decision.

I: To my opinion, a couple have no enough time to spend on themselves after they have a child, say, on their work or trip.

H: I think it is very hard to reach the goal as expected even if I am trying my best. Therefore I play with my son in most of my spare time.

W: I have liked very much leisure activities before my kid was born. Now as my son grows up, I spend more and more time and energy on him.

(Mr. Chnjia leaves to take care the kid to sleep.)

W: My husband takes care of his bath, even takes care of toilet-tissuing him.

I: What have you done to foster your son?

W: We have tried our best to provide him with what the local kids have.

(Mr. Chnjia comes back from his son's bed-room.)

H: I intend to follow the way the local people teach their kids. The Chinese way makes kids repeat what they learn. The way here encourages kids creatively thinking.

I: How much money do you often spend on yourselves?

H: It's hard to say. We usually consider one another. When she goes shopping alone, she never buys clothes for herself. When we go shopping together, I always say the lady's clothes are cheap although I don't know the market price at all. But we do not hesitate to spend money on our son.

I: Who governs the family financial budget?

W: I do. Our monthly expenditure is about \$1,800.

H: Our custom is to keep balance between income and consumption. We never borrow money from others.

I: Do you often contact Chinese?

H: We consciously avoid keeping in touch with them (who come from the mainland of China). Because there were some sorrowful events happened in the past. We are glad to approach the local people.

I: How many close friends do you have?

H: We have 5 families with close friendship and 2 single persons. They are all Chinese. But most of them are Taiwanese. The rest were my alumni. It is very difficult to keep close tie with the alien people. Taiwanese were met in US. We now sometimes phone each other and sometimes send photos to each other.

W: Gossip is another problem.

H: No. Gossip exists among all kinds of people.

W: I don't like their dress either. They are not particular about their dress.

H: In some occasions, such as the performance during the Chinese Spring Festival and some dancing parties, people must be formally dressed. Informally dressed people, in fact, do not show respects to others. This is not simply an financial problem. It is a problem of habit. I feel no privacy among Chinese.

I: Why?

H: For example, once a person asked me if I had bought a house. I feel uncomfortable. House buying is a private affair. They do not understand the local customs. Some Chinese are low in quality. In the last residential Christmas party, all participants were required to bring their own dishes. A Chinese family with 6 members merely brought one dish and ate a lot. As I know, this family had just bought a house around that time.

I: Do you have any religion?

H: No.

I: Have you gone to church?

H: Sometimes, but just for fun.

W: Some Chinese go to church in order to have a free lunch, as I know.

I: Oh? What do you mean?

W: After a Mass, church usually provides a free lunch. Some people send their children to day care with the governmental subsidy. Whereas their parents, who come to look after their own grandchildren, do baby-sitting work for others' children.

I: Do you keep in touch with your relatives in China? If yes, how?

W: We write to them every two months. We phoned them 2 or 3 times when we were in US because it is cheap. Here the frequency is reduced because it becomes expensive.

I: Do you send money back to China?

H: Not often. Our families have good living conditions with high income. They are ranked above the average in China. We sent several hundreds dollars to China because they mailed us parcels.

I: What did they mail to you?

W: Mostly clothes. Because my sister is living with us, my mother feels that she sends us a burden and that she can do nothing for us besides mailing parcels.

H: But I think this is not necessary because we are one family.

I: Have you ever plan to go back to China to have a look?

H & W: We have.

W: I have ordered the air ticket and planned to return in May of 1989. But because of the uncertain political situation, I gave it up.

H: She had no job at that time.

I: Finally, may I know your dates of birth?

W: I was born in July 14, 1955 and he was in June 13, 1960.

I: If I rank income before tax by every \$10,000, which income rank do you think you had last year?

W: \$20,000-\$30,000.

H: Mine is less than \$10,000.

I: I appreciate your co-operation very much.

H & W: Our pleasure.