

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE LIFE OF  
THE SINGLE ASIAN IMMIGRANT WOMAN IN WINNIPEG:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

**BY**

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Social Work

**Thesis Advisor: Professor Esther Blum**

**School of Social Work  
University of Manitoba**

**August, 1987**



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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the life experience of single Asian immigrant women in Winnipeg (over a four-month period of time). The sample consists of eight single Asian immigrant women who are residents of Winnipeg. All have been residing in Canada for two to five years with ages ranging from 21 to 58.

The study uses an exploratory qualitative methodology with a two-tiered interview strategy. The first part of the interview is structured and focusses on gathering socio-demographic data. This is followed by an open-ended, in-depth interview which explores the life experiences of the participants.

The study identifies five major themes which describe the single Asian immigrant woman's experience: 1) "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure"; 2) "Being Isolated and Lonely"; 3) "Being Anxious"; 4) "Being Different" and 5) "Feeling Trapped". The intensity and importance of these themes varies with the individual. However, they all have experiences attributable to being single, immigrant and female i.e. the so-called "triple jeopardy". While the major problems derive from their being immigrants, these immigration related issues aggravate the experiences of being single and female.

The women all seem to cope in their own unique ways with the resettlement problems of isolation and loneliness, unemployment and economic difficulties, and with the societal expectations of being single and female. The most frequent coping strategy mentioned is the need to acquire a spouse. Having a spouse is perceived to resolve all three areas of difficulty at the same time.

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## CHAPTER I

### OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

For anyone, leaving one's country of origin can be a very traumatic experience. Of the thousands of Asian immigrant women in Canada today, many have left their homeland for economic, political, familial and personal reasons (1). They have come to Canada to seek a better life. For most of these women, immigration is a transition characterized by radical change and a series of losses - one's homeland, financial security and social network of kin, friends and neighbours. Among these, the loss of the woman's social support network is probably the most troubling type of loss (2). The Asian immigrant woman may, in the process, also lose her sense of security, self-identity and self-esteem.

Upon her arrival to Canada, the Asian immigrant woman may for the first time in her life find herself living in a large urban centre rather than the small village to which she was accustomed. She may go out of the home to work, and may learn to express herself in a new language. Regardless of what her life experience may be prior to immigration, coming to Canada inevitably drastically alters her social position and her old behavioral patterns and the cultural norms which guided her are no longer really relevant. The social relationships she develops in the new society often are superficial and temporary in comparison to the extensive network of relationships in her country of origin.

Whatever the case, the immigrant experience is a new and a dramatic one; each woman's experience remains uniquely personal but at the same time it is heavily influenced by the larger socio-economic and socio-political processes and practices of the host country.

Many of the difficulties the Asian immigrant woman faces today in adjusting to life in Canada are due largely to the compound problems she must face as both a female and an immigrant. A mainstream Canadian woman may have difficulty attempting to reconcile the conflicting demands of a paying job, homemaking, mothering in addition to coping with other obstacles such as lack of employment and educational opportunities for women, lack of childcare facilities, wife battering, and so on. These problems are, however, magnified for the immigrant woman who must in addition deal with a whole raft of difficulties which accompany the initial settlement phase for all immigrants. These may include some or all of the following: feeling discriminated against, cultural and language barriers, problems related to finance and employment, lack of Canadian life skills, and limited knowledge of, and access to, services and information about her legal and political rights. Hence, she runs the risk of becoming a non-entity. The double negative of being female and foreign born is further aggravated if the immigrant woman is not a member of the preferred groups such as the Americans and the British (3).

To further compound issues, the Asian immigrant woman has lost access to the social support networks at home that provided her with the necessary material, social and emotional support. However, these needs

are rarely met again with the same appropriateness of response. In the face of new demands associated with taking up residency in a western, highly industrialized society and its complexities which she may not be prepared for, the immigrant woman now requires more support, more resources, but gets less.

Being single can further complicate the Asian immigrant woman's life experience. This group of immigrant women experiences what may be called the "triple jeopardies" of being single, female and immigrant. This is because "singles" in our society are still regarded as a somewhat deviant group, different from "normal" married adults. Until very recently, single immigrant women have been neglected as a subject of serious research, despite experiences of varying types and degrees of discrimination attributable to the single marital status (4).

The experience of isolation is well noted amongst singles. According to J. L. Barkas in his book Single in America, "loneliness is the most often cited consequences of singleness ....", (5). Without a mate, the single individual is more susceptible to depressive consequences of life strains which is worsened by a lack of an alternative social support system (6). The importance of a workable social support network is supported by S. M. Johnson, who, in his book First Person Singular: Living the Good Life Alone, pointed out that "to achieve autonomous adulthood two basic skills must be mastered: 1. you must perform the social tasks involved in the acquisition and maintenance of a well-operating social support group; 2. you must be able to live autonomously and perform all self care functions.... A

working social support system is necessary for a fulfilling life for almost everyone, no matter what his life circumstances may be." (7).

Both the literature review and conclusions drawn from the researcher's own personal experience indicate that the single Asian woman's situation is aggravated by immigration, especially the initial stage of settlement and adaptation to a new cultural and linguistic milieu. The immigrant experience is marked by numerous losses, as above noted, and these losses, compounded by the above mentioned factors, lead to the experience of isolation.

While there is an increasing number of studies on Asian immigrant women in recent years, the single Asian immigrant woman has not been the subject of study as such. Little attention has been paid to her contribution to Canadian Society and even less to her own perception of it. There is no research in the area of social work theory and practice which has, to my knowledge, examined the nature and specificity of the isolation experienced by the single Asian immigrant woman in relation to her social support network. This current study aims to collect descriptive data that will be derived from the woman's own perspective; it will attempt to capture the uniqueness of the single immigrant woman's experience (of varying degrees) of isolation during the early years of settlement and adaptation in the new country.

This study has two objectives. The first is to focus on the specific manifestation of isolation in the daily life of the single Asian immigrant woman. The second objective is to determine the relationships between her experience of isolation, and the presence or

absence of a social support network for her. The study will in the process attempt to provide the beginnings of answers to some of the following questions: What exactly is the nature of the single Asian immigrant woman's experience? How does the single Asian immigrant woman cope with the experience of isolation? How is this experience different or similar across ethnic groups? What is the role of a social support network? What social work interventive strategies can alleviate the isolating experience? What are the implications for social services delivery? Single immigrant women from the Filipino, East Indian and Chinese ethnic groups are the interviewees. They have been chosen for the study based on the fact that between 1981 and 1983, Filipinos, East Indians and Chinese constituted the three largest non-refugee groups in Manitoba whose mother tongue is not English (8).

## 1.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

In the context of service delivery in Manitoba, the few services that are targeted specifically for Asian immigrant woman focus mainly on pre-employment job skill development. The Immigrant Women's Employment Centre is one agency delivering such services. However the psychological and emotional needs of immigrant women are not always recognized or addressed. To date, there have been no concerted efforts on the part of service planners to deal with the isolation experienced by this special needs group, although it nonetheless greatly affects the women's functioning. Whatever services are available (e.g. the Laotian Women Association, the Immigrant Women Association) lack the personnel, and financial support necessary for effective functioning. In fact,

many of the problems associated with isolation do not come to the attention of the various services until they reach the crisis stage. Due to a lack of understanding of the Asian immigrant women's needs, the problems they face are most often labelled by the helpers to be only "cultural adjustments" and "value conflict" issues.

While services that are normally available to mainstream Manitobans are also available to Asian immigrant women, as residents of this province, they however remain inaccessible to this population for a number of reasons:

1. Society in general tends to take a middle class, individualistic orientation to health and social policies. Consequently, addressing special needs is assigned as the responsibility of those who are affected by the problem, rather than the responsibility of the society at large. That is, the concerns and needs of the Asian immigrant women tend to be seen as the responsibility of the Asian immigrant community. Yet the latter does not have the fiscal or human resources essential for the successful delivery of long term comprehensive health and social services (9).
2. Fragmentation in service delivery. Due to the lack of understanding of the interrelatedness of certain issues such as immigration, employment, health (physical and mental), which the Asian immigrant woman faces, the unique concerns of the Asian immigrant woman have not been comprehensively addressed by the program of any one of the government departments (10).

3. Lack of long term funding of services to immigrants in general. Consequently there is an absence of continuity in service provision and therefore a lack of overall experience in service delivery to this special needs population (11).
4. Lack of crossculturally trained and multilingual professionals and para-professionals sensitive to the needs of Asian immigrant women.
5. Institutional discrimination in service provision by three levels of government departments. This is especially true in the areas of access to language and skill training programs to Asian immigrant women in their language and community setting (12).
6. Tendency by the service planner to lump the needs of the Asian immigrant women with the general immigrant adjustment programs with lack of special attention given to their special needs.
7. On the part of the new immigrant, a lack of language and Canadian life skills. This inhibits his/her accessing services.
8. Asian Immigrant women who come from countries where services are relatively unknown do not understand and are suspicious of institutionalized services (13).
9. Poor coordination of service provision between community resources and the immigrant communities. This results in an inadequate response to the needs of Asian immigrant women (14).
10. Stereotyping and discrimination towards Asian immigrant women by some members of the population-at-large, obscure the unique needs of the Asian immigrant women (15).

11. Lack of flexibility and support services in delivering English As Second Lanague/French As Second Language program (16).
12. Lack of grassroot outreach programs to help immigrant women access services and express their needs (17).
13. For professional and technically trained Asian immigrant women, the lack of available requalifying programs offered by professional and trade associations, hinder and prevent these women from passing certification examinations which will allow them to practice their professions (18).
15. Asian Immigrant women and immigrant groups in general have not been politically organized enough to achieve political "clout", and generally lack lobbying skills (19).

In other words, Asian immigrant women, as residents of this province, presumably entitled to receive services as any other Manitobans have in fact been systematically denied quality and relevant services. The problem is more acute for the single Asian immigrant woman because recognition of the need for special services for this target population is almost non-existent.

The study shall provide first hand knowledge on isolation from the standpoint of the single Asian immigrant woman herself. The experience of isolation can expand our knowledge base in at least three spheres:

I. In social service delivery, the woman's experience may shed light on:

a) Helping interventions which can reach the single Asian

immigrant woman, especially the non-English speaking woman who



experiences isolation. It will attempt to confirm or refute the researcher's own thoughts on the following:-

- (i) outreach as an effective technique to serve this group (20).
- (ii) the need to develop comprehensive information and skill development training programs to help the single Asian immigrant woman to access service and to develop other life skills.
- (iii) the need to develop a drop in center.

b. Gaps in service delivery, especially in the fields of resettlement and mental health. This may help determine, for example:-

- (i) the need for a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of service delivery targetted to the single Asian immigrant woman.
- (ii) the need for a redirection and/or expansion of present services to meet the needs of this group.
- (iii) the need for affirmative action programs for the single Asian immigrant woman.
- (iv) the need to expand the roles of volunteer and ethnic associations in service delivery focussing on the needs of this group.
- (v) the need for the development of group work services such as peer support groups.

II. In the social sciences, this study will contribute insights into:

- i) The adaptation and resettlement process as experienced by the single Asian immigrant woman.
- ii). Society's perception of the single Asian immigrant woman's adaptation.
- iii) The interplaying roles of gender, marital status and ethnicity as factors in the adaptation and resettlement process.

III. In social work education and training, we may be able to use the above materials to develop workshops and curriculum materials appropriate for working with the single Asian immigrant woman.

This proposed study may provide insights into some or all of the above areas. Because the single Asian immigrant woman is a woman and an immigrant, the knowledge gained in this study may also shed light on the other immigrant population groups. Regardless, the study will provide initial themes and categories for further research and analysis into the experiences of the single Asian immigrant woman. This in turn will provide the profession with a better understanding of the problems and challenges of the single Asian immigrant woman, and hopefully will specify actions for change.

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

#### 2.1 SINGLENESS

Single people of both sexes constitute a distinct minority in today's society (21). They experience social discrimination and stigmatization due to their single status, largely because adulthood and emotional maturity are held to be synonymous with marriage and parenthood in our society. The attitude prevails that those who remain single are deviant or in some way inadequate for adult roles. In the area of career development, single people are perceived to be less responsible, dependable or capable of commitment to their career (22) in spite of the fact that careers are often found to be more central to the single person's life than to the married adult's life (23). Very often, married individuals are given preference in the workplace over single people with the same qualifications and the same level of experience (24). Besides facing discrimination in the workplace, Peter Stein in his book Single comments that a high percentage of single men and women report experiencing discrimination in obtaining credit or loans, as well as in the areas of housing, insurance or taxation (25).

Single women particularly, "do not have the psychological freedom of not marrying while men (to some extent) do." (26). Until recently, society has tended to judge women's success or failure in life largely on the basis of marriage. While single men are often perceived to be "swinging bachelors", single women are seen to be "old spinsters" or "old maids" who have failed to acquire husbands (on whom they can

depend). Single women, more so than single men, experience discrimination in more forms as a result of being both female and single. This is especially true when it comes to advancement on the job, which to a certain extent is determined by one's marital status as well as one's gender (27). It is often assumed by many that marriage would make the single man more responsible whilst it would eventually cause the woman to give up her job.

According to Angus Campbell et.al. in their book The Quality of American Life, "...marriage and work make the greatest difference in the lives of women in our society." (28). Discrimination in the area of employment therefore bears significant impact on the lives of single women, because work is very often paramount; it provides them with economic independence and through their co-workers, emotional support. The latter was noted by Warren (1980), and Gladieux (1978) and also Stein (1976) (29). Financial independence for the single woman is particularly important since it promotes a sense of dignity and self-esteem. Activities of the Women's Liberation Movement, and an increase in educational opportunities for women have contributed to increasing women's participation in the labour force (30). In fact, in 1981 more than 60% of Canadian women aged 15 to 24 were in the labour force, with single women 20 years and over having the highest labour force participation ever (31). As a result of these economic and social trends it has become more acceptable to be employed and unmarried (32).

Focusing on the experience of the single immigrant woman, what are the specific issues this group has to face, besides being single?

## 2.2 IMMIGRANT AND FEMALE

Campbell et.al. suggest that an individual's sex and race affect the quality of one's life (33). Like her male counterpart, the immigrant woman experiences discrimination because of her ethnic minority status. "Minorities are stereotyped as less desirable workers in a variety of ways (e.g. laziness, unreliability, dim-wittedness, uncleanliness, etc.)..." (34). According to the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, the minority worker, especially the new immigrant, is often the last to be hired and because of the seniority principle, the first to be let go (35). Compared to their male counterparts and to native born women, immigrant women, especially those who do not speak either of the official languages, are more likely to be disproportionately employed "... in the poorly-paid labour market sectors where they work as domestics, chamber maids, building cleaners, dishwashers, waitresses, sewing machine operators and plastics workers. Ignored by unions and inadequately protected by provincial labour legislation, they occupy the bottom rung of the "vertical mosaic". (36). In fact, about one third of all immigrant women are employed in poorly paying service and manufacturing sectors compared to one fifth of Canadian born women (37). This is in spite of the fact that immigrant women display a pattern of higher labour participation rates compared to native born women (38). This appears to reflect their memberships in two "negative status" groups: female and foreign born (39).

Patricia O'Brien in her book The Woman Alone indicates that since women are raised as marriage material, many experience problems in

facing life alone without men; they face loneliness which derives from their dependency on men (40). For women of marginal groups, such as immigrant women, M. Eichler in her article "Sociology of Feminist Research in Canada" argues the existence of a "state of double dependency -- that is, the negative effects of their marginal status (of being minority) is reinforced by being female and being female predisposes them to a more marginal status than comparable males." (41).

### 2.3 SINGLE IMMIGRANT WOMAN

In addition to experiencing the double "whammy" of being female and immigrant, as a single immigrant the immigrant woman belongs to a lower income group, than her non-immigrant counterpart (42). The single immigrant woman is therefore found to experience the "triple jeopardies" of being single, female and immigrant.

For the single immigrant woman who comes from a family centered system which emphasizes traditional values, may experience a conflict because her culture views marriage with procreational goals as the preferred state. Thus, being single creates a conflict that may be difficult to resolve. By coming to Canada, she often finds herself being caught amid three cultures -- the one from which she came, the mainstream culture within which she now finds herself, and her own ethnic community in the host society -- all of which value and promote marriage, with the woman being dependent on her husband. Yet, with the severance of ties and roots as a result of immigration to Canada, the single immigrant woman is under pressure to be self-reliant in our

society where there exists different and sometimes conflicting values regarding self-reliance in women. Although the same could be said about the society from which the immigrant woman came, there, at least, the woman would still have her social support network to fall back on if necessary.

#### 2.4 ISOLATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK

The term "isolation" is used here in a broad sense to refer to include physical, social and emotional isolation and the various types and varying degrees of emotions that are consequences of these different forms of isolation. Salient to the various forms of emotionality is the feeling of loneliness that come as result of being physically, emotionally and socially isolated (43).

The term "social support" network refers to a "set of interconnected relationships among a group of people that provides an enduring pattern of nurturance (in any or all forms) and provides contingent reinforcements for efforts to cope with life on a day to day basis." (44). That is, it provides the individuals with support in structuring his or her reality, as well as helping immensely in terms of providing both practical expertise and emotional and social supports which help the individual feel less isolated (45). According to Stephen M. Johnson, in his book First Person Singular: Living the Good Life Alone "... a working social support system is necessary for a fulfilling life for almost everyone no matter what his life circumstances may be." (46). Stein finds that "the greatest need single people feel in their

departure from traditional family structure is for substitute networks of human relationships that provide the basic satisfactions for intimacy, sharing and continuity." (47) In the settlement and adaptation processes, social networks assist immigrants with acculturation to the new society and help them maintain their emotional well-being. S.D. Nguyen notes in his paper, "The Psycho-Social Adjustment and the Mental Health Needs of Southeast Asian Refugees", that separation from family members was a major factor that caused the refugees depression and anxiety, and impede the adjustment process (48). A social support network therefore provides a kind of "buffer zone" needed for the immigrants to deal with the stress and change of immigration.

In examining isolation in relation to singleness, the single woman and her social support network, there appear to be conflicting views. Some authors, such as Weiss, and Pearlin et.al., perceive single people to be socially vulnerable individuals who are susceptible to isolation and mental health problems (49); while others, such as Holmes, view them as individuals whose life experience is not much different than the population at large (50). All three writers cite a social support network as the critical counteractant that will alleviate the isolating experiences prevalent amongst single persons.

This can be applied to the experience of single Asian immigrant women as well. However, in addition to the loss of the social support network incurred as a result of immigration, the single Asian immigrant woman also experiences numerous other losses in addition to difficulties in the initial settlement phase -- all of which render her more



vulnerable to isolation than her married counterpart, the mainstream Canadian woman, or the Asian immigrant man.

#### 2.41 The Immigration Process: Its Potential Contribution To Isolation (51)

In her study on the effects of the migration experience on migrants, J. Huntington in her paper "Migration as Bereavement: The Use of Analogy in Social Work Research" explores the analogy between migration and bereavement; both migration and bereavement are seen as stressful life events that have to do with issues of attachment, separation, loss experience and behaviour (52). Migration is perceived as a psycho-social transition in one's lifespace, and one's lifespace embodies not only aspects of one's biography and identity, but one's own social reality as well, which threatens our sense of total well being (53).

Migration, then, is characterized by the loss of self-identity which is experienced through:

1. Loss of "taken-for-granted" inner and outer equilibrium (54).
2. Loss of place and culture which embody one's biography (55).
3. Loss of social support network (56).

The migrants' social support networks which form parts of the migrants' previous life spaces and biographies are no longer physically accessible and available to them.

How does the loss of self-identity affect the single Asian immigrant woman? Is she more vulnerable to isolation than her male

counterpart? Several studies (Huntington, Ng & Ramirez, O'Leary, Bonapanna, Nguyen) have indicated that indeed the immigrant woman in general faces greater isolation in comparison to her male counterpart.

For the single Asian immigrant woman, relocation and migration are very stressful and isolating life experiences. As a female she is socialized into the role of being family oriented. Her world, according to Jessie Bernard, is basically a world of "Gemeinschaft". "Gemeinschaft" is a parochial, limited world in which "blood and soil" or rather kinship ties and locale are fundamental bonds (57). By moving away to a distant land, the woman "disturbed not only the local ties but also the personal kinship ties ...(thereby) making them harder to maintain" (58). Because of her dependence on her roles as friend, kin and neighbor to provide support for her sense of self (59), there is greater vulnerability to actual or threatened loss of relationships with a high incidence of depression (60). Moreover, due to the presence of stronger filial piety bonds in Asian cultures than in the Western cultures, the identity of the Asian immigrant woman tends to be more tightly linked with her family and kin. For this reason, the loss of her social support system will have a greater impact on her life. As a single person, the Asian immigrant woman in the initial stages of settlement and adaptation, does not have the support of a spouse. As well, she may have little or no alternative forms of social relationships. The single Asian immigrant woman may therefore find herself facing this major life crisis with little or no support from others. In preparing for her paper "Women's Place", Sylvia Fava in her

literature research on relocated suburban women, found that singles and minority women are two groups of women especially disadvantaged by relocation (61). These women are found to experience stress because of distances from their social support networks of kin, friends, work and services. For the single Asian immigrant woman, relocation across countries and cultures thus has an even greater impact on her life, because being single and in minority status, is further compounded by the relocation process.

Once in Canada, the woman initially may also find herself in a position where she suffers the following experiences:

1. A lack of awareness of, and access to information regarding essential services. She may also feel intimidated by service agencies because of her own lack of information and knowledge.
2. A lack of access to information regarding the laws of the land, including human rights, labour laws, and so on. It should be noted that many immigrants come from third world countries where rights are frequently abused if they exist, and government agencies are often oppressive.
3. Inability to communicate due to little or no functional English or French language ability. Language plays a major role in survival and life skills development. Women who have little or no capacity in one of the official languages lack an important tool of self help (62).
4. Disorientation because of the many physical differences between her

old and new environment - the urban western city compared to the rural third world towns and villages.

5. A lack of Canadian life skills. This is especially problematic for her if she comes from a rural village in non-western, non-industrialized country (63) and is now obliged to learn to adjust to our urban, industrialized settings.

The combination of these experiences often lead to a sense of alienation, depersonalization and incompetence, and, as a result, self-devaluation or lowered self-esteem. These additional factors will only aggravate her isolating experience.

#### 2.42 Socio-economic and Socio-political Processes of the Host Country: Their Potential Contribution to Isolation

The individual's own experience of a major life event is affected not only by her or his psychological make-up, but also by the prevailing socio-economic and socio-political conditions over which the individual has little control. In the case of a single Asian immigrant woman, her experience is part of and determined by the larger social, economic and political processes of the country to which she has immigrated. These processes are inextricably tied to her life in fundamental ways, and the lack of control over these processes may lead to greater social isolation. The immigrant woman's experience may include:

1. discrimination and often severe exploitation in the labour force.
2. culture segregation (64).

These problems are further exacerbated if the woman has problems in communicating effectively in the English language, which in turn hampers

the woman's ability to make connections with the larger social, economic and political processes.

The last, but not the least important issue that will be discussed in the proposed study, is how immigration policy and practices contribute to isolation.

#### 2.43 Immigration Policy and Practices: Their Potential Contribution to Isolation

Single Asian immigrant women come to Canada either under the Family Reunification Program or as Independents. Studies (Boyd, Ng & Ramirez) have illustrated that immigration policy and practices are discriminatory towards immigrant women and reinforce her dependency in Canadian society. Rather than facilitate integration into mainstream Canadian living, immigration policy and practices impede the acculturation process for the immigrant woman. Policy in the areas of language, occupational and skill training, for instance, is discriminatory against sponsored immigrant women. Unlike the independent immigrant and refugee, a sponsored immigrant woman is not eligible for a training or travel allowance if she wishes to take a language training course sponsored by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. Consequently her employability and earning capacity are limited. Further, the CEIC sponsored occupational and skill training programs exclude the non-English speaking immigrant woman by stating that the applicants must speak and read English or French and have the equivalent of certain levels of formal education (65). Bearing in mind that most single Asian immigrant women need to be financially

self-sufficient, opportunities for upgrading of skills and self-improvement are imperative if they are to escape the trap of low paying, non-unionized, dead-end job ghettos which provide only poor working conditions with no job security and few opportunities for advancement and language acquisition. Discrimination within immigration policy on sponsorship extends to the area of social assistance. Here a sponsored immigrant woman is not eligible for provincial aid during the five-year sponsorship period. The only condition under which the immigrant woman can obtain welfare is if she can prove disassociation with her sponsor. This in turn can be a degrading and painful experience to the woman. For the single Asian immigrant woman who is employed in a poorly paying job that does not provide job security, the option of applying for social assistance might provide her with some degree of self-sufficiency.

Another factor which contributes to isolation for the immigrant at large but has specific impact on single Asian immigrant women, is the definition of "family" under the immigration act. This definition limits sponsorship to immediate family only: sponsored spouses, fiances, unmarried children under 21, parents or grandparents over 60 (or widowed parent if under 60). This policy of limiting the woman's social support network only to those sponsored individuals and relationships she has formed in Canada contributes to greater isolation. This is because the single Asian immigrant woman is dependant on her social support network to meet her various needs, and

her definition of self being largely dependant on the social relationships she has formed.

In summary, as a result of immigration, the single Asian immigrant woman may experience loss of self-identity as a result of the many losses encountered through immigration to Canada. The single Asian immigrant woman is without the support of a "transplanted" mate or an already-well-established, adequate support system to provide her with practical, social and emotional supports for survival in an alien environment and culture. In the absence of a stable, previously established support network, new networks have to be created in order to provide the functions of the old support system in new ways. Yet, during the periods of transition and adaptation, the single Asian immigrant woman's experience of isolation is exacerbated by the problems that are inherent in the larger social, economic and political processes of the host country. These include the Canadian immigration policy and practices which rather than facilitate, actually impede adjustment into mainstream Canadian living. As she struggles to restructure her world, the single Asian immigrant woman in fact may need more support but often gets less. And even if a new support network does develop in the new environment, too often it may lack the permanency and stability that characterizes the slower and less mobile societies. As a consequence of migrating to Canada the single Asian immigrant woman may find herself placed, at least in the initial transitional stage, in the position of being powerless and completely alone, resulting in her gradual loss of

self-confidence and self-esteem, and rendering her susceptible to mental health problems.

## 2.5 SUMMARY

According to the 1983 Immigration Statistics, single (never married, widowed, separated or divorced) immigrant women totalled 17,721 or 40.8% of all the foreign born women over the age of 15 who immigrated to Canada that year (66). This percentage is very close to the 1981 statistics on all single Canadians which indicated that 40.3% of Canadian women aged 15 and over were either never married, widowed, separated or divorced (vs 59.7% of women who were married) (69). In spite of their numbers, until more recently, very little literature exists on the experience of the single woman in Canada. Not surprisingly literature on single Asian immigrant women in Canada is non-existent. The review of the existing literature on singleness, immigration, immigrant women and being female and the role of support network in relationship to isolation and loneliness only generates a set of assumptions about some aspects of the life experience of the single Asian immigrant woman. This exploratory study proposes to fill in that knowledge "gap" by examining the life experience of the single Asian immigrant woman, specifically the relationship of her single status to her experience both as an immigrant and as a woman.



## CHAPTER III

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Although there is a growing interest in studying singleness, understanding in this area is still relatively limited. In the area of immigration, most of the available studies focus on the issues faced by immigrants in general. Until recently few studies have been done on the immigrant woman population. As mentioned in the Introductory section of this paper, this study will attempt to obtain descriptive information from the single Asian immigrant woman herself. It will focus on the life experience of the single Asian immigrant woman and any isolation that is manifested in her daily life. It also attempts to make the connection between any experiences of isolation and the existing social support network.

The purpose of the research is not to seek "facts" or "causes", but to develop an "understanding" of the immigrant woman's experience in the above mentioned areas; it therefore uses an exploratory, phenomenological approach combined with a qualitative methodology.

The phenomenologist:

is concerned with the understanding of human behaviour from the actor's own frame of reference.... The phenomenologist examines how the world is experienced. For him or her, the important reality is what people imagine it to be. (68).

Qualitative methodology refers to:

research procedures which produce descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour... Qualitative methods allow us to know people personally and to see them as they are, developing their own definitions of the world. (69).

Because qualitative methodology allows the researcher to "get close to the data", it permits the development of

analytical, conceptual and categorical components of explanation from the data itself - rather than from the preconceived structured, and highly quantified techniques that pigeon hole the empirical social world into the operational definitions that the researcher has constructed (70).

Rather than testing a specific hypothesis, the exploratory, phenomenological approach emphasizes the discovery of themes and relationships within the context of the findings:

This approach.... directs itself at settings and the individuals within those settings holistically; that is, the subject of the study... is not reduced to an isolated variable or hypothesis, but is viewed instead as part of a whole. (71)

Perhaps quite appropriate for this study is Huntington's concept of analogy as used in her exploratory study. She indicated that such a methodology is:

particularly appropriate to the early phase of scientific research on a particular phenomenon where intuitive exploration, observation and generation of insights are necessary prior to formulating empirically testable hypotheses. (72).

In addition to being exploratory in function, qualitative methodological techniques are also applicable to theory construction (73) through "(taking) into account the inner perspective as well as the outer perspective of the subjects under investigation." (74) that is, intersubjective and transobjective understanding of the data.

A different type of relationship between the researcher and the participants is established because this type of research requires ongoing dialogue between the means, content and method. Here, the participants become co-researchers and partners rather than subjects only, and the researcher is no longer a detached controller but rather a collaborator. The nature of this type of relationship will potentially achieve two things: firstly, it will increase trust and respect on the part of the participants and thus increase their motivation to continue with the research; secondly, it will facilitate more in-depth probing of sensitive areas that may otherwise not be open to the researcher. However unlike quantitative methodology, the obvious constraint on the proposed methodological approach is that its findings cannot be easily generalized.

In designing a qualitative study, certain factors must be taken into consideration:

1. to acknowledge the outcomes of the interactions between the researcher and participants with these interactions becoming part of the data base,
2. in the absence of a firm hypothesis, the research design is fluid and open to change, but always keeping within the boundaries of the original terms of reference. This enables the researcher to:

explore concepts whose essence is lost in other research approaches... such concepts as beauty, pain, faith, suffering, frustration, hope, and love can be studied as they are defined and experienced by real people in their everyday lives. (75)

The design of the present study involves a two-tiered interview strategy. To obtain some basic background information on the women themselves, the first part of the interview focuses on gathering socio-demographic data through a structured interview format. (See Appendix A) This is followed by an open-ended, in-depth interview which focuses on the life experience of the study participant, especially the experience of isolation as it occurs in the study participant's daily life as a single immigrant woman. The interview format also encourages the subject to discuss the experience of isolation and how it relates to her social support system (see Appendix B).

For the purpose of this study, the term "immigrant woman" refers to women who were born outside of Canada and who now reside permanently in Canada. The study participants have been in Canada for a period of one to five years (76) and their primary language is not English (77). The term "single" immigrant woman refers to those immigrant women who have no family responsibilities (ie. no children) in Canada and who are currently not married or living in a common-law heterosexual or homosexual relationship (78). They have come to Canada as 1) independents, with limited social ties in Canada or 2) as sponsored immigrants, with family relations here. They live alone or share accommodations with relatives or friends. They may never have been married, or may be separated, divorced or widowed. Self-defined political refugees are excluded from this study as the literature and experiences have indicated that the experience of these two groups differ (79).

### 3.1 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

#### 3.11 Sample

In this type of research, it is not necessary to minimize sample differences although a large enough bank of sample data is needed to develop adequate themes and categories (80).

A period of four months was set aside to interview all the study participants. The goal was to conduct these interviews as close to each other as possible. The temporal proximity of the interviews had the advantage of keeping themes fresh in the interviewer's mind. Moreover, it was sometimes necessary to go back to a study participant and explore further a theme that developed afresh while interviewing another study participant. This time frame acted as a guideline to determine the number of interviews and the size of the population to be studied. The initial goal was to interview possibly sixteen women, but not less than ten, within the four month period. It was hoped that there would be four women each from both the Filipino and East Indian ethnic groups and eight Chinese women interviewed for the study (81). It was also hoped that all the women from the Filipino and East Indian ethnic groups would be able to speak English. With the Chinese group, four women would have command of conversational English and the other four would have little command of the English language (82). Each of these groups of four were to be further divided into two subgroups: single living alone; and single living with family (nuclear/extended) or friends. In addition to the constant factors of being a single immigrant woman who has resided in Canada between one to five years and whose primary language is not

English, the study would look at situations of women who have a) some command of the English language (with the exception of the above mentioned four Chinese women), b) had a minimum of secondary education (Grade 10) (83), c) were then employed or were seeking employment (84), and d) were over eighteen years old (85).

**TABLE 1: THE "IDEAL" SAMPLE**

	FILLIPINO	EAST INDIAN	CHINESE - SPEAKING
Living Alone	2	2	4 (2 Eng./2 no Eng.)
Living with Family/Friend	2	2	4 (2 Eng./2 no Eng.)

In the data collection process, the nature of the sample was modified from that initially intended. This was due to the difficulty in finding participants who met all of the outlined criteria. Besides, modification was also necessary in order to include some women who provided rich data but did not fall within the "ideal" criteria. Modifications took place in the areas of sample size, ethnic compositions, age distribution, education, and employment status. However, there was no compromise in the crucial parameters of marital status, length of stay in Canada, and the woman's direct immigration to Canada from her country of origin. This is due to the fact that these are important determining factors in adjustment to living in Canada (86).

A total of eleven single Asian immigrant women were interviewed.

However only data collected from eight participants were used in the analysis process (87).

In the case of the eight participants, four of the women had very limited English language capability. This included the two Chinese women (who were interviewed in the Cantonese dialect), one Filipino woman (whose family member acted as a translator) and an East Indian woman (who was interviewed without the assistance of others). Interviews with the rest of the participants were done in English. In terms of the country of origin, the three Chinese speaking women came originally from Hong Kong; the two Filipino women came from the Philippines; and of the three East Indian participants, two came originally from the Indian sub-continent, and one from Kenya. Four were in their twenties, three in their thirties, and one was fifty-eight years old. The women's educational background varied from having (at least) Grade 8 to post secondary education. At the time of the interview, six of these women were blue collar workers, one was a retired professional, and one was a student (88). Seven of the women had never been married and one was a widow. All except two of the eight women lived with family members at the time of the interview. The other two lived alone (89). All had lived in Canada for between two and five years and had come to Canada directly from their countries of origin. Five of the women were sponsored by their families and three of them applied as independents. Among the five women who were sponsored, two felt compelled to immigrate with their families or be left behind; one felt indifferent, in contrast to the experience of another woman who was

excited about coming to Canada. The widow immigrated because she felt obliged to be with her children who sponsored her. As to the women who applied as independents, two applied from their countries of origin and one applied after she had worked as a domestic worker in Winnipeg for two years. All these three independents chose to apply to immigrate because of perceived better opportunities here in Canada.

TABLE II: THE "ACTUAL" SAMPLE

		EAST INDIAN	FILIPINO	CHINESE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	LIMITED	1	4	2, 3
	FAIR		7	5
	FLUENT	6, 8		
AGE	20-29	1, 8	7	5
	30-39	6	4	3
	40-49			
	50+			2
FORMAL EDUCATION	JUNIOR HIGH		4	
	HIGH SCHOOL	1	7	
	TRADE/TECHNICAL COLLEGE	6		2, 3
	UNIVERSITY	8		5
EMPLOYMENT	STUDENT			5
	BLUE COLLAR	1, 6, 8	4, 7	3
	WHITE COLLAR			
	PROFESSIONAL			2
LIVING ARRANGEMENTS	ALONE	1		3
	FAMILY/KIN	6, 8	4, 7	2, 5
VOLUNTARY IMMIGRATION		1, 6	4	3, 5
INVOLUNTARY IMMIGRATION		8	7	2

PARTICIPANTS - 8: BARBARA (1); BONNIE (2); CANDICE (3); DEBORAH (4);  
FAY (5); KATIE (6); PATRICIA (7); SALLY (8)

- MARITAL STATUS: 7 NEVER MARRIED, 1 WIDOWED
- LENGTH OF STAY: 2-5 YEARS
- CAME TO CANADA DIRECTLY FROM COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



### 3.12 Sampling Procedures

Advertisements to recruit volunteers were placed through the Immigrant Women's Association. In addition, the snowball sampling technique was used to locate the study participants. The researcher started by making contacts with individuals and organizations of the three ethnic communities. These individuals and organizations put the researcher in touch with other individuals and workers in the community, who in turn were asked if they would be interested in identifying immigrant women whom the researcher might not otherwise be able to contact. Through such a method, the researcher was able to reach immigrant women from a variety of backgrounds who had and had not used services provided by these agencies.

Personal contacts established by the researcher prior to the study were approached, either to participate in the study (with the provision that they were not the researcher's close personal friends) or to provide referrals. Since sampling was limited by the researcher's own linguistic capability, that is, the usage of the English and Chinese only, this necessarily limited participation to only those who had command of these two languages. English was not the first language for any of the participants, thus there were problems in expressing thoughts and in conceptualization in English during the interview process. However, being herself an immigrant woman as well as a practising social worker, the researcher was familiar with cultural symbols and interviewing techniques, both of which assisted her in the data collecting process. In fact, since the researcher shared all or some

similar cultural/linguistic background with the women, she was more "tuned in" to the cultural "cues" and was therefore able to gather more sensitive information, ie. information of a personal nature, from these groups.

Confidentiality was ensured as this was a key concern expressed by those immigrant women with whom the researcher had initially spoken. It is a particularly sensitive issue because the small size and intertwined nature of the ethnic communities allows the easy identification of an individual's personal situation. To ensure confidentiality and protect the individual's identity, pseudonyms were used and identifiable details were altered to ensure anonymity without distorting the relevant experiences. In addition, interview materials were kept in a locked and secure place accessible only to the researcher.

### 3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

#### 3.21 Data Collection

In most cases, the researcher took notes during the interview, after having discussed this with the participants to ensure that doing so would not effect the rapport that was essential for interaction between the researcher and participants. In addition, field notes that documented the process, context, observations and impressions were made immediately after each interview to ensure accuracy of the data collected. Audio and/or visual taping was not used. This was because prior experience indicated that the participants would feel intimidated and this would interfere with the empathic process essential for such an

interview. The data was collected by interviewing those in the sample previously described. The total interview process varied from one to three sessions per study participant, each session averaging about two to three and a half hours.

In addition to the content of the interviews, the researcher also noted her own behaviour and the behaviour of the participants. This allowed the researcher to analyze the participant's statements and activities in the context of that particular interview. As well the researcher recorded her own observations, impressions and future questions she planned to ask. The women were contacted for clarification of any questions or concerns arising following the interviews.

Data collection was undertaken during a four month period.

### 3.22 Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was done via the thematic approach. This approach focusses on the categorization of the data in accordance with the emergence of themes and sub-themes of common experiences shared by the participants. Not only is it "a process entailing an effort to formally identify themes... (but also) to construct hypotheses (ideas) as they are suggested by the data and an attempt to demonstrate support for these themes and hypotheses" (90).

The researcher preferred the thematic approach to the composite profile of individuals because: (a), the thematic approach captures the essence of the experience shared by, or common to women of heterogeneous backgrounds and provides the reader with an understanding of the various

contexts under which a theme emerges; a composite profile of individuals does not provide an understanding of the heterogeneity of the social histories and social situations which determine each woman's own unique life experience. (b), it highlights immigrant women and their experiences in a more concrete and salient fashion than would the composite profile format. However, a drawback of the thematic approach may be in concentrating on experiences rather than providing a personality to the individual participant. To compensate for this limitation, a profile of each woman is provided in Appendix C (91).

Themes were identified and developed from the interview data and the data analysis process. Theme identification and theme categorization was done immediately following each interview with consequent hypotheses generation. Clarification of themes to allow their categorization was often done with participants in subsequent interviews. Thus data collection, analysis and hypotheses generation were simultaneously undertaken, each influencing the other ie. data collection in later interviews was influenced by the themes identified, and the ideas generated in earlier interviews. The content of data collected determined the themes identified which in turn determined the sub-themes. On the basis of the preliminary set of themes and hypotheses, the women were compared once more for similarities and differences. The themes were further refined and scrutinized as the research progressed until a common set of themes emerged. Besides studying areas of high similarities, the analysis also scrutinized areas of high degree of differences between and among participants. Other

important variables taken into account in the generation of themes were the differences in age and life experience, English language and conceptualizing abilities, ethnic and socio-economic background of the participants. The impact of these variables on the analysis will be discussed in Chapter IV. Experiences of women who epitomize the themes and sub-themes were noted.

After field notes were written up on each case and the interviews completed, the themes, sub-themes, problems, questions and hypotheses were noted from each contact. The coding of themes and sub-themes was done by assigning colours, numbers and letters to each theme and its sub-theme. This was carried out by duplication of field notes and assignment of the appropriate colours, letters and number to the themes and sub-themes on the margin beside the relevant paragraphs. The colours, numbers and letters served to identify the various themes and sub-themes and hence assisted in the organizations of the materials. Upon the completion of the coding process, patterns were sought.

The common themes were categorized according to: 1) the frequency (quantity) of agreement on an issue (Theme Frequency); 2) the degree/intensity (quality) of the agreement (Theme Emotional Valence); 3) the most important theme to the participants (Theme Importance).

1) Theme Frequency: Here the themes are grouped into three categories: themes with (1) high concordance (60% or more of all the participants talked about the same issue in varying degrees), (2) medium concordance (30 - 60% of all participants talked about the same issue in

varying degrees), and (3) low concordance (less than 30% of all participants talked about the same issues). Concordance in this context does not imply the degree of importance of any particular theme, it only implies the frequency with which a specific theme was talked about by the participants.

2) Theme Emotional Valence: Under this section, themes that were most emotionally engaged are introduced. With this analysis procedure, materials from each case interviewed were reviewed to determine the most emotionally charged theme for that individual participant. Since the degree of emotionality associated with each theme cannot be directly compared from participant to participant, only the most emotionally charged theme for any participant was selected. All of these themes were then categorized according to the frequency of occurrence ie. the number of participants for whom a particular theme was considered the most emotionally charged in the interview process. The most emotionally charged theme for any participant was established taking into consideration the following criteria, a) the theme that was spontaneously verbalized by the participant as being emotionally charged, b) the theme that was verbalized in response to specifically asked questions, c) the researcher's intuitive feeling about an issue during the interview, d) the expression of emotionality by the participant through non-verbal communication such as the participant's tone of voice, sitting position, and facial expression and other such cues, e) the expression of emotionality by the participant according to the frequency of expression of the same theme throughout the entire

interview process.

3) Theme Importance: Only the theme that was expressed (whether prompted or not) by each participant as the most important at the time of the interview is presented here. This was expressed by the participant simply stating that the issue was the most important for her. Since the importance of a theme is a subjective expression by the participant herself at the time of the interview, no a priori criteria were set for defining importance other than as defined by the participant.

### 3.3 REMARKS ON METHODOLOGY

#### 3.3.1 Interactions Between The Researcher and Participants

The interactions between the researcher and the participants impacted on the life experiences of both parties. As a single Asian immigrant woman who had personal experience with the issue in question, the information shared by the women encouraged the researcher to reflect back on her own experiences in her first few years of resettlement in Winnipeg; this enabled her to make observations and raise questions through recollection and reminiscence. This process helped the researcher consolidate some personal issues related to her experience as a single Asian immigrant woman. For the participants the majority of the women stated that they welcomed the opportunity to be able to express their thoughts and feelings to an empathic listener. One woman stated that it was very satisfying for her to share her personal experiences with a like-minded individual whom she felt understood her.

Another woman asked the researcher to be her trusted friend. The process of articulating their problems to a sympathetic listener appeared to achieve two things for the women: (1) they felt comforted as a result of "being listened to" and (2) they gained insights into the causes of their negative experiences, thus feeling more empowered and less alone or at a loss. The latter process was reinforced when they acquired knowledge of some of the other responses to certain issues. After each interview, the researcher would also share with the women any information and services which she felt the participants were unaware of.

Because of problems with the English language, interviews with two Chinese women were done in Chinese. The absence of language barriers, enabled the researcher to obtain richer data from these women compared to the other interviews which were done in English.

### 3.32 Themes

For the purpose of analysis, criteria of each theme were established through the theme identification process as discussed in detail above. To ensure reliability of the themes, an independent observer (92) was asked to go through the descriptors of each theme to find out if they were in concordance with that of the researcher's. Due to the nature of the interviews, inferences could have been made in some instances, however, efforts were made to avoid making them.

### 3.33 Theme Frequency

The amount of agreement on each theme is in no way indicative of the degree of saliency of any particular theme. In fact, the different



amounts of agreement on a theme may be the result of whether it was or was not raised by the interviewer. Because of this, the theme in question may or may not be part of the experience of every woman although they were obviously issues of concern for some of the women. Whether a certain issue is part of the experience of every single immigrant woman will remain an unknown factor within the realm of this study. However, it is to be noted that the more frequently an issue was discussed, the more knowledge was generated about that particular issue.

### 3.34 Theme Emotional Valence

The degree of emotional intensity or valency of a particular issue is another crucial measure used in the theme identification process. The usage of each of the five mentioned criteria in establishing the most emotionally charged theme for any participants bears its own merits and deficits. Whilst the following three criteria: a) the theme that was verbalized in response to specifically asked questions, b) the theme that was spontaneously verbalized by the participant as being emotionally charged, and c) the expression of emotionality by the participant according to the frequency of expression of the same theme throughout the entire interview process, may present data that are more "objective" and "concrete" in nature, it may not capture the latent affective nature of an issue. On the other hand, by including the criteria of c) using the researcher's intuitive feeling about an issue and d) non-verbal communication expressed by the participants' during the interview, another dimension in determining the degree of

emotionality of an issue to the participant is added. These latter two criteria also provided the researcher with the "cue" to the possible presence of an unspoken latent issue which the researcher might then decide to pursue through further probing. In essence, although this reading is subjective in nature, non-verbal statements were not taken in isolation but in combination with the other criteria set through verbal communication. In other words, the five criteria are interdependent on each other and embedded in the interactive communication process.

### 3.35 Theme Importance

The combination of the "Theme Emotional Valence" and the "Theme Importance" analysis procedure provides a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of salient issues which have arisen, persist or recede over the period of the immigrant woman's stay in Canada. Using both allows one to gain a more "wholistic" view of the total life experience of the woman, ie. her past and present. This is true especially in cases where emotional valency and most importance of a theme do not coincide. For example, being discriminated against may have been an all encompassing salient emotional issue for the woman throughout the length of her stay in Canada, yet the most important issue for her at the time of the interview may have been the anticipation of the arrival of her fiance to Canada.

## CHAPTER IV

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

He (Ivan Karamazov) had often before known moments of anxiety and depression and there was nothing suprising in his feeling this way at a moment when he was about to break with everything that had brought him here and start on a completely new and unknown course - a course that he would follow all alone as before, full of hope without knowing what he actually hoped for, and expecting a great deal, perhaps too much, from life without being able to define what he expected or even what he wished for.

The Brothers Karamazov, by  
Fyoder Dostoevsky

The experiences of the single Asian immigrant women are similar in this study. While embarking on the unknown course of life as immigrants in Winnipeg, the women, like Ivan Karamazov, experienced the feelings of anxiety, loss, anticipation, hope and uncertainty about their future. They also experienced alienation, vulnerability, and, most of all, overwhelming loneliness and aloneness during this process of immigration. Dramatic changes in their life course forced the women to evolve or use coping strategies that let them carve out a new lifestyle for themselves.

While each woman's response to the changes in life course brought about by immigration and the strategies used to cope with these is unique, there are, however, common themes in their experiences. These themes are attributable to the interaction between the women and their host environment; and they are characterized by the women's common distinction of being single, immigrant and female. The findings of this study support the researcher's earlier suggestion that being single,

immigrant and female forms a unique constellation having a negative influence on the individual's life. This is to say in combination these defining characteristics form a "triple jeopardy". (see Chapter 2). This is clearly noted in the interviews with these women. An attempt is made here to categorize the single immigrant women's experiences, and incorporate them under predominant themes. Five major themes were identified from the interviews and will be discussed in this chapter.

These themes were derived through the simultaneous process of data collection, analysis and hypotheses generation after each interview, together with the progressive identification of common experiences as expressed by the women.

The themes are supported by quotes and illustrations. Verbatim reports are not used because the interviews were not taped. However, attempts have been made to reproduce, as much as possible, the original dialogue that took place between the participants and the researcher. Wherever possible, attempts are made to use the women's own words in both the title of the themes and the descriptors. As a result, this chapter provides glimpses of the life experiences of the single Asian immigrant women interviewed. These findings will be further discussed in light of the literature already reviewed, and ideas recently discovered. The following headings will serve as an organizing framework: 1) Major Themes, 2) Variation of Themes Among the Women, 3) Theme-Related Explanatory Factors and Coping Mechanisms.

#### 4.1 MAJOR THEMES

Five different yet interlocking themes were identified:

1. Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure
2. Being Isolated and Lonely
3. Being Anxious
4. Being Different
5. Feeling Trapped

A set of descriptors on each theme will be presented and illustrated with quotes exemplifying the women's experience on the various issues.

##### 4.11 BEING LOST BETWEEN WORLDS AND INSECURE

This theme encompasses feelings expressed by the participants which suggest that they are psychologically lost in their attempts to adjust to their new environment. As a result they feel caught between two realities. They are unable to fully identify with or gain a sense of belonging to either their home country, host country, or their own ethnic community here in Winnipeg.

Still relatively new immigrants to Winnipeg at the time of the interviews, most women continued to feel overwhelmed by and bewildered at the changes in their lives. In fact, all eight participants still found themselves periodically in limbo, caught between different cultures, different worlds. There was sometimes for them an obvious lack of coherence, when they tried to "fit" the "back home" way of life with the Canadian way of life which now confronts them. They occasionally still find the lifestyles of their own ethnic community

here in Winnipeg mysterious.

At the same time these women spoke of differences between the two worlds, that is, the social, political, cultural, and economic situations in Canada, as compared to their home countries.

I did not like the social, economic and political conditions in the Philippines, the traditional way of living and limited freedom... Canada has a good standard of living... it was easier to find a job here... and the political condition is better here because Canada is a free country ie. one could do whatever one liked... However I miss home...

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
4 years in Canada)

Along with describing the differences, the women "evaluated" different aspects of the two worlds. Many echoed Patricia's observation that Canada has a higher standard of living, and that they were impressed with the relative ease in finding a job. Like Patricia, a number of other women stated that they particularly enjoyed the freedom of being able to do whatever they liked. It is worth mentioning here that the perception of "freedom", whether it be "political" or "social", and the definition of "freedom" varied among the women. For example, one woman pointed out that as an immigrant she did not have "real" freedom, because she was "lost":

In India, I had a lot of freedom because I had confidence - I was respected because of my volunteer (philanthropic) work, and I knew my way around and the people. Also, people had more time to do leisure things. I was also more financially independent because my father gave me some property there. Here, I had to work and worry about finances, making sure that I was self-sufficient. As well, I have no relatives or friends to share problems with other than my own family.

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

Sally, like many others expressed that despite their positive impressions of Winnipeg, they tremendously missed "back home": "there is no place like home".

Most of the women respondents also noted differences in lifestyles, values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and norms etc., with individuals, and with systems in Canada and in their countries of origin. For example, quite a few women noted that one of the differences between living in Winnipeg and "back home" is the pace of life: "People always rush around here - life here is fast moving." People here have no time for themselves, or one another:

East Indians here have to work very hard and have no time. In India things are different - one has time to worry about one's appearance. Here one does not even have time to iron one's clothings.

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

Others, such as Patricia, talked about the lack of mutual understanding of cultural differences and expectations by both mainstream Canadians and the new immigrants:

One of the problems I still face in adjusting to life in Canada involves differences in cultures - Canadians do not understand Filipino culture, and as for myself, I do not understand the lifestyle and custom of the people here. The people here have different expectations of things. Take dating for example. Unlike the Filipino custom, dates here do not visit the girl's home and want to become "steady" too soon. I will try to understand the Canadians. This should not really be a major problem though - one needs to do like the Greeks do when you're in Greece....

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
4 years in Canada)

The women also talked about their impressions of their own ethnic

communities in Winnipeg:

I do not understand the East Indians here very well. Some East Indian groups are too busybody and behave as if they look down on domestic workers. I find them suspicious of others and not very friendly and keeping their distance. This makes me wonder if they feel that they are better. In fact one East Indian couple I have met behaved as if they are better. As well, they only talk about India and they speak very fast...

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
4 years in Canada)

In their relationships with their own ethnic communities, some women found themselves having to establish a community role for themselves; they were to a degree able to choose the social subgroup(s) with which they wanted to be associated, quite unlike the situation in their home country, where they by prearrangement or birth had a "place" in the community cut out for them.

In essence, the overall experience of being caught between worlds was best summed up in this woman's comment:

Leaving my homeland and being in Canada makes me feel like being both an aquatic and terrestrial animal at the same time, living between two worlds and not making it to the shores (destination) in either case.

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

#### 4.12 BEING ISOLATED AND LONELY

All eight participants indicated that they experienced varying intensities of isolation and loneliness after coming to Canada. In the interviews they emphasized that they felt lonely, alone and in need of a close, meaningful, dependable and trusting relationship.

This is best illustrated by the following account:



Soon after I arrived here, I found that my business partner was dishonest. I felt very discouraged and had some regrets about coming here... I felt very lonely and isolated because I was not surrounded by people I knew and whom I could talk to about the problem I was having with this friend... this was the most difficult and loneliest time for me. I needed friends for companionship and to confide about my personal problems... I missed home... I wanted to go back to Hong Kong. I like Hong Kong because I know the place and things well there. I have family and more friends as well as closer friends. After being here for one year, I have made some friends. The boyfriend especially helps me feel less lonely and less at a loss.

(Candice, Chinese, Sewing Machine Operator,  
3 years in Canada)

Some women said that they had many periods of feeling intensely bored and restless; they wanted to be with others, to reach out to others and to relate to others:

Before coming to Canada, I did prepare myself psychologically for feeling bored and lonely. After I came here, I became more aware of the lack of any support contacts I have. Because of this, I have been making special efforts to get to know people, especially single people and ask to go out with them - the more people there is, the less lonely one feels and I can go out more often because I have more companions to go out with.

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

The condition of isolation for these women created in them a desperation for other people in whom they could confide, and with whom they could socialize. It was sometimes overwhelming, preventing them from paying proper attention to other aspects of their lives.

#### 4.13 BEING ANXIOUS

The anxiety experienced by these single Asian immigrant women

primarily took the form of apprehension about the future and/or new situations; general worry; and bewilderment.

One woman stated:

Because I am not sure about the customs here, I feel apprehensive sometimes when doing things. Even now I still worry if everything will be alright all the time when I have to deal with Canadians. For example, when I have to do business with the bank, I am not able to tell the teller how to transfer my money from savings to term deposit, or how to ask about interest rates. I feel I need to understand banking lingo. I feel at a loss and worried and have no confidence in my own ability... I have an inferiority complex because I do not understand what people are saying.

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

In addition they also worried about families and kin "back home":

In case there is a crisis back home, such as someone in the family getting sick or dying, I am not able to help out because of the distance and expenses involved to go back home. Also my family will not tell me because they fear that I may worry. This worries me and causes pain in me. I wish I were there to be supportive.

(Katie, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

Others expressed feelings of being overburdened:

I started working as sewing machine operator 2 weeks after I arrived here (I was 18 years old) and have been working since... having to support the entire family of 6... My parents and three siblings depend on me financially and emotionally. I felt... burdened.

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
4 years in Canada)

All three statements highlight "Being Anxious".

## 4.14 BEING DIFFERENT

This theme serves as an umbrella for similar feelings though expressed in different ways by different women: feeling different; feeling unaccepted and not treated the same as others; feeling self-conscious or awkward; feeling alienated and not part of things; and feeling inferior or superior.

The following statement relates being single as a source of being different:

I feel that many men are not willing to commit themselves to a relationship... I find it hard to find a male friend. By not having a husband, I feel discriminated against by both Canadians and East Indians because I feel that I should have a husband as a lot of women do. I also feel self-conscious - I feel people stare at me. This is true when I take a cab (by East Indian taxidivers) or when I eat alone in a food stall. I feel people wonder why I was alone. It makes me wonder what is wrong with me.

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
4 years in Canada)

Some statements related ethnic and/or religious background as a source of being different:

One of the main reasons I do not want to stay in Canada is because of discrimination against Sikh people such as my father, who was told that for him to get a job he needed to cut his hair or remove his turban.

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

Others traced being different to being an immigrant:

I don't feel like a participating member of this society: for example, as a teacher, I used to go to the Hong Kong Teacher Association which sponsored concerts. Now in Canada, I can not even get involved as a member at large of this society on general societal issues (eg. popular fund raising events),

never mind to get involved in the political process here...

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

Although "being different" was described by the participants with various emotions in the interviews, and within various contexts, common to their accounts was the feeling of being stigmatized and/or being discriminated against.

#### 4.15 FEELING TRAPPED

This theme describes the participants' feelings of not being able to get out of an unhappy situation, "stuck"; and in addition, for various reasons they feel that they are unable to go "back home".

One participant described a situation of feeling trapped as follows:

I felt very down when I did not have a job - I felt people didn't like me. I wanted to go back home... Everything is a struggle here and you have to show to Canadians that you can make it and that you can fit in better. But to the people back home especially, I need to be able to show it off to them that I can make it on my own...

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
5 years in Canada)

Another woman, who was swindled of her money, managed to overcome the urge of wanting to go "back home", even though there she had family members and close friends from whom she could derive comfort, because, she said, "I felt I could not give up because I would lose face and lose everything".

These five major themes are reflective of the different aspects of the resettlement experience of the single Asian immigrant women interviewed. Although the themes each represent a set of unique experiences, they also interrelate. This is understandable in so far as all human experiences are interrelated and any efforts to separate the themes into discreet categories can only be arbitrary. The configuration of experiences is nevertheless distinct and is a manifestation of the common experience of singleness, being female and an immigrant.

#### 4.2 VARIATION OF THEMES AMONG THE WOMEN

Table I illustrates how often these themes have appeared, how emotionally-laden they are, and how important they are to the women.

TABLE I: VARIATION OF THEMES AMONG THE WOMEN

THEME	THEME FREQUENCY	THEME EMOTIONAL VALENCE	THEME IMPORTANCE
Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure	8 (100%)	4 (1) 3*	4 (2) 2*
Being Isolated and Lonely	8 (100%)	1 (4)	2 (3) (1)*
Being Anxious	6 (75.0%)	(1) (1)*	
Being Different	5 (62.5%)		
Feeling Trapped	5 (62.5%)	(1)	

Total: 8 participants

\* = Expression of equal value on two themes

( ) = Being second in value

Note: Number between the lines indicates that it is either equal and/or second in value to the themes just under and above it.

#### 4.21 THEME FREQUENCY

All themes were mentioned by at least 63% of the participants (five participants). "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" and "Being Isolated and Lonely" were the most talked about themes (by all participants). "Being Anxious" was the second most talked about theme (by six participants). "Being Different" and "Being Trapped" were the third most talked about themes being mentioned (by five participants) (Table II).

TABLE II: THEME FREQUENCY

PARTICIPANTS	BEING LOST BETWEEN WORLDS & INSECURE	BEING ISOLATED & LONELY	BEING ANXIOUS	BEING DIFFERENT	FEELING TRAPPED
Katie	X	X	X	X	X
Sally	X	X	X	X	X
Candice	X	X	X	X	X
Bonnie	X	X	X	X	X
Barbara	X	X			
Debora	X	X			
Fay	X	X	X		
Patricia	X	X	X	X	X
FREQUENCY	8	8	6	5	5

## 4.22 THEME EMOTIONAL VALENCE:

The themes are categorized into (i) those judged to be the most emotionally charged—Highest Emotional Valence and (ii) Others.

- i) Highest Emotional Valence: Four participants addressed "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" as the most emotionally charged theme. Three participants indicated that "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" and "Being Isolated and Lonely" were equally emotionally charged. Another participant indicated that "Being Isolated and Lonely" was the most emotionally valent theme for her.
- ii) Others: One participant depicted "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" as being the second most emotionally charged theme. The same participant also chose "Being Isolated and Lonely" as the most emotionally charged theme for her. Four participants felt that "Being Isolated and Lonely" was the second most emotionally charged

theme for them, after "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure". As well, one participant indicated that "Being Anxious" was the second most emotionally charged theme for her, while another felt that both "Being Anxious" and "Being Different" were equally second. Both chose "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" and "Being Isolated and Lonely" as the most emotionally charged theme for them. One participant depicted "Being Anxious" and "Feeling Trapped" as equal in emotional valence after "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" and "Being Isolated and Lonely". Table III provides details of the valence attached to each theme by each participant.

**TABLE III: THEME EMOTIONAL VALENCE: RANKING ORDER**

PARTICIPANTS	BEING LOST BETWEEN WORLDS & INSECURE	BEING ISOLATED & LONELY	BEING ANXIOUS	BEING DIFFERENT	FEELING TRAPPED
Katie	1	2	4	3	5
Sally	1	2	4	4	3
Candice	1	1	2	3	2
Bonnie	1	2	3	4	5
Barbara	1	1			
Fay	1	2	3		
Patricia	1	1	2	2	3
Deborah	2	1			

KEY: 1 2 3 4 5  
Most Least

NOTE: Same number denotes equivalency in emotional valency.



#### 4.23 THEME IMPORTANCE:

An attempt was made to determine the relative importance of each theme.

- i) Most Important Themes: Four participants stated "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" to be the most important theme for them. Two participants indicated that "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" and "Being Isolated and Lonely" were equally important themes for them. Two participants stated that "Being Isolated and Lonely" was the most important theme for them.
- ii) Second Most Important Theme: Two participants felt that "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" was the second most important theme for them. Three participants indicated that "Being Isolated and Lonely" was the second most important theme for them, whilst one participant felt that "Being Isolated and Lonely" and "Being Anxious" were equally the second most important themes for her. Table IV provides the details of ranking order.

**TABLE IV: THEME IMPORTANCE: RANKING ORDER**

PARTICIPANTS	BEING LOST BETWEEN WORLDS & INSECURE	BEING ISOLATED & LONELY	BEING ANXIOUS	BEING DIFFERENT	FEELING TRAPPED
Katie	2	1		3	
Sally	1	2			
Candice	1	2	2		
Bonnie	1	1			
Barbara	1	1			
Debora	1	2			
Fay	1	2			
Patricia	2	1		3	

KEY: 1 2 3 4 5  
 Most Least

NOTE: Same number denotes equivalency in theme importance.

This section indicates that the first two themes of "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" and "Being Isolated and Lonely" were the most frequently mentioned themes, the most emotionally charged and the most important themes of all. It would seem that the same issues that are most important are those that are most emotionally charged.

#### 4.3 THEME-RELATED EXPLANATORY FACTORS AND COPING MECHANISMS

The participants' perceptions of the factors which explain their experiences, and the coping mechanisms they employ will be discussed in this section. Three major factors stand out as equal in the degree of importance placed upon them by the respondents. They are as follows:

1. Immigration-Related Factors
2. Social, Economic and Political Environment of the Host Community
3. Personal Characteristics

#### 4.31 IMMIGRATION-RELATED FACTORS

Those factors affecting adjustment and resettlement that are specific to the participants' immigration experience itself will be discussed in this subsection. Two major issues, cultural incongruency and social support will be focussed upon.

##### 1) Cultural Incongruency:

Moving from one's homeland to a totally foreign community, listening and learning to speak in a different language, experiencing a different climate and interacting with individuals from a different cultural background naturally makes one feel anxious, different, at a loss, isolated, and lonely. A commonly expressed explanatory factor for these feelings is the experience of cultural incongruence between the participants' "back home" culture and the host community culture.

The experiences of cultural incongruency are attributable to losses and changes which accompany immigration. They are manifested in the following areas: a) language, b) behavioural norms, c) physical environment, and d) cultural expectations related to being single and being female.

##### a) Language:

Language is the expression of "cultural traits". Experiencing problems with the English language was identified to be one of the major

explanatory factors for the experiences discussed under the themes "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" and "Being Isolated and Lonely". It also led to "Being Anxious" and, to a lesser degree, "Being Different".

The language capabilities of those women who could converse in English varied in degrees of fluency ("I wish I can use better vocabulary in my English") and conceptualizing ability. Those women who spoke English, and those who had very limited English capability, both identified difficulties with the English language as being a major obstacle to resettlement. This includes problems in understanding the host culture, and problems going to places, finding a stable, satisfying job, and accessing resources/services, all of which contributed to increasing their experiencing negative emotions. In addition, language difficulty interferes with the women's ability to learn and acquire new skills necessary for adapting to a new environment.

Being able to speak English was a major problem for me. Because of my poor English, I was not able to connect or communicate with other people. This had effected my ability to learn and understand about people and things around - I felt embarrassed.

(Fay, Chinese, Student,  
3 years in Canada)

I feel that a person who does not have the English language ability suffers in two areas: 1) Practical day to day living: without being able to speak the English language, one cannot even have access to or find out where one could, for example, take a course on flower arrangement. 2) Disconnected from and at the periphery of the mainstream: I don't feel that I am a participating member of the society... As an educator, it had been my responsibility to obtain first hand knowledge and hence having advance understanding of an issue. Now, not only do I have

access to knowledge only after the fact had taken place, I actually find myself totally clued out over what is taking place around me or what had happened around me, ie. no knowledge and hence no awareness or understanding and subsequently no control over my situation. Take for example, I did not find out about the train derailment until sometime later when I was at the International Centre. I feel sad because I have to depend on others for information... To this date, I still worry if everything will be all right when I deal with the mainstream people... I feel at a loss and I worry. I have no confidence in my own ability. After being here for a while, I feel better because I know my way around more and because my English has also improved yet I still experience inferiority complex because I do not understand what people are saying most of the time except when I talk to my E.S.L. teacher whom I know well and feel comfortable with...

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

In essence, problems with the English language affect the women's ability to cope with the experiences and feelings highlighted under all themes.

b) Behavioural Norms:

Behavioural norms are the non-verbal expression of "cultural traits". They are expressed through cultural cues which are specific and particular to each culture. These cultural cues are "cognitive schema" to interpret and anticipate responses grounded within the context of the Canadian mainstream culture (93). A lack of understanding of these cues contributes to feelings of being at a loss, to anxiety, isolation and alienation.

I am still trying to get used to the Canadian individualistic approach to things. Take for example, when I am in a group setting, I noticed that the Canadian way is to have each person chip in to buy coffee. A Chinese person on the other hand, would buy coffee for the entire group. You see, Chinese people are brought up in a culture which emphasizes politeness and courtesy and hence not being "picky" about little things as such. The Canadians on the other hand, takes the attitude that it is important not to "owe" someone a favour when going out.

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

Other illustrations presented by the women interviewed related to cultural conflicts derived from the confrontation with culturally different attitudes toward work. These will be discussed in the next subsection.

In addition to the above experiences, the women also experienced conflicting expectations concerning relationships with neighbours; one of the participants in particular was advised by her family that she was not to borrow salt from her neighbour as this is not the custom in Canada. Another woman stated that even after 4 years in Canada, she still finds herself on the periphery of Canadian society, excluded, a non-entity. "I feel disconnected here... I feel like a totally illiterate person - my world closes in on me." Problems in understanding others' responses was also expressed by women who spoke fluent English and had high conceptualizing abilities and hence stronger problem solving capacity. This lack of comprehension of one's new cultural environment and the behavioural cues and responses embedded in it, challenged the intrapsychic coping mechanisms of each of the women.

Because it impacted on their everyday life in the host community and many were poorly equipped to deal with it, the women were bewildered. They were incoherent, felt unsupported, lost their self-confidence, felt vulnerable and directionless. Their experiences are best described by Albrecht and Adelman in their findings:

Initial adjustment to a new culture places high demands for processing new stimuli and challenges problem solving skills... help seeking is severely curtailed by the mental fatigue of culture shock, the high uncertainty in knowing which people are appropriate sources for help, or the inability to predict their reactions to such requests. (94)

These authors explained that for the newer immigrants, the experience is even more stressful when they are not able to link attributory factors to their predicaments. In response to the inability to attach meanings to the new situations, the individual tends to internalize the attribution, which leads to further feelings of helplessness and inadequacy:

(In discussing the future)... I have been having a lot of worries - not sure whether to come or go... When I applied for my landed immigrant status the first time, I failed because I was told that I did not socialize enough... the immigration officer told me "you should try harder to socialize to Canadian life... just look at yourself." After the interview was over, I felt angry at myself for ending up thanking her for the advice, even though I was almost in tears - wondering what she meant by that. I asked myself "was she being critical of my looks and/or my clothing? Am I stupid?"

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
5 years in Canada)

This is further echoed in other case examples in this study. Further, according to Coutes and Winston, internalizations of negative

attributions are more likely to take place when the person is not coping well and has no feedback from others likely in the same situation (95). Their finding highlights the importance of developing a program strategy to better improve the women's coping mechanisms in this area.

Generally speaking, all of the women experienced varying degrees of difficulty related to behavioural norms. As a way to deal with this, two women cited reading about Canadian culture and lifestyles, and comparing them with their "back home" ways. However, for a majority of the women, the lack of a "cultural map" to explain the responses of others, in addition to an overloading of stimulation from the new environment was immobilizing.

c) Physical Environment:

Not knowing the new physical environment was identified by many of the women as a major factor contributing to the negative experiences discussed under the themes "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure", "Being Lonely and Isolated", "Being Anxious", and to a lesser degree, "Being Different".

The physical environment is used here to refer to both locale and climate. Commenting on locale, one woman stated:

I used to feel very lost and isolated because I didn't know my surroundings... I felt less at a loss and less isolated after I knew more about the environment (eg. knew how to shop, take the bus etc.). I used to live far away at the other end of the city and did not know how to take the bus and how to get to my destination after I got off the bus. I become dependent on the friends I was staying with - no freedom and no other friends.

(Candice, Chinese, Sewing Machine Operator,  
3 years in Canada)



Winnipeg's severe winter, quite unlike the climates to which the participants were accustomed, was one of the major complaints made by many of the women. Understandably, the cold, harsh, long winter prevented them from going out very often. It also limited their mobility by deterring regular usage, and thus familiarity of local transportation. As none of the women could afford to buy a car, the physical isolation led to varying degrees of social and emotional isolation.

I felt very excited with the first snow fall but my excitement subsided soon after I experienced the cold and shut in feelings. Because of the cold weather, I could not go out and I felt physically isolated. This was different to what I was used to - back home I used to go out everyday to do grocery shopping and talk to someone or I would go to the park... After I came here, I did not go out very often at the beginning because I did not know the way around and because of the weather (too cold to go out).

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

"Homeboundness" because of cold weather was thus synonymous with isolation, according to many women. However the issue of climate was more of a problem in the first few years; after that the women gradually became "acclimatized" as they found ways to cope with winter both physically and psychologically.

Learning to drive and acquiring a car were coping strategies suggested by a couple of women, to deal with problems of the physical environment. However, this was not always feasible for a number of reasons. One particular woman stated her obstacle was that she did not have the English language capability to read and pass the written test.

Others spoke of the prohibitive expenses involved in buying and maintaining a car; as well they did not know where to go for driving lessons.

d) Cultural Expectations Related to Being Single and Being Female:

The single immigrant women found that the difficulties they experienced "back home", because of cultural expectations placed on them as single persons, and as women, were compounded when they immigrated to Canada and had to face a different set of social and cultural expectations from the host population, and in addition, a slightly different set from their own ethnic communities in Winnipeg. For example, being a woman in Winnipeg, they might feel generally "freer". Yet through contacts with their own ethnic communities, they felt the impact of the clash of old ideas meeting new ideas. These clashes focussed on the role of women in society; on gender related behaviour; on male/female relationships and on ideas related to marriage:

Up until now I had had three attempts of match-making with East Indian fellows from India. I found that for me, their expectations are too traditional; they wanted dowry and wanted to know if I have property etc.

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
4 years in Canada)

While the women might wish to be "independent-minded", like mainstream Canadian women, they might not feel comfortable with acting on their desires in the face of their "back home" and ethnic communities' cultural restrictions. In fact, isolation was identified as a result of cultural restrictions imposed on them as women. This was felt to inhibit the women's attempts to explore many opportunities and options.

It is significant to note that despite other cross-cultural differences, the women perceived that all three cultures; "back home", mainstream Canadian culture, and the culture represented by the ethnic communities living in Winnipeg, expected single persons, particularly single women to marry. As a consequence, the single immigrant women felt a lot of pressure to marry (which implied a dependence on the husband and a fairly fixed role). Yet, their life situations demanded that they be self-reliant, self-determined, and self-directed, to find a "place" for themselves, and to realize their ambitions.

All of these conflicts contributed to feelings of "Being Different", "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure", "Being Anxious", "Being Isolated and Lonely", and to a lesser degree, "Feeling Trapped". The women dealt with the conflicts, they stated, by expressing the desire to find a husband. This coping mechanism will be discussed later in this chapter.

This subsection indicates that difficulties in the areas of language, behavioural norms, physical environment and cultural expectations of singleness and being female are direct results of immigrating to a different cultural environment. The experience of cultural incongruency which was manifested in these four areas led to the emotions described under all five themes.

ii) Social Support:

The interviews show that social support was critical in maintaining and developing the women's self-identities. This finding supports Bernard's work which indicates that a woman's self identity is deeply

rooted in established social relationships (96). Further, the data supports the significance of social support in affecting the single person's quality of life (97). In addition, social support was found to be a crucial stress mediator that assisted the women in coping with the major life transitions of immigration. This finding concurs with Nguyen's study (98).

The single Asian immigrant women identified both the informal support network (family/kinship and friends) and formal support network (mainstream agencies and ethnic/religious organizations) as necessary for providing them with emotional and practical support; and making them feel less isolated and lonely. In describing the relationship between isolation and loneliness and her informal support network, one woman stated:

There are quite a few reasons why I feel lonely and isolated. For example, not having someone whom I can socialize with or not having someone whom I can confide personal situations/problems with when my best girlfriend is not available or not having someone I feel I can lean on in crisis situation makes me feel isolated and lonely. Not having a husband or a male companion and not being appreciated by friends because of differences in religious beliefs does not help the situation either. I wish my mother was here. I also wish I had a companion to share my religious beliefs with.

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
4 years in Canada)

Because social support assisted the women in their transition to a new society, it helped them feel less psychologically lost and insecure:

Having family and relatives in Canada is important, especially if one does not have a husband. Their being here gives me a sense of security and confidence that I can adjust readily. I know I can be accepted right away and they will help me.

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

In addition to being cited as the major factor that led to the themes "Being Isolated and Lonely" and "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure", the absence or limited access to social support led to negative emotions discussed under "Being Anxious": "Because of a limited number of people to socialize with, I feel lonely at times. This makes me feel more withdrawn and just obsessed with more worries." The absence of a spouse, as a component of one's social support network, contributed to feelings of "Being Different". This will be discussed later in this chapter.

In the following section, various forms of social support networks (excluding spousal support) will be discussed. They are rank ordered here according to their role of importance in contributing to the different emotions described under the themes.

a) Family/Kinship Support:

I feel lonely and isolated because I miss my family and relatives in India. Family and relatives in Canada are important because their presence gives me the sense of security - knowing that I can adjust readily because I can be accepted right away and that they will help me.

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

Being lonely, according to another woman, leads to "floundering and losing one's sense of direction."

These emotional reactions had to do with the functional role of social support in providing practical and emotional support as cited by all respondents who had family and/or relatives in Canada.

My mother cleans up the place and cooks the meals. Not only does she give me practical help but also support emotionally. I can talk about my problem to my mother. She and my fiance are the two most important persons in my life who help me adjust by helping me feel less isolated & lonely.

(Fay, Chinese, Student,  
3 years in Canada)

Those women who did not have families or kin at the time of the interviews expressed being more at a loss, more insecure, more isolated and lonely, more alienated, and felt more trapped.

Furthermore, many women who had close families and kin ties "back home" also expressed concern over their well being and felt helpless over their inability to be supportive, especially in crisis situations. The absence of families and kin kindled the realization of their importance in the women's lives.

Immigration also exacerbates the already present personal/developmental issues: "I wish I was brought up here, everything would be so much easier; but I know I should be proud of who I am." Some of the younger women stated that they wished their mothers were present to provide guidance, to help make decisions, to lend an understanding ear, and to give encouragement. Two cited the desire to have their brothers here, mainly to provide male points of view. The desire to have mothers

or brothers present probably reflects these younger women's struggles in establishing their own personal identities.

For individuals with no family or kin in Canada, there was a reliance on friendship networks for socialization. Meanwhile, socializing activities for those who had families and/or relatives here tended to be family centered. The family met many of the needs normally provided by friends in North American society.

The family and kinship support cushioned major life crises and assisted individuals in their transactions with their external environments. One woman's experience illustrates a possible consequence of vulnerability without this social support:

I was once offered marriage to a millionaire - I refused him because I did not love him. If I had no family I might have been less choosy about picking the right man. It has been especially tempting just to get married when I have to struggle hard - having to work doubly hard over a lot of things...

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
5 years in Canada)

Unfortunately, the immigration policy of limiting sponsorship to immediate family limits the women's potential to expand their social support.

In essence, without the family or kinship support, the single Asian immigrant women experienced the emotions described under "Being Isolated and Lonely", "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure", and "Being Anxious".

The importance of family and kin in the immigrants experience of resettlement in a new country is supported by Nguyen's study (99). It is significant to note, however, that the study also indicates that those who had families and kin with them in the long run were more isolated from the mainstream because most of their needs were adequately met through this support network, thus precluding reaching out beyond family and kin. This supports Pearson's finding on the disadvantage of a closed family system (100). He found that most family-dominated systems tended to be dense systems which limited the type and amount of emotional support available. In addition, Hirsch (101) concluded that dense systems are disadvantageous in situations which involve significant life transitions. This point is reinforced by the responses in this study.

To cope with the lack of support from family and kin and to maintain a sense of identity, many of the women maintained regular contacts with their families and kin "back home" through correspondence and occasional telephone calls. The continuing role of family members back home as a corresponding support system was also reported for African students by Mpumlwana (102). These students often sought advice and support from family members "back home" in times of difficulty. Pearson also observed the use of correspondence in times of difficulty as a way to strengthen or maintain one's identity (103). Some women also made the occasional trip "back home" as a means to reassure, reaffirm or consolidate their self-identity depending on the degree of their adjustment in Canada. This too was previously noted in the



literature (104). Some respondents in this study attempted to import their support systems from their home country. They applied for family members to join them here in Canada. This coping strategy i.e. importation of support system is yet to be addressed in the literature.

A most prevalent coping strategy to deal with lack of family and kinship support as well as many of the other negative experiences in resettlement was the expressed desire to go "back home". "Back home" is where one could reaffirm one's identity. It is where one would derive comfort, feel accepted, and feel less at a loss. Being "back home" would help the women feel secure and less vulnerable, less lonely and isolated, and less at a loss. However, going "back home" was not the most feasible or available alternative, except in the case of two women. One made the decision to go back to India after she had obtained her degree, and the other one to go back to Hong Kong after she had acquired her citizenship. Both made the decisions after they had reviewed and revised the initial goals they set for themselves at the time of immigration. Both women felt that they did not fit into this society and would never feel quite at home here. One specifically pointed out that she would have more options and would be able to better develop her potential "back home", because of support from her family. Here, in Winnipeg, her options were limited because she was dependent on others. In essence, this type of coping mechanism, although reactive in nature, indicates desperation and bewilderment. It also suggests that the problem was so overwhelming for these women that they were

immobilized on the cognitive, affective and skill levels (105).

b) Friendship:

Friendship was cited as being very important to all respondents. It was especially important for those single women who had no, or limited, family or kinship support in Canada; hence they depended largely on the friendship network to meet their emotional and practical needs. Being able to count on a friend for assistance in crisis situations was especially important for many of these women:

Being in Winnipeg in a new environment is very stressful because I need to respond and deal with it, yet I do not have a husband, family/relatives or close friends whom I can count upon to help me out in a real crisis situation, such as when I need monies. In Hong Kong, I not only have family and relatives, but I also have good friends, close friends.

(Candice, Chinese, Sewing Machine Operator,  
3 years in Canada)

A number of women expressed the desire for a close male friend. Two of the women who had boyfriends at the time of the interview said that they felt less at a loss and less insecure once they had a boyfriend.

Having female friends (and relatives) was also cited as important by all women. They felt more comfortable in confiding personal problems to women friends, than to family members. They either felt that they would not be understood by family members ("third party are more observant and hence can see things clearer i.e. they are more objective"), and/or they did not want family members to worry about them. Others also commented that relationships with other females were special because they could have "woman talk" i.e. "talks" they would

otherwise not feel comfortable sharing with male friends, family members or kin, eg. talking about "sexy clothes"; "sexual desire". The significance of female relationships for women supports Bernard's findings (106).

Confidantes, (those to whom the women could confide personal issues) according to the women, may be girlfriends, boyfriends, husbands, and/or female family members and kin such as mothers, sisters, sisters-in-law and cousins. All of the women interviewed cited confidantes to be the most important persons in their lives because they provided the women with emotional security through practical and emotional supports. Besides being able to confide in them about personal problems, they also served as socializing companions, therefore alleviating boredom.

If I need information or practical help, my best friend would make the phone call to get the needed information for me. We also go shopping together, talk about personal/family lives, about marriage, boyfriend and girlfriend relationships, financial situations - I could go to her if I have financial problems. She is like a sister to me. She had helped me when I experienced any problems or crisis in my life. This relationship is very satisfying for me.

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
4 years in Canada)

This type of relationship was generally described to be intimate, trusting, understanding, meaningful, caring, durable, long-term, dependable and mutually committed. Those women who had confidante relationships felt less at a loss and more secure. Yet, for many women, these types of relationships were hard to come by:

I find it hard to get a trusted friend - a very important issue for me. I have had experience with friendship whereas things would seem to go well and suddenly I did not hear from them. I would then ask myself "did I do something wrong?"... I do not know how to go about getting a trusted friend. May be you (researcher) can be my friend?

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
5 years in Canada)

One of the major reasons confidante relationships had not been well developed by the women interviewed was because of their short length of stay in this country. The trusting, dependable type of friendships that some women had, were "transplanted" friendships, that is, with old friends who also happened to immigrate to Canada. As one woman put it, "this is the type of friendship that has already born fruit whilst those in Canada are just in the flowering stage." The latter friendships had not gone through the "test of time": "Friendship in Canada is still new... one needs to nurture friendship to allow a deeper understanding of each other and this is only possible with the passage of time... unlike friends "back home" with whom I can share, and we can depend on each other in crisis." Opportunities to develop true friendships became more remote the more the women worked, because they did not have much time to socialize and/or nurture long-term friendships.

The importance of female confidante relationships for women reinforces Bernard's finding (107). Moreover, the data on the significance of confidantes in husbands or boyfriends concurs with Brown and Harris' finding on their study of women and depression (108). In general, the data on confidantes concurs with Huntington's study; her study emphasized the importance of confidante relationships to women and

the traumatic impact, as result of severance of these relationships due to immigration, on the lives of the women (109).

Some women mentioned the importance of a mentor; ie. someone who could provide encouragement and guidance ("to point out if I am on the right track in the decision I made, and in my own perception of my capability") or act as a role model, especially for issues related to settlement and adjustment, and other personal life transitional issues. The role of a mentor could be embodied in one person or a number of persons. For a few women, their mothers served in that capacity. Although the supportive functions of guidance and encouragement was mentioned in some literature (110), the embodiment of these type of supportive functions in the role of a mentor (as defined in this study) in relationship to immigration and the immigrant experience have not been mentioned in other studies.

A few of the participants also stated that the importance of being with like-minded individuals: people with whom they could have intellectual and "spiritual" conversations. All felt that the absence of such individuals made them feel at the outer edges of mainstream society and hence at a "loss". In addition, like-minded individuals were also cited to be important in reducing loneliness and boredom.

Friendships made through work provided both emotional and practical supports. In fact, five out of the six participants indicated that they had established friendships of various forms through work. Further, two participants stated that they had established confidante relationships through work. The women whose jobs did not provide much opportunity to

meet and make friends (eg. domestic work) expressed feelings of isolation and loneliness.

For a number of the women, their friends were those who shared the same ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background. This type of friendship will be discussed in detail under the next subsection "Contacts Made Through Own Ethnic Community".

Even though the length of stay in Canada was an important factor in building up a friendship support network, many of the women (more so the younger women) also expressed frustration in not knowing how to go about meeting/making potential friends: "people are friendly here, but it's difficult to make friends." Some expressed their disappointment that their gestures of friendship were not reciprocated by others. In response to this, one participant stated: "I have become more choosy with making friends after being here for a while." This experience of the lack of reciprocity in friendships affected the women's confidence in making friends. The issue of reciprocity appears to be a problem mainly for the young women. It appears that for the "older women", their life experiences might have allowed them to be more realistic about relationships. While the lack of reciprocity in relationships may be universal, its impact is perhaps felt more by immigrants or other groups with no support system. Pearson summed up reciprocity in relationships, as "the proportion of individuals' relationships that are reciprocal in nature, may hold deep significance for the future stability of their social support resources, as well as giving an indication of their interpersonal adequacy." (111) However, inter-personal adequacy

is often undermined by the lack of appropriate cultural and behavioural cues necessary to make friends.

The finding in this subsection supports the concept that different types of support alleviates different types of loneliness as described by Weiss. Weiss made the distinction between the loneliness derived from social isolation, and the loneliness resulting from emotional isolation. Loneliness as a result of social isolation refers to pain caused by an absence of, or lack of involvement with one's peers, while the loneliness of emotional isolation refers to the pain caused by an absence of, or lack of involvement in mutually committed relationships. Further, the data concurs with the literature on the symptoms of these two types of loneliness - a driving restlessness and a yearning for relationships (112). Loneliness as a result of social isolation includes as well feelings of boredom and aimlessness, and feelings of exclusion. In comparison, the loneliness of emotional isolation leads to symptoms such as distress, anxiety and extreme aloneness. Hence, there is overwhelming support for the presence of another individual to share in one's daily routine; this is a crucial source of emotional security (113).

Having various types of friends for social support was identified by all of the women to be a very important coping mechanism. However, interestingly enough, very few women had verbally expressed "ways" or strategies to meet and make friends. The exceptions were two participants. One of them stated that a way of making friends was to join classes, organizations or to attend ethnic community organized

functions. The same woman also stated that for her, changing to a non-domestic job would mean better opportunities to make friends through work. However, to change jobs she needed to upgrade her education - a long (upward) struggle. The second woman purposefully reached out to single persons after having ascertained that they were more available time-wise for socializing; this alleviated her boredom. In general, it appears that in spite of the very high value the women placed on having various types of friends for social support, many appeared "stuck" cognitively or practically on how to proceed in "recruiting" friends. This is probably because they lacked the "cultural map" to interpret other people's actions in a new culture (114). This in turn reduced their chances of acquiring the necessary skills to make friends. Moreover, the associated bewilderment and tendency to blame oneself in response to the negative feedback of others, as mentioned before, reduced their confidence and hence further attempts at making friends.

c) Contacts Made Through Own Ethnic Community:

Contacts made through the women's own ethnic communities assisted in alleviating some of the negative emotions described under "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure", "Being Isolated and Lonely", and "Being Anxious". Contacts with people within their own ethnic communities were established through other individuals, or through ethnic or religious organizations which were ethnically dominated. The women expressed varying degrees of satisfaction with these contacts, depending on the degree to which they felt the contacts provided empathy, opportunities



for socialization, spiritual comforts, and important sources of assistance:

Generally speaking, I find that having social contacts in the same ethnic community is important because these people have been here longer and can help me with my career direction, and can give me the information I need. As well, they are able to tell me about gossip in the East Indian community, especially gossip about myself in the community - I do feel self-conscious about other people's perception about me in the community.

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

The importance of contacts made through one's own ethnic community is supported by Bochner (115). He found that the compatriot support networks of immigrants serve to reaffirm home values and decrease home sickness and disorientation that accompanies the adjustment process. On the other hand, certain negative experiences were commonly described:

Some of the Chinese I have met in Canada are willing to help others but I generally find them lacking in providing mutual help/support. This is specifically true of those who have been here longer. I find those who have been in Canada for a shorter length of time to be more helpful. Generally, I find the Chinese here to be gossipy, envious of others, selfish, back-biting, and like to place emphasis on material possession. Some of them also like to show off or try to keep up with others. They form cliques and in-groups which are hard to break up and are not very helpful.

(Candice, Chinese, Domestic Worker,  
3 years in Canada)

This finding has not been found in the literature reviewed.

However, while contacts with individuals in one's own ethnic community appeared to decrease isolation for these women, the data

indicates that these contacts' capacity to provide satisfying support was perceived to be somewhat limited: "The people I know cannot be of much help to me because they themselves are going through the same adjustment problems I am having now." As well, while the women did not feel particularly isolated themselves because of their involvement with their own ethnic communities, the consequences of confining their contacts to the mentioned groups only led to isolation from the mainstream society. This is also found by Albrecht and Adelman who reported that dependence on ethnic support systems insulate the new immigrants from cultural change (116). Moreover, others have further suggested that long-term reliance on such a support system may prevent adjustment in the host country (117). This type of isolating experience was especially true for women who had limited English language capabilities, whose employment was limited to jobs not requiring the English language or Canadian work experiences, and/or who appeared to have a more heightened sense of awareness of their positions as "cultural transits". Often the women's limited language capabilities and their employment status meant limited access or opportunities to develop skills to access the mainstream; for these women their contacts with their own ethnic communities provided the only viable alternate source of support outside of their families and kin. As well, in comparison to those women whose contacts were limited only to individuals and systems within their own ethnic communities, the women who were in the process of establishing more contacts with the mainstream experienced accentuated feelings of isolation from the mainstream. This was because the contacts with the mainstream seem to

reinforce the increasing awareness of their "misfit" positions ie. the feeling of lack of coherence when trying to "fit in" with the different cultures and different worlds.

For future studies, the merits of contacts with one's own ethnic community and the acculturation process into the ethnic community and its organizations need to be reassessed.

In essence, during the initial resettlement phase, contacts with the women's own ethnic communities helped to alleviate some of the negative emotions described under the mentioned three themes. However, in the long run, these type of contacts could also act as barriers to accessing the mainstream support systems.

d) Mainsteam Agency/Organization:

English As A Second Language (ESL) teachers were cited in some situations to be important sources of emotional and practical support. In addition to assisting the women with their English language skills, E.S.L. teachers very often took a personal interest in helping their students deal with settlement and adjustment issues. Besides the teachers, staff at various settlement agencies had also been approached by the women for practical help, such as giving out information about certain services and programs. Women who had contacts with E.S.L. teachers and agency personnel had more knowledge of services and resources than those who did not. Most of the women, however, reported that they did not know how to make their needs for certain services known, or how to find out what services and resources were available, and how to access them.

I feel that I do not know much about services and organizations. It is difficult to depend on my family. They have to work and many have to lose a day's pay if they go with me. Yet I have difficulties in accessing services - even when I get to the agency, I still get lost in the shuffling of services and I do not know what forms to fill out and how to fill them out.

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

Almost all of them stated that they needed to know more about available services and resources to help them cope better. These were specifically important in the areas of employment, job training and educational upgrading. One woman pointed out that if she would have known more about a special education program and other training opportunities it would have allowed her to better plan her future career. The same woman also stated that prior knowledge about a particular program's admission criteria would have helped her to better prepare for the admission interview. Other women stated that they relied on certain individuals in the settlement agencies to help them cope or to refer them to the appropriate resource. The names of these contact persons were obtained through word of mouth. However, one domestic worker obtained her knowledge about services from the public announcements on daytime T.V. which she watched when doing the domestic chores.

e) Neighbors:

Some women missed the mutual support network provided by neighbours ("neighbourliness") which they had in their countries of origin. However problems with our long, harsh winter and language barriers do

not always encourage or facilitate close interactions between neighbours. In addition, it seems that the physical arrangement of the neighbourhood (eg. whether houses are closely located), the short duration of residence in any one neighbourhood combined with the individualism that reigns in Canada's culture and our highly mobile society, do not facilitate establishing "neighbourly" contacts. This contributes to the isolation experience.

The importance of a social support network in providing emotional and practical supports, was frequently cited in this study. This finding concurs with Huntington's study on the overall significance of the social support network in defining and supporting one's identity (118). Further, the data corroborates Bernard's finding on the importance of social support in maintaining and supporting a woman's self-identity (119). Moreover, the data finds that because of the women's deep rootedness in social relationships, the severance of ties as a result of immigration bore a negative impact on their lives. This was also found by Scarfe (120). In addition, the data reinforces Barkas' finding which shows that without a mate, a single person is more susceptible to depressive consequences of life strains; this is worsened by a lack of an alternative support system (121).

The data also reinforces Hirsch's conceptualization of the social network as a personal community that roots and supports critical social identities (122). His work provides another perspective for examining the intricate processes of preserving critical social identities and of identity loss. According to Hirsch, social identities evolve and change

over one's life span and are related to roles and role performances as well as various aspects of one's self-concept. That is, to be an educator, a music lover, to be wise, or to be single and widowed, such as in Bonnie's situation, necessarily involves having certain kinds of interactions or relationships with others. "Without sharing our activities with others, whether by word or deed, our identities would be tenuous and at times illusory" (123). In applying this idea to this study, the data suggests that the absence of the women's pre-immigration support network combined with the absence of a similar support system in Canada, prevented the women from having a sense of continuity in their roles and in their personal development. This continuity, according to Hirsch, is especially important during major life changes, because rebuilding a satisfactory identity depends to a large degree on having a personal community that supports it. Hirsch's study is supported by the findings in this study, which show that immigration disrupts and fragments the women's self-identity and natural self development. At the same time, it inhibits them from redefining and restructuring their identities. This led to feelings of bewilderment, being at a loss, being "in limbo", anxiousness, helplessness, loneliness, aloneness, isolation and directionless.

In sum, the experiences of these single Asian immigrant women support the findings by other researchers on the importance of social support in supporting one's identity, therefore structuring one's reality (124). The significance of social support illustrated in this study is reflective of the combined experience of being single, an immigrant and an Asian woman.

This section on Immigration-Related Factors has illustrated the importance of cultural congruency and social support in adjustment and resettlement in a new cultural environment for the single Asian immigrant women. The findings indicate that the immigration process and problems in the area of social support challenge, strain and threaten the women's self identity.

#### 4.32 SOCIO-ECONOMIC-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE HOST COUNTRY

Adjustment to the host community is affected by the social economic and political conditions within that environment. The response to new immigrants by the host environment, in terms of discrimination or toleration, is strongly affected by the host community's economic well-being. That is to say, in times of economic well-being the host community will be more tolerant of and open to new immigrants, but more threatened by them in times of high unemployment. The political environment of the host community also determines how immigrants are absorbed or accepted (125). Further, the political and economic status of any environment affects its sense of social responsibility towards the new immigrants. This may be expressed through funding for job creation programs and language training courses for new immigrants (126). Employment and economics, and discrimination are two salient issues which impacted negatively on the lives of the single Asian immigrant women in Winnipeg.

i) Employment and Economics:

Employment and economic status contributed most towards "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure", "Being Anxious" and to a lesser degree, "Being Isolated and Lonely".

By immigrating to Canada, many of the women lost the economic security they had had in their countries of origin. For instance, some of the women who came from rural areas possessed land which they could have easily "lived off" by farming it or renting it out. After arriving in Canada, however, these women experienced many difficulties related to employment and their economic status. In most cases these single women found themselves in the disadvantaged position of needing to build their households and other types of security from "scratch".

A job is very important for me as a single person because I need everything: food, clothing, housing... by coming to Canada, I am not better off because I am faced with problems of having to adjust here... one of them being everyone here has to work because they all started from "scratch"...

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

Once in Winnipeg, these women found themselves placed in a situation where they needed more than "just" a job. They required a secure, stable job outside of the home which would provide them with a livelihood. They required the necessary financial security to protect themselves, and perhaps also to support their families here and/or families who remained "back home". The importance of employment in providing the single person with a basic living concurs with the study done by Stein, who finds that as a single person, employment is most often of paramount importance (127). In addition, the urgency of



acquiring a job to meet basic survival needs is best explained by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (128).

Unlike "back home" where the women had a well structured support system which they could count on especially in a crisis situation, there they had no choice of whether or not to work:

As an immigrant here, I really don't have a choice whether to work or not because I started up with nothing. In India, one family member only needed to work and can support the whole family. Because we had property and relatives in India, there I had a choice of whether to work outside of the home or not...

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

This placed a tremendous burden on these single immigrant women.

When searching for jobs, some women stated, they had problems finding employment suitable to their academic qualifications and career aspirations. They attributed this to a lack of Canadian life skills and work experience. The inability to find appropriate work, coupled with the feeling of insecurity and apprehension about the future prompted them to take any jobs which happened to be immediately available; most often these jobs were menial. Even though obliged to take up such kinds of work, quite a number of women expressed their dislike for being in "low-class" jobs.

Soon after I arrived here, my parents asked me to work because we needed the money. I complied to their wishes and worked as a sewing machine operator. I felt very hurt because it was a menial labour job which I had never done before and I hated it... Where I come from, I was respected for my education and the volunteer (philanthropic) work I did.

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

This was a problem particularly for those who came from a culture and a social class background which: 1) did not expect women to work outside the home and/or 2) did not approve of their being employed outside of a white collar or professional position.

With the exception of one woman, all of the participants stated that because of the high cost of living in Canada, a family needed more than one salary earner to provide for an adequate living. In fact, because some of the women's family members were not able to obtain employment or stable employment (due to reasons that will be discussed in the next subsection), many of these women became the main breadwinners in their households, if not the sole breadwinner in some instances. Even when they were not in the wage sector, they worked in the home, mainly babysitting and running the household for the main breadwinner. In addition to supporting themselves and their families, some also shouldered the responsibility of paying back the debts incurred as a result of immigrating to this country. This often included the plane fares.

For quite a number of women, having family members dependent on them, combined with their sense of duty to support these dependents, led to overwhelming feelings of being "pulled and pushed" by their responsibilities.

...(in discussing the burden of having to support the entire family)... In the first two years, I felt stressed... I started to swear and I was not happy at all. I resented the family...

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
4 years in Canada)

Unfortunately for a majority of the women there was almost no indication of a future improvement in their economic situations. They were trapped in low paying, non-unionized jobs which offered limited job security and/or advancement opportunities (see chart on page 32). Employment counsellors did not offer adequate support for these immigrant women to find better jobs and/or retraining opportunities (this will be discussed later in this chapter).

Although the sample of women in this study was not randomly selected, they were referred from various sources. The findings of this study nevertheless support Arnopoulos study, which indicated that immigrant women are disproportionately employed in low paying, non-unionized jobs such as domestic work, chambermaid duties and sewing machine operation (129). Boyd noted that this was in spite of immigrant women displaying a higher pattern of labour force participation than the Canadian born women (130). She attributed this to the double negative status of being foreign born and female. Boyd further concluded that the double negative of being female and foreign born in the area of occupational attainment is further aggravated if the woman is not American or British. Furthermore, the women's difficult financial position (and thus social position) as a result of being employed in low paying jobs, could not be even slightly improved if she were a sponsored immigrant. This will also be discussed in detail in the next subsection.

To ensure an adequate income for themselves and their families, many of the women needed to work overtime or to hold two jobs. This was

especially true for some of the women who were the sole salary earners for their families. Being in such a precarious situation made the women more acutely aware of their vulnerability. In addition, being overworked had other ramifications: the women had limited time to develop and nurture long-term friendships ("In Canada everybody needs to work because of the high cost of living and hence is always very busy... and has no time to visit and socialize in order to develop friendship"), and relationships with men. Social and emotional isolation were often subsequent consequences. In addition, a few women also had limited time to upgrade their job skills, hence they became "stuck" in the same type of employment, however undesirable it might be, with little chance for advancement. The ghettoization of immigrants congregated in low paying jobs that provide little or minimal job security, seemed to be a vicious circle.

In spite of the difficulties and responsibilities all of the women encountered in the area of employment and economics, the women who were employed also expressed positive experiences about having a job. For instance, having a job reduced the feelings of being "at a loss", and restored the women's sense of dignity through self-sufficiency:

One of the main reasons I quite like it here is the better job opportunities and therefore better money. I had a hard life in the Philippines because I did not have enough money for food or clothings. Having a job is very important for me as a single person because it allows me to be self-sufficient...

(Deborah, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
3 years in Canada)

Being self-sufficient meant not being dependent on anyone. Their

improved self-esteem helped them feel more confident and secure, and in more control of their own lives.

The major reasons I like it here are the better job opportunities... better life. Especially because I can lead an independent life here and not be dependent on relatives. Also, the government here helps a lot with education and finding a job.... I was happy to leave India because of these reasons... especially for the chance to have a job and not be dependent on people, not owe people money.

(Barbara, East Indian, Sewing Machine Operator,  
5 years in Canada)

Having a job allowed the women to have the financial means to improve their living conditions and lifestyle. It created more options (for example, "having one's own place"; "not having to tolerate living under someone else's conditions", if living in someone else's home; "going back to school" or visiting or returning "back home"). A job also provided women with the opportunities to "be stimulated by and exposed to more things in the world", as well as the chance to meet potential friends, thereby reducing isolation. This latter finding reinforces the studies done by Warren (131), Gladieux (132) and Stein (133). Further, a job acted to "kill time - something to do" and hence the women felt less restless and bored. It also provided the women with the opportunity to be "out there working in the society", hence enhancing one's feeling of being a participating member of the society. Moreover, a job helped the women to improve their English, Canadian life and social skills, as well as to learn about Canadian technological skills. Having a job provided the women with the opportunities to use some of their previous training and qualifications. Finally, a job

enabled these women to gain emotional satisfaction as they met the challenges their work provided, and improved their work performance. Among the participants, two women specifically identified being in the wage sector as the factor that made them feel less excluded, less marginal, less on the periphery of mainstream Canadian society. In contrast, for one woman who was not in the wage sector at the time of the interview, the intensity of her isolation was even more pronounced than for those who were employed. Two other women felt that having a job was important because it allowed them to sponsor their fiances and thus not be alone.

A way of dealing with the deep sense of "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure", "Being Anxious" and "Being Lonely and Isolated", which resulted from problems with employment and finances, was to find a job (if unemployed) or a "better" job.

In the past few years, the most difficult thing for me has been to be able to keep a job... Having a job is definitely very important as a single person because I need money to support myself...

...(in discussing her insecure feelings)... I don't know why I have no good qualifications, especially when it comes to having and keeping a job. I feel dispensable - they can fire me any time they want to... it makes me feel vulnerable... I feel I need to find a better job - this will make me feel more secure.

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
5 years in Canada)

A "better job" is used here to include a better paying job or a stable permanent job (instead of temporary employment), or in the case of under employment, a job more suitable to their academic and previous work

experience; or any move to fulfilling their personal employment aspirations.

In order to move into the mainstream society, some women stated that it is necessary to be selective in choosing an occupation, preferably to find one which could lead to a career and/or provide contacts with the mainstream. Two women did volunteer work in mainstream organizations as part of their overall strategies. However, many felt that the key to finding a "better" job was to improve their English language skills, and/or to take training courses to increase their marketability and their incomes. About taking courses:

I feel that it is very important to do upgrading in order to be able to change my career. I feel it is time to change jobs now before I get older. I find that Canadians always upgrade themselves - carrying books around even in such cold weather. This has inspired me to upgrade myself, so that I can find a better paying and a more interesting job as well as helping me to be more aware of the world around me.

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
5 years in Canada)

However, some of the women indicated that taking courses was not always feasible. Most often they were too exhausted ("overworked"; "overburdened") both physically and emotionally, by activities directed towards meeting their basic needs. Unfortunately, as one Chinese woman pointed out, unless a woman had a stable income, her feeling of being psychologically lost would make it difficult for her to concentrate wholeheartedly on language training. Very often the women were caught in this "no win" situation: to acquire "better" English language skills in order to get a "better" job, one needs, as one woman put it,

to get the type of job that provides one with the opportunity to practice and improve English (thus allow movement into the mainstream). But most of the jobs that provide contact with mainstream also require someone with the training and previous work experience before they're hired.

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

Those who actually applied for training programs most often found themselves ineligible for the program. Others either did not know about the existence of such programs, or did not know how to access them (this will be further discussed in the next subsection). As a result, the women felt unsupported and more alienated.

This subsection indicates that employment and economics impacted on many aspects of the women's resettlement experiences in Canada. It also indicates that singleness and employment status significantly influenced the quality of their lives. The latter finding specifically reinforces Campbell's study (134). It also reveals that although the women had the intellectual know-how and determination to solve their difficulties and improve their personal circumstances, other variables that were beyond their realm of control could leave them "stuck" and immobilized.

A future, longitudinal study on the psychological impact of under-employment on the resettlement process for single immigrant women would provide a better understanding of the needs in this group, and hence enable the development of appropriate intervention strategies.



ii) Discrimination:

Many women expressed feelings of anxiety and alienation. Although both feelings are inevitable consequences of immigration, their emotional reactions in these areas were compounded by the lack of acceptance by the host country and/or individuals within their own ethnic communities in Winnipeg. This resistance took two forms: discriminatory attitudes in individuals, and institutionalized discrimination built into government policies and programs. The women's accounts of the reactions of individuals and of Canadian bureaucracies to them will be discussed here.

Discrimination (either covert or overt) was identified by some women as the reason they were "Feeling Different" and "Feeling Anxious", and to a lesser degree, "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure". Some women experienced discrimination because of their their skin colour and/or religious practices: "I experienced discrimination by being Sikh, especially after the Air Canada incident." The women were also discriminated against because of their language: "We were all told to go to hell because we didn't speak English". Discrimination by individuals from their own ethnic community were also reported by a couple of women. They stated that they were "looked down upon" by some people from their own community: one woman felt that it had to do with her employment status as a domestic worker, and another felt it was due to her shorter length of stay in Canada, and because she was less fluent in English. As well, there was the subtle discrimination against them because of their single status.

Although the women did not experience discrimination on the job,

they did report the discrimination that their families and kin had faced in finding jobs. Most of these instances related to language capabilities and ethnic background. The absence of perceived discrimination on the job could be due to the fact that the majority of the women were employed in isolating jobs such as domestic work, or in congregates, such as sewing machine operator units, where most of the inter-personal contacts were limited to those with fellow immigrants. That is, this type of employment not only precluded contact with the mainstream but was also perceived to be of minimal threat to mainstream Canadians.

As was mentioned, although a few women expressed a desire or made previous attempts to improve their economic and employment situation through language or job training courses, the experience of being "overworked" and "overburdened" because they had to support their families and kin, meant that they had no physical or emotional energy left to pursue this goal. If the women were sponsored immigrants, government assistance programs were of little help since they were not eligible. A participant's entire family faced undue hardships because of this discriminatory practice (135). Those women who were able to take training courses, found themselves ineligible for some of the programs because of discriminatory criteria such as the ability to speak and read English or French and have the equivalent of certain levels of formal education. Moreover, as sponsored immigrants they were not eligible for the CEIC language training or travel allowance as previously mentioned. A few women who were eligible for training programs were never made aware of their availability. In addition, employment counsellors and

immigration officers were cited as insensitive to the women's linguistic and cultural difficulties. As government representatives, their attitude had a long lasting impact on the women, in fact, discouraged any future help-seeking attempts.

Discrimination, whether overt or covert, bears devaluing messages and has significant impact on one's self-esteem. In all, the affects of discrimination by individuals led to a loss of confidence. The lack of confidence which inhibited the women from seeking help to cope with feelings of insecurity and alienation was further aggravated by the lack of support displayed by government service personnel and expressed through its programs and policies.

In dealing with some of the issues on discrimination, especially related to skin colour and religion, some women resigned themselves to accepting these "realities" and "worked it through" in their own personal way. The discriminatory attitude by the government personnel was interpreted as a personal rejection by this country. Some women reacted by blaming themselves for the language and cultural barriers they were experiencing. This in turn led to further feelings of inadequacy and alienation. On the other hand, some women reacted with anger and became determined to work harder to show mainstream Canadians that they could "make it" here, and even do "better" than "them". However, the means of "improving" oneself was often hindered by the conditions mentioned above.

The two coping styles of accepting the "realities" and self-blaming seemed to reflect difficulties on the cognitive, affective and

skill levels because the responses were mainly passive and self-directed. On the other hand, the coping style of reacting with anger and to prove to others seemed to reflect difficulty on the cognitive level and was reactive rather than proactive and social action oriented.

In essence, discrimination in various forms and in various ways added to the difficulty of resettlement for all of the above.

This section illustrates that the women's experience in the area of employment and economics, and discrimination affects their resettlement in their host community. Although each experience is individual and personal, the commonality of the women's experiences reflects the nature of the environment in which these experiences are embedded. A non-supportive environment, such as that described by the women, impedes rather than facilitates the adjustment process. The women's experiences illustrated in this section reflect the combined experience of being single, a female and an immigrant.

#### 4.33 PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

This subsection describes various personal characteristics of the single Asian immigrant women, which influence their resettlement experience. They will be illustrated and discussed under the following headings:

- i) Involuntary Immigration and Incongruency in Expectations
- ii) Length of Stay in Winnipeg
- iii) Personality Characteristics
- iv) Age and Life Experience
- v) Socio-Economic Status Prior to Immigration
- vi) Being Single

i) Involuntary Immigration and Incongruency in Expectations:

Some of the women who had ambivalent feelings about immigrating to Winnipeg in the first place and/or found that there was incongruency between what they found and what they had expected, expressed "Feeling Trapped."

A few women stated that they had come to Winnipeg with their family, but had limited choice in the matter; the alternative was to be left behind alone.

I felt ambivalent about coming to Canada. I had to leave my boyfriend behind. I came because my parents decided to come when my brother sponsored my family to come here. I was eligible to come with my parents because I was under 21 - I did not want to be left alone so I decided to come with the family....

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
5 years in Canada)

Whether immigrating was voluntary or not, for many women life in Canada was not what they had expected. As expressed by Patricia:

When I came to Canada, I expected that I would go to College, not end up supporting the whole family...

Another woman:

I disagree with my parents' initial feeling that we would be better off in Canada. I do not feel that the family is better off here because we have been faced with many problems of having to adjust here...

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

Drastic differences between the post-relocation environment and what the women were used to often made adjustments very traumatic:

The first few months to the first year of settlement was the most difficult time for me... Besides having no family or friends to talk about problems, I was also not used to the environment (bus service, shopping, etc.) and had problem with the English language...

(Candice, Chinese, Sewing Machine Operator,  
3 years in Canada)

The voluntary and involuntary nature of their immigration and the extent to which their expectations were met, either enhanced the adjustment process or aggravated it. For instance, immigration was a positive experience for the younger women who immigrated to "try their wings" or break away from their ("restrictive") families and to be "on their own". For these women, immigration to a more individualistic society meant greater assertion of their independence from a more traditional, collective culture. For a small percentage of the women, immigration to Winnipeg provided them with the opportunity to get away from family problems, a decision about which they expressed ambivalent

feelings in retrospect. For example, a young woman who had been looking forward to immigrating to Canada so that she could leave family problems and assert her independence from her family stated: "I can do my own thing here... I have learned to be more independent and take more responsibility after I got here... still it is hard to adjust."

Having their pre-immigration expectations unmet, having to deal with unexpected situations, and having limited social support networks in the new country increased the negative impact of their experiences, even for those women who chose to immigrate initially and had realistic and positive expectations about the move. Yet, they could not go back to their countries of origin because of their feelings of pride (losing face because of being seen as not being able "to make it"), lack of financial resources to do so, their personal situation having not improved as hoped, as well as initial goals of immigration having not been achieved, e.g. making more money, obtaining a better job than "back home", completing education, etc. Often even what started as voluntary immigration became irrevocable. Those who immigrated to Canada on a totally voluntary basis, expressed considerably less negative emotions even though there was incongruency between their pre-immigration expectations and post immigration findings.

This subsection reveals that while both factors of voluntary/involuntary immigration and differences in pre/post immigration expectations were important explanatory factors of the women's responses as described under "Feeling Trapped", the issue of voluntary/involuntary immigration appears to, on the whole, bear a more significant impact on

the women's resettlement experience in Canada than does the issue of incongruency in expectations. Further studies in these two areas and its impact on resettlement should yield interesting results.

ii) Length of Stay in Winnipeg:

Many women stated that the first three years were the worst for them. This supports the findings which indicated that the first three years are the most isolating for immigrants (136). During this period, "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure", "Being Isolated and Lonely" and "Being Anxious" describe many of their experiences. Although the degree of adjustment to various issues differed with each woman, generally speaking, after being in Winnipeg for the first few years, the women felt more in control of their situations. This was because they knew their way around, had a stable job, had established a set of informal and perhaps formal support networks, improved their English language and had found ways to cope with the cold weather. Although other resettlement issues might have still been outstanding after their first few years here, the women appeared to have achieved a certain degree of mastery over the basic survival areas. Crucial in assisting the women to better cope with the life transitional issues were their social support networks. Unfortunately, these, in most cases, had not yet been well developed nor had they undergone the "test of time", thus explaining the host of experiences described under the themes.

For some of the women who were domestic workers the problems experienced in resettlement in the first few years were compounded by their status as temporary workers in Canada. The process of waiting



three years for final approval for their landed immigrant status added further stress.

The old saying that "time has a way of healing things", is appropriate here. The "healing web" or the social support in the case of the single immigrant women, would need to undergo the "test of time" to develop and satisfactorily meet the needs of the women. This is especially true of close, intimate, trusting and dependable relationships for which many women yearned. The relationship between the length of stay in a new country and the development of a viable, satisfying social support network is yet to be addressed in the literature.

iii) Personality Characteristics:

Some women identified certain personality characteristics in themselves as either facilitating or impeding the resettlement process. These, according to them, had led to the experiences discussed under the themes "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure", "Being Lonely and Isolated" and to a lesser degree, "Being Anxious" and "Being Different". The following profile of personality characteristics, identified by the women themselves, acted as positive aids: sheer determination "to make" it and personal faith that things would work out; a strong drive to work hard; being goal oriented; being self-reliant and independent-minded; having an optimistic outlook; having a extroverted and friendly personality ("easy to make friends"); self-discipline (in applying energy to improve one self through hard work and education); curiosity (a desire to learn, especially about Canadian

culture and life-styles); tapping one's own resources and problem-solving ability; and religious faith. On the negative side, one woman stated that she had lost her fighting spirit as a result of feeling disconnected with the mainstream society ("I feel that I am floating like a buoy in a wide open sea"). Another woman identified one of the personality characteristics which had prevented her from integrating into mainstream Canadian society as her shy and unassertive personality:

I am being seen by many as quiet and shy - my counsellor told me that I should talk more because Canadian girls talk more. She made me feel that I would fit in better in Canadian society if I were more outgoing - this is a very important issue for me.

(Sally, East Indian, Chambermaid,  
2 years in Canada)

Although personality characteristics either assisted or impeded resettlement, the data indicates that the woman's "personality traits" were also greatly affected by her total immigration experience. In other words, an outgoing assertive woman in her country of origin might find herself becoming a shy and unassertive person after immigration to a totally new "environment". Future studies on the relationship between the immigrant's personality characteristics and resettlement would add knowledge in this area.

iv) Age and Life Experience:

These two characteristics were identified as reasons that led to the emotions highlighted under the themes "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure" and "Being Anxious".

Many women identified their age and life experiences at the time of

immigration as two of the most significant factors affecting their lives in Canada, particularly during the initial stage of settlement and adaptation:

One of the most difficult things for me in the first few years here was to be able to keep a job; I never had this type of job (domestic worker) before, and I did not feel secure about myself - I had no life experience in handling difficult situations and I had no other support except my sister.

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
5 years in Canada)

The importance of a woman's age and life experiences at the time of immigration was specifically relevant in the case of the younger women whose experience as an immigrant intertwined with the developmental stages they were in ie. experiencing life transition from youth to adulthood. For example, two of the younger women who immigrated to Canada with their families suddenly found themselves having to work outside the home (for the first time) because of economic necessity. For the "older" women, two found that their age and previous life experiences provided them with the life skills and confidence in their abilities to deal with the major unanticipated changes and the complex new problems arising from their immigration.

One of the participants took on parental responsibilities for her younger siblings after immigrating. The role transfer was due to her becoming the family's major breadwinner, as well as her knowledge of Canadian society; her command of the English language was best in the family. This meant changes in the relationships within the family structure; it also forced the younger woman to mature quickly into adulthood.

...(in discussing her role as a main breadwinner in the family)... because we had no money and could not be dependent on my brother who sponsored us... and my parents not being able to find stable jobs, I had to work steadily since I came to Canada... to support the family... and to pay back the plane fares. I was forced to mature faster... (in discussing family dependency on her)... especially my three siblings... they feel closer to me than to my parents. However, my parents do not resent this role I am in... They are very understanding and involve me in major decisions and discussions related to buying things. My parents trust my decisions and judgement. For example they no longer fuss about my coming home late.

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
4 years in Canada)

Uprooting, "transplanting", and resettlement in a new country are major life crises even for the most well prepared and most resourceful individuals. The younger women who lacked life experience were inadequately equipped with the life skills to cope with major and unexpected changes accompanying immigration. Although Huntington had indicated that women who immigrate when they are in their forties are more susceptible to the stress related to immigration (137), no studies have yet determined the affect of life experience and resettlement on the single immigrant woman.

v) Socio-Economic Status Prior to Immigration:

Loss of socio-economic status is a pervasive consequence of immigration. The data indicates that although the majority of the women had a minimum of high school education, they were employed in blue collar positions. Sally's University degree from India, for example, was recognized as equivalent of only Grade 11. For the women like

Sally, immigrating to Winnipeg meant a loss of socio-economic status since their previous education and work experience became irrelevant.

In spite of their limited English language capability, the women who had higher education could better conceptualize their life experiences and had stronger problem solving skills. This is exemplified by Bonnie, who after having concretely identified that one of the sources of her boredom was the absence of friends, systematically proceeded to try to "recruit" friends. These women also appear to experience higher levels of frustration as a result of i) the discrepancy between their present job situations and their previous employment status "back home", and ii) the discrepancy between the intellectual awareness of how to problem solve and the means to achieve their goals (eg. the English language ability). Included in the change of socio-economic status is their change of social class. For example, coming from the middle-upper class in India, Sally had to work as a chambermaid here. Unlike Canada, in the more traditional societies one is born to his/her social class. To maintain one's previous social class in Canada not only requires the development of certain Canadian life skills and social skills, acquired through interactions with the mainstream, but it also requires time to develop the "appropriate" class network and the occupation to access and maintain the network (138). According to the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, the minority worker and new immigrant is often the last to be hired and the first to be let go (139); this makes it even more difficult for someone born into a certain social class "back home" to achieve the same status

here. Complementing the women's social class were the various organizations they belonged to prior to immigration. For instance, Bonnie was a member of the Hong Kong Teacher's Association, but could not join the Teacher's Society in Manitoba because she was not eligible to practice her profession here. Yet being a teacher was a very significant part of her identity. In general, the women who came from a higher socio-economic status "back home" found that the loss of socio-economic status added to the already stressful experience of immigration. However, a few participants who were from a lower socio-economic status in their countries of origin, welcomed the increased employment opportunities here. These women also expressed satisfaction over the higher salaries in Canada.

The loss of the immigrant women's socio-economic status often resulted in feeling insecure, at a loss, directionless and vulnerable. One way of coping with the loss was to find a "better" job; this was discussed in the previous subsection. Future studies on the loss of socio-economic status and its impact on resettlement for the single immigrants in general would add knowledge to this area.

vi) Being Single:

Many of the women expressed a desire to have a husband in response to the following: a) the cultural and social expectations surrounding marriage; b) a need for a reliable and stable source of emotional and practical security, similar to that provided by families and kin; and c) a need for a socially sanctioned sexual partner. One woman summed it up: "I used to think that maybe if I meet a guy and get married it would solve all of my problems."

In the case of cultural and social expectations surrounding marriage, two of the women expressed their acute awareness of others' curiosity about their singleness. This curiosity intensified their sense of being at variance, and being an outsider:

A lot of time I found myself not wanting to go to a social setting because when other people showed up as a couple, they made me feel self-conscious. I felt that the couple would look so very proud and full of vitality. This made me feel even more self reflective and I felt like a single, lonely boat all alone in the sea - it made me feel at a loss and sad. The times that I did go out to the social functions, I felt lonely and alone and felt inferior.

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

The women also felt stigmatized or discriminated against, however subtly, because of their single status:

I feel that I am different than individuals in a couple relationship, but I am not really worried about how people think about me. I am more concerned about my own feelings surrounding my being alone. I feel that both the Chinese and Canadian mainstream cultures emphasize coupling.

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

Both the Canadian mainstream and the women's own ethnic minority cultures saw marriage as desirable for women. The single women, in turn, internalized these expectations: "I feel that I should have a husband, all women do." This finding of women being psychologically pressured to marry concurs with Bardwick's study (140). Also, it appears that some of the women who were in their late twenties and early thirties expressed a more urgent desire for male companions to "settle down" and to start a family with ("to leave my mark"). Unlike the women

outside of this age group, they appeared to be responding to the cultural and social expectations that women should be married by a certain age.

Having been raised to be "marriage material" and having internalized these expectations led to a psychological dependency on men to meet their needs. As a result, the women experienced loneliness when they failed to get married. The desire for marriage in order to achieve emotional security is best illustrated in the following statement:

(In discussing the importance of the roles of family, relatives and friends to the single Asian immigrant women)... Without a family, life would be lonely unless one is married... if one is married, life will be full with my own family, husband and his relatives. I would want to get married because otherwise I might feel lonely and alone, make wrong decisions and/or rush into decisions.

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
4 years in Canada)

Being single does not provide me with a sense of security because I have no one to talk to and consult with, especially with regards to important matters...

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

Being socialized to feel that without a husband, the women would face a life of loneliness, reinforces O'Brien's findings as cited earlier (141). Isolation and loneliness as consequences of singleness in this study also corroborates the work done by Weiss (142), Pearlin (143) and Barkas (144). Given the literature on singles and single women, it would be interesting to find out if the same experiences apply to single men.



The data also indicates the importance of practical supports in a marital relationship:

It is harder to be a single woman than be a married woman. Married women have more options eg. the husband can support the wife to allow her going to school because husband and wife are interdependent on each other - unlike single woman who are all alone... That is mainly due to economic reasons, it is difficult for single people to take chances in life eg. to change career, take courses, etc. because they have no husband to help out...

(Candice, Chinese, Sewing Machine Operator,  
3 years in Canada)

Like family and kinship ties, a formalized marriage relationship legitimizes having someone whom the woman could depend and count on, especially in crisis situations.

... being widowed and single now without a husband means that I have no one to talk to... and no one to depend on and lean on especially in case of a crisis; I feel I have lost a sense of security and feel at a loss.

(Bonnie, Chinese, Retired Educator,  
4 years in Canada)

I feel that it is important to have someone whom I can count on - people such as family members and/or a husband. If one does not have family or someone to rely on, one could at least depend on the husband or would feel isolated... One of the reasons I feel isolated is because I do not have someone I can count on/lean on... especially in a crisis situation.

(Patricia, Filipino, Sewing Machine Operator,  
4 years in Canada)

An illustration of the importance of having a spouse to help cope with a crisis situation follows:

If I were married, I might have handled the problem of my being swindled somewhat better because I would at least have a companion to help me deal with problems and feel less lonely... ordinary friends cannot be around all the time... and my family is not here...

(Candice, Chinese, Sewing Machine Operator,  
3 years in Canada)

These findings support the study which finds that being single without a mate increases an individual's vulnerability to mental health problems and that life crises are worsened if the individual does not have other social supports (145).

As a result of wanting a husband because of feelings of loneliness and isolation, and a desire for emotional and/or financial security, there was a tendency to be less "choosy" in picking their future mates.

Two women admitted to such pitfalls. One of them stated:

Sometimes I feel I am struggling financially and emotionally, I would want a husband more than ever. Especially when I feel frustrated about the job situation and lifestyle especially when watching the rich, I would then dream of having my own car and my own home - I wish I am rich and able to afford them. Now I have nothing, no investment, no house or home. I feel that I need to get a man to pay for my lifestyle and support, just like my parents relationship where my mother married my father to gain a sense of security in life... (chuckling)... In fact, my girlfriend told me that she married this guy for his \$13 per/hour pay cheque; she doesn't love him... It's a good thing that I have a sister, everyone told me so. I think I probably would just get married and not having to worry about everything (job, future and so on).

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
5 years in Canada)

As well, it seems that the less social support the women had, the more they felt the need for male companions. For example, a professional woman in her 30's, who was working as a sewing machine operator at the time of the interview, stated that before coming to Canada, getting married was never an issue for her. She had been employed in a predominantly female profession with a high percentage of single females, and she had always been an independent-minded person. However, after she came to Canada, she felt very lonely as a result of the absence of family and a limited number of friends. Because of this, she had given more thought to marriage.

Besides desiring emotional and practical support, one woman also indicated that one of the reasons she would like to have a husband was to satisfy her sexual desires. The same woman did not believe in living common-law with a man. For this woman, it seemed that marriage was the most socially, culturally and personally acceptable means to meet her sexual needs.

For three of the participants, the presence of a spouse was not crucial at the time of the interviews. They stated that they enjoyed the freedom of making their own decisions and not needing to consult a husband:

"I can do whatever I like to do, not having to get someone's else permission; I take sole responsibility for the consequences of my action."

(Katie, East Indian, Domestic Worker,  
5 years in Canada)

In fact, they felt that they were freer than married women because of the absence of marriage related responsibilities. The two participants who were in their early twenties, also felt that they were not ready to get married yet but would do so in the future. The participant in her early thirties left it up to fate to determine whether she would meet the "right" person and marry. However, all three of them expressed the "problems" of not being married, eg. loneliness, no one to count on, taking chances with decisions, experiencing loneliness because of "no lifetime companion" and so on. One of the problems in taking chances with decisions, however, lay in not knowing if the decisions would eventually turn out all right. All of the women who stated at the time of the interview that having husbands were not crucial for them, also had their families in Winnipeg, and so already had a supportive social environment.

This study reveals that for the majority of the participants, the presence of a husband in their lives was important for them at the time of the interviews. The three women who indicated the contrary, nonetheless recognized the "problems" of not having a spouse. Various factors, including cultural and social expectations, the need for emotional and practical supports and sexual partners, were found to determine the degree of urgency to find a husband. Overall, the perceived need to be married in order to acquire a formalized, legitimized form of long term, dependable social support, is special to single female immigrants. This perception is for them a coping

mechanism. Due to a lack of other supports combined with the social pressure "to have a husband", marriage is regarded as the paramount solution which can replace the social support losses and fulfill the desire for lost stability and a role and identity in the new world. The implications were that marriage would reduce feelings of being at a loss, feeling alienated, insecure, feeling uncertain, anxious, trapped and vulnerable as a result of being a stranger in a strange land - feelings especially pronounced if the women had a limited support network and were in the initial resettlement phases.

Failing to acquire a husband (146), a small number of women articulated strategies to cope with their single lifestyle:

- i) finding ways to make friends
- ii) upgrading their education and/or looking for a "better" job
- iii) connecting with either the mainstream or ethnic communities
- iv) having religious faith

For the majority of women, a predominant way to cope was finding ways to be more self-sufficient and independent (eg. having a job, learning how to drive).

The significance of "finding a husband/getting married", and the specific ways in which psychological dependence on men impacts on the lives of the immigrant women (married or single), needs to be explored further.

In conclusion, on the one hand, the single woman's personal development and maturation as an individual and social being is fragmented and impeded by the difficulties that immigration and resettlement bring. On the other, the obstacles which face a newcomer are magnified if the immigrant is female, and moreover, is single. This is because she does not have an established, satisfactory role within even her own community in the host country; thus she tends to be more isolated and disoriented, and less able to reestablish her identity, and to eventually feel "at home" and integrated in her new environment.

This chapter has described the five predominant themes generated from the data and the frequency, emotional valency and importance of the five themes. It also described and discussed the reasons behind the emotions illustrated by the themes and the coping mechanisms developed by the women in dealing with these issues. The findings in this chapter indicate that there were no differences in experiences among the women from the three ethnic groups. The following chapter will include a summary of the findings and recommendations in the areas of program and policy interventions and future research.

## CHAPTER V

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 5.1 SUMMARY

Eight single Asian immigrant women who are residents of Winnipeg were interviewed. All have been residing in Canada from two to five years. Their ages range from 21 to 58 years at the time of the interview.

The two objectives the study initially set out to achieve included 1) examining the specific manifestations of isolation as they occurred in the daily life of the single Asian immigrant women and 2) determining the relationships between the woman's experience of isolation and the presence or absence of a social support network. It was hoped that the study would provide insights into some of the following: 1) the nature of the single Asian immigrant woman's experience, 2) her coping style in dealing with the experience of isolation, 3) the differences and/or similarities of the single Asian immigrant woman's experience across ethnic groups, and 4) the role of a social support network. This study has accomplished this but has also discovered additional knowledge about isolation, loneliness and social support as illustrated under the five major themes: "Being Lost Between Worlds and Insecure"; "Being Isolated and Lonely"; "Being Anxious"; "Being Different" and "Feeling Trapped". The intensity and importance of these themes varied according to the individual experiences of the women. However, they all had experiences attributable to being single, immigrant and female ie. the so-called

"triple jeopardy". While the major problems derived from their situation as immigrants, these immigration related issues aggravated the experiences of being single and female.

The women all seem to cope in their own ways with the resettlement problems of isolation and loneliness, unemployment and economic difficulties, and with the societal expectations of being single females. The most frequent coping strategy mentioned was the need to acquire a spouse. Having a spouse was perceived to resolve all three areas of difficulty at the same time. While it is not being suggested that this is not similar for all single people including single mainstream women, it is very unlikely to be cited to the same extent. For this reason, I venture to say that the coping mechanism of wanting to find a husband/getting married is particular to the single immigrant woman's experience. However, other strategies were also used eg. maintaining social support "back home" as a way to preserve a sense of identity and deal with isolation and loneliness, and/or looking for a "better" job to resolve economic difficulties.

The interviews with these women alerted me to the many gaps that exist in services which do not adequately address the three main difficulties experienced by these single immigrant women ie. isolation and loneliness, economic difficulties and societal expectations about "singles" and females. From my experience as a social work practitioner and as an immigrant woman, these difficulties could be appropriately addressed if the following recommendations are implemented.



## 5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are outlined under three subheadings: 1) Program/Practice Interventions, 2) Policy Interventions, and 3) Future Research. As the data has shown that immigration related problems aggravated the issues associated with being single and female, the recommendations for both program/practice interventions and policy interventions are designed to reflect the experiences of immigrants in general and the specific experiences of the single immigrant woman. Because the study focusses on the experience of the single immigrant woman, the subsection on Recommendations for Future Research will concentrate on her alone.

### 5.21 Program/Practice Interventions

#### i) For Immigrants in General:

For interventions to have an impact on the resettlement and general immigration process, they have to be instituted prior to the immigrants' arrival in Canada and maintained throughout the resettlement phase. These interventions should be implemented in three phases a) at the pre-immigration decision, b) in the immigration process itself, and c) in resettlement.

#### a) The Pre-Immigration Decision:

- Information sessions on the realities of life and living in Canada.

These should be made available prior to taking applications to immigrate. These sessions should portray important realities that would assist the prospective applicant in making decisions that are reality based, eg. being made aware of: the non-recognition of one's academic

qualifications and work experience, the probability of existing discriminatory practices, the loss of social support and social class, the climatic and cultural differences, the prevailing economic climate, and the implications of these.

b) The Immigration Process:

- Counselling and Orientation

After an application has been made and accepted, prospective immigrants should be counselled about Canadian foods and nutrition, language and cultural barriers and different behavioural norms. This would be complemented by a series of orientation sessions. The prospective immigrant should also be given a realistic impression of the physical environment in Canada. This may include a) showing films of our winter and discussing the protective measures and dangers associated with living with severe cold and icy conditions, and b) discussing the ramification of a long cold winter in terms of its effect on social interaction (ie. isolation and loneliness) and discussing the need for different types of seasonal (winter, summer, fall/spring) clothing, together with the financial implications.

c) Resettlement:

Increased efforts by government, private individuals, and social services agencies should be made to provide for smooth resettlement in Canada. The following are suggested resettlement programs which can complement the existing programs.

- A comprehensive orientation package focussing on programs and services available, the target population for such programs and services, and how to access them (147).

- A comprehensive Canadian life and social skills training program. Evidence has shown that this type of program, to be truly effective, should take place in an informal group setting with a peer support component (148), and should be community based and implemented (though not necessarily sponsored) by a non-governmental and non-profit organization (149). An outreach component attached to this program is also crucial to ensure success (150).

Other intervention strategies aimed at making the immigration and resettlement process a less disturbing experience involve public education lectures and seminars aimed at the general host population and the immigration officials (in and outside Canada). These would include:

- Compulsory cross-cultural sensitivity training for employees of Employment and Immigration Canada.
- Sessions on the history of immigration in Canada delivered to the general public, public schools and the media. Immigration policy and the background, culture and contributions of immigrants in Canada should also be taught as a course in public schools and universities.

ii) Specific to Single Immigrant Women:

- a) A "Big Sister" program akin to the "Host Program" (151).

Under this program "established" immigrant women would befriend the "recent" single immigrant women (152). Correspondence with the immigrant women from the host country should occur prior to the actual immigration. This would allow the "Big Sister" host to give her contact information and advice, and would contribute to establishing a

relationship between the two women prior to the latter's immigrating.

The host might also wish to meet the newcomer at the airport, as landing alone in a strange country can be a very distressing and bewildering experience.

b) An outreach program targetted for single immigrant women (153).

This would aim to reach out to single immigrant women, discover their needs, design appropriate services and/or assist them in accessing existing services.

c) A "drop-in" program.

This would provide the women with opportunities to meet and make friends as well as to learn about services in an informal and non-threatening environment.

d) A support group for single immigrant women (154).

The group should be informal in nature, small in size, language based (either English speaking or speaking the same ethnic language), and facilitated by an "established" immigrant woman who has resolved her own personal immigrant-related issues and who is also skilled as a group leader (155). This group would decide its own discussion topics; these might include loss, adjustment, the issue of singleness as it pertains to women, information on resources and services as well as life skill sessions on job searches and cross-cultural communication. This program should be community based and implemented (though not necessarily sponsored) by a non-governmental and non-profit organization. An outreach component attached to this program is also crucial to ensure success.

e) A pre-marital preparation and counselling program for single immigrant women.

f) An affirmative action program for single Asian immigrant women.

For the programs which do not have outreach components linked to them, special efforts should be made to inform the public about their availability and mandate. This may include advertising in "ethnic" community organizations and "ethnic" religious organizations.

#### 5.22 Policy Interventions:

Although the following recommendations apply to immigrants in general, they also have specific implications for single immigrant women. There is a need for:

- i) Non-discriminatory language training and job skill training programs.
- ii) Non-discriminatory government assistance programs in housing and finance.
- iii) Expanding the definition of eligible "family" to allow immigration sponsorship of extended family.

#### 5.23 Future Research:

Clearly with the study being exploratory in nature, many questions were raised that can only be answered through further research - both qualitative and quantitative. Some of these are:

- How does the experience of the single immigrant woman vary across age groups? This study suggests some variance.

- How does the experience vary between those who are single, never married, widowed, separated or divorced? This study suggests some variance between the single, never married and the single widowed.
- How does the single immigrant woman's own ethnic community response to her singleness impact on her life?
- How often does the single immigrant woman marry as a way of resolving her conflicts, vis a vis the mainstream single woman? Does such marriage differ from marriage in her home country and host country? If so how different is it?
- How do employment and economics, isolation and loneliness and social and cultural expectations about singleness and being female, each contribute to the decision of getting married by the single immigrant woman?
- What constitutes a "satisfying" social support network that would enhance the self-identity of the single immigrant woman? What is the network size of such social support?
- What is the role of various types of social support in successful resettlement for the single immigrant woman and single immigrant man? What are the supportive functions of each type? How do they change over time?
- The data reveals an overwhelming concern with the absence of social support in crisis situations; is this uniquely a single person's problem, an issue specifically related to women, an immigrant problem and/or the product of the combined experiences?
- Does social support provided by a spouse differ from that provided by family, kin and friends in crisis situations? If so, how is it

different? Does it differ for the immigrant as opposed to the mainstream person? If so, how?

- Does the supportive function of an immigrant spouse differ with that of a mainstream spouse? If so, how is it different? Does it differ from the supportive function of a family and kin? If so, how?
- The finding suggests that because of survival needs, the single immigrant woman tends to be "less choosy" in selecting her mate? How do such marriages fare in a long run, especially after the initial resettlement phase?
- The data suggests the likelihood of a high degree of interdependency between the single Asian immigrant woman and her future immigrant mate, at least in the initial phase of resettlement. Are such marriages different from marriages between a mainstream couple? With the immigrant couple, what happens to the marital relationship after the difficulties of the initial resettlement phase have been mastered by either partner of the couple?
- What are the major factors which provide for successful resettlement of the single immigrant woman? How do social support, economics and employment, age and life experience, length of stay in Canada, personality characteristics, involuntary/voluntary immigration, and congruency/incongruency between pre-immigration expectations and post immigration findings each determine successful resettlement for the single immigrant woman?
- How effective is pre-immigration preparation in successful resettlement for the single immigrant woman?

- What is the impact of climate on the experience of isolation and loneliness for the single immigrant woman?

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It is the hope of the researcher that this study will provide insights and a better understanding, particularly on the part of social service deliverers and policy makers, of the complexity of the single Asian immigrant woman's resettlement experiences, her needs and aspirations. It is further hoped that the recommendations be seriously considered in an effort to improve the quality of life for this special group of immigrant women.



Reference Notes

1. According to Immigration Statistics, 1983, Immigration Branch, Employment and Immigration Canada, 1983, p. 9, 43,438 foreign born women over the age of 15 immigrated to Canada in that year. Out of this number, 12,051 or 27.7% were single never married, 4,367 or 10% were widowed, 930 or 2% were divorced and 373 or 8.6% were separated (constituting a total of 17,721 or 40.8%). This leaves 25,717 or 59.2% of the foreign born women to be married.
2. This does not preclude the impact of loss of socio-economic status associated with immigration.
3. Boyd found that the double negative of being female and foreign born was less of a factor for occupational attainments for those immigrant women who were members of previously preferred groups (e.g. Americans and British) than it was for groups which in the past had been labelled as undesirable groups (such as those of Asians and Eastern European origin) at the turn of the century. (M. Boyd, "The Status of Immigrant Women in Canada," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 12 (4), part 1, 1975, p. 1096.
4. P. Stein, Single, Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, 1976, pp. 25-32.
5. J. L. Barkas, Single in America, 1980, p. 148.
6. L. I. Pearlin and J. S. Johnson, "Marital Status, Life Strains and Depression", in Single Life: Unmarried Adults in Social Context, (Ed.), P. Stein, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981, pp. 165-178.

7. S. M. Johnson, First Person Singular: Living the Good Life Alone, New York: J. B. Lippin-Cott Co., 1977, pp. 119-189.
8. Annual Report, 1983: Preliminary January 1 to December 31 Manitoba Immigration Information Bulletin, 1983, p. 17.

Since it has been confirmed that severe stress and isolation are experienced by immigrant women whose first language is not English (the Social Planning Council of Toronto Report titled: "Sub-urban in Transition - Part 1", in S. Bopanna, "Variables Affecting the Mental Health of the Immigrant Women", The Family's Interventive Strategies in a Multi-Cultural Context, p. 1) and since one of the foci of this study concentrates on the isolation experience of single immigrant women, only non-English speaking immigrant women are used in this sample.

9. This personal observation is derived from contacts made with various mainstream and ethnic service organizations.
10. Ibid.
11. The researcher's observation made through personal and professional contacts with various organization indicate that for a long while most of the services provided to immigrants tended to be linked to short term projects; thus they often lacked the permanency and continuity required for coherent and comprehensive service delivery.
12. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this has not been made available by any level of government.
13. This observation is derived from professional and personal contacts with Asian immigrant women and the organizations which serve them.

14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. The Federal government-sponsored language training program limits eligibility to the "head of the household" only and individuals who have a minimal of Grade 8 education.
17. This observation is based on personal and professional contacts made with the Asian immigrant women and the organizations which served them.
18. Ibid.
19. The researcher's observation made through personal and professional contacts with Asian immigrant women and immigrant groups in general noted that until recently these groups had not been considered as important voting blocks, nor had immigrant issues been taken seriously.
20. This is based on the observation that for various reasons, immigrant women who appear to require support services the most do not utilize the service effectively in meeting their needs. This appears to be due to (1) the women not being made aware of the availability of the service, and (2) the women being so overwhelmed by their situations that they were sometimes immobilized and could not seek out solutions to resolve their problems. A suggested outreach program would enable the women to access services.
21. Numerically, in 1981, 37.9% of Canadian men aged 15 and over, were either widowed, separated, divorced or single never married (vs. 62.1% married men) whilst 40.3% of the total Canadian women population aged 15 and over were either separated, widowed,

- divorced or single never married (vs. 59.7% of women who were married). (1981 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada Catalogue 92.901).
22. Stein, (1976), pp. 26, 29-30.
  23. Ibid, pp. 17, 29.
  24. Ibid, p. 26.
  25. Ibid, p. 26.
  26. J. M. Bardwick, Psychology of Women, New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1971, p. 210.
  27. Stein, (1976), pp. 27-28.
  28. A. Campbell, P. E. Converse and W. L. Rodgers, The Quality of American Life (New York: Russell Sage Foundation), 1976. In The Allocation of Time by Women Without Family Responsibilities, I. H. Holmes, Washing, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983, p. 102.
  29. M. B. Warren, "The Work Role and Problem Coping: Sex Differentials in the Use of Helping Systems in Urban Communities", presented at the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, 1975; mentioned in The Female World by J. Bernard, New York: The Free Press, 1980, p. 293.
- J. D. Gladieux, "Pregnancy - The Transition to Parenthood: Satisfaction with the Experience as a Function of Sex Role Conceptions, Marital Relationships and Social Network", in The First Child and Family Formation, W. B. Miller and L. F. Newman, eds, (Chapel Hill: Caroline Population Center, 1978); mentioned in Bernard, (1980), p. 284.

- The same finding is supported by Stein, (1976), p. 29.
30. Mentioned in Holmes, (1983), p. 102.
  31. Women in the Work World, (1984), Charts 2 & 5.
  32. K. O. Mason, J. Czajka and S. Arber, "Change in the U.S. Women's Sex Role Attitudes, 1964 - 1974", in American Sociological Review, 41,(8), 1976, in Holmes, (1983), p. 102.
  33. Mentioned in Holmes, (1983), p. 102.
  34. B. Thomas and C. Novogrodsky, Combatting Racism in the Workplace: Readings Kit, Toronto: Crosscultural Communication Centre, 1983, p. 20.
  35. Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, "Lay Offs and Unemployment, Job Retention as a Policy Issue", Working Papers for Fall Employment #2, 1980, by Thomas and Novogrodsky, 1983, p. 21.
  36. S. M. Arnopoulos, The Problems of Immigrant Women in the Canadian Labour Force, Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1979, p. 3.
  - R. Ng and J. Ramirez, Immigrant Housewives in Canada: A Report, Toronto: Immigrant Women's Centre, 1981, p. 56.
  37. Arnopoulos, (1979), p. 5.
  38. Boyd, (1975), p. 1096.
  39. Boyd, (1985), pp. 1112-1114.
  40. P. O'Brien, The Woman Alone, New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1973, p. 44.
  41. M. Eichler, "Sociology of Feminist Research in Canada," SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 3 (2), Winter, 1977, pp. 409-422. This argument is an extension of her thesis that a state

of dependance permeates every aspect of the Canadian woman's experience: cultural, ideological, legal, economic, physiological and psychological.

42. According to the the 1981 Census of Canada Report an overall 42% of immigrants who were unattached individuals were in the low income group in comparison to the 37% for their non-immigrant counterparts.
43. Loneliness, as one of the characteristics used here to describe the experience of isolation, was seen by R. Weiss (in Stein, 1981, p. 157) as a reaction to the absence of some particular social relationships.

In his work on loneliness, Weiss distinguishes between the loneliness of social isolation and that of emotional isolation. The former refers to the pain caused by severance from, or lack of involvement in a network of peers of some sort; Weiss maintains this isolation can be alleviated through restoration and substitution. The latter is described as the loss, or lack of the "availability of emotional attachment of a relationship with another person such that the mere proximity of the other person can promote feelings of (emotional) security and wellbeing." (R. S. Weiss, Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1973, p. 90). This loss can be remedied only by involvement in mutually committed relationships. These are distinct from "ordinary" friendships and take only a few forms, such as marriage and other cross-sex committed relationships; the relationship of a woman with her close

friend, sister or another woman; and with men, by the relationships of "buddies".

Both types of loneliness share the same driving restlessness and the same yearning for the missing relational provisions. The latter, however, also leads to distress, anxiety, utter aloneness while the symptoms associated with the loneliness of social isolation are feelings of boredom or aimlessness, feelings of exclusion, and include the marginality of the small child whose friends were all away. (Weiss in Stein, 1981, pp. 158-160).

44. J. K. Whittaker, J. Garbarino and Associates, Social Support Networks: Informal Helping in the Human Services, New York: The Alpine Publishing Co., 1983, p. 5.
45. Weiss, (1973), pp. 149-150.
46. Johnson, (1977), pp. 119, 189.
47. Stein, (1976), p. 109.
48. S. D. Nguyen, "The Psycho-Social Adjustments and the Mental Health Needs of South East Asian Refugees," The Psychiatric Journal of the University of Ottawa, 7 (1), March 1982, p. 28.
49. Weiss, for example discusses the importance of the presence of another individual who shares: "a common investment in a daily routine of existence which are a crucial source of emotional security (which include reinforcement of one's personal identity and creates the sense of an orderly world) that it retains its dynamic value even when the overall marital relationships has many of its problems." (R. S. Weiss, Marital Separation, New York: Basic Books, 1975, Chapter 4). He found that severe loneliness

appeared to be unusual among married men, somewhat more prevalent among married women and quite prevalent among the unmarrieds of both sexes (Weiss in Stein, 1981, p. 161).

Weiss' thesis was supported by Pearlin et.al. who observed that without a mate, the unmarrieds were more susceptible to depressive consequences of life strains; this, however, was aggravated if they also lacked alternative social supports (in Stein, 1981, pp. 165-178).

50. On the other hand, writers such as Holmes, found that like the marrieds, some unmarrieds fit the stereotype of being lonely while others can also be described as living a life of happiness and fulfillment (Holmes, 1983, p. 105). However, Holmes also found that a more common reason given by those single women who reported that they were unhappy was that they were lonely and desired a male companion (pp. 144-145).
51. This refers to the total experience of migration, i.e. that of "uprooting", "transplanting" and "settlement" and "adaptation" in the new country. Both physical and psycho-social transformations are involved in all of these phases.
52. J. Huntington, "Migration as Bereavement: The Use of Anology in Social Work Research", p. 8. Paper presented to the Research Seminar, International Association of School of Social Work, List Congress at the University of Sussex, August 20, 1982.
53. Ibid., pp. 9-11.
54. According to Huntington, "Migration changes dramatically our reality and imposes on us, at least temporarily, a discrepancy



between inner and outer and the task of realigning them if we are apt to survive with any degree of mental health." (Ibid., 1982, p. 8).

55. Culture and place provide individuals with a homeland, financial security and social positions which are all embodied in a vast interlocking set of networks. As a result, they provide the individuals with a sense of belonging, a sense of security and self-esteem. All are important features of one's sense of rootedness and attachment to a particular culture and place. "The loss of place represents a change in a potentially significant component of the experience of continuity of our relationship to past, present and future." (Ibid., p. 20).
56. Because of the loss of a social support network, the migration experience meant greater vulnerability to stress, but specifically it meant greater susceptibility to breakdown for migrants who migrate at certain points in their life cycle (the fourth decade for women). As well, the migrants experience greater vulnerability if the migration has also meant loss of confidantes, Ibid., pp. 12-15.
57. Bernard, (1980), pp. 281-289.
58. Ibid., p. 287.
59. Weiss, (1973), pp. 147-148.
60. Scarfe, mentioned in Huntington, (1982), p. 15.
61. S. Fava, "Women's Place", presented at the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, 1978; mentioned in Bernard (1980), p.

287. Fava researched the literature on women relocating to the suburban areas and finds that there are six categories of women especially disadvantaged by suburban relocation: the aged, teenagers, minority women, corporate wives, the single and the divorced. The stress which results from being at a far distance from their work, the services and the support system are great.
62. Some knowledge of the English language was needed so as to access the formal and informal service system that were needed for day to day living, Bopanna, p. 1.
63. Ng and Ramirez, (1981). Both found that those immigrant women who were not in the work force and who had come from rural areas in non-western and non-industrialized countries, experienced qualitative changes in their everyday lives as a result of migration into an urban, technologically advanced, money economy. These led to an isolation experience.
64. In the urban areas, due to problems with the English language and other adjustment issues, contact can often be limited to members of the same ethnic groups. This limits the opportunities for immigrant women to participate in mainstream Canadian life. In the rural areas, the lack of contacts with and hence support from members of the same ethnic community can result in feelings of isolation.
65. This practice intensified the problem of "double disability" -- illiteracy combined with the lack of knowledge of the English language. This problem was found to be more prevalent among

immigrant women than immigrant men. As a result, immigrant woman experienced isolation (G. O'Leary and A. Brooks et.al., "Immigrant Women," a discussion paper prepared by representatives of the Department of the Secretary of State and the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, July 1979, p. 3).

66. Immigration Statistics, (1983), p. 9.
67. 1981 Census of Canada
68. R. Bogdan and S. J. Taylor, Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods, New York: A. Wiley - Interscience Publication, 1975, p. 2.
69. Ibid., p. 4.
70. W. J. Filstead, ed., Qualitative Methodology: Firsthand Involvement with the Social World, Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1970, p. 6.
71. Bogdan and Taylor, (1975), p. 4.
72. Huntington, (1982), pp. 3-4.
73. B. Glaser and A. Strauss, The Discovery of Grounded Theory, Chicago: Aldine, 1967; "The Discovery of Substantive Theory: A Basic Strategy Underlying Qualitative Research," American Behavioural Scientist, February, 1965, pp. 5-12.
74. Filstead, (1970), p. 6.
75. Bogdan and Taylor, (1975), p. 5.
76. Most of the literature (Ng & Ramirez; Nguyen; C. E. Sluzki, "Migration and Family Conflict", Family Process, 18 (4), December 1979) on immigrant women with family responsibilities showed that

the mental health problems related to resettlement did not surface until the third year of residency in Canada. Yet the agency personnel contacted by the researcher indicated other findings, that is that the problem of isolation appeared to be most severe in the first two years of residency in Canada. Because of the differences of opinion in this area, the researcher has chosen to limit the sample to those women who have been resident in Canada for one to five years.

77. Since studies and experience have indicated that lack of the ability to communicate in the English language is a major factor in the experience of isolation, the study hoped to identify the role of language skills as the major determining factor in the isolating experience; hence the participants were further limited to those whose mother tongue is not English.
78. Cohabiting singles were excluded from this study because of the parallel interpersonal experience of cohabiting couples with those of the marrieds.
79. Nguyen, (1982), pp. 26-27.
80. Glaser and Straus, (1967), pp. 36-43.
81. This selection was based on the Annual Report 1983: Preliminary January 1 to December 31 Manitoba Immigration Information Bulletin, 1983, p. 17, which indicated that in 1981 to 1983, the Filipino, East Indian, and the Chinese-speaking immigrants constituted the top three largest non-refugee groups whose mother tongue was not English.

82. Since the researcher is fluent in both the Chinese (Cantonese) and the English languages, the division based on the English language ability was hence applied to the Chinese speaking women. It was hoped that this would also provide some insight into the role of English language ability in the experience of isolation.
83. Educational attainment is generally considered to be an acceptable indicator of one's conceptual skill. Since the medium of communication in the interviewing situation was to be carried out in English (except with the 2 Chinese speaking women), which would be a second language for all of the women, a minimum of some secondary education (from Canada or their country of origin) was established as one of the criteria in the selection of the participants for the study.
84. This included those who were temporarily unemployed but were actively seeking employment. Those who worked in the home were excluded from this study because the isolating experience with this group was expected to differ in degree.
85. The developmental life experience of a woman is seen to have great impact on how she responded to the experience of immigration and ultimately her perception of her life experience as an immigrant in Winnipeg. For the purpose of this study, the lower age limit of eighteen years old was established to ensure capturing the widest possible range of life stages which might compound the problem in question.

86. The reason marital status and length of stay in Canada were considered to be crucial determining factors in adjusting to life in Canada was based on the reviewed literature previously outlined and the researcher's own personal experience. In addition, direct immigration experience was also considered to be important because the researcher feels that this was the only way to ensure that the immigration experience to Canada was not in any way affected by the woman's experience as an immigrant anywhere else.
87. This was because three of the women interviewed did not meet one or some of the major criteria which would make them eligible as a participant in this study: 1) marital status; 2) length of stay in Canada; 3) the direct immigration experience to Canada from their country of origin; 4) experience as an immigrant (vs. refugee experience).
88. One participant who was retired from the work force was included in the study because of the richness of the material provided by this woman, and also because of the difficulty in finding participants. It was also felt that she would provide a contrast for discussing any differences between her adjustment process and that of the employed single immigrant women.
89. It is speculated that those women who lived with families would have a qualitative difference in life experiences vis a vis those women who lived on their own.
90. Bogdan and Taylor, (1975), p. 79. "Hypotheses", as used by these

writers, are propositional statements.

91. Women's social histories are altered in order to protect the woman's identity. Efforts are made to ensure that the changes do not effect the essence of her story.
92. This independent observer was a clinical researcher who is familiar with research methods.
93. R. W. Brislin, Cross-Cultural Encounters: Face-to-Face Interaction, New York: Pergamon Press, 1981.
94. M. Adelman, "Theoretical Perspective on Social Support and Cross-Cultural Adjustment", p. 3.  
Paper presented to the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research Annual Conference in Montreal, Quebec, May, 1987.
95. D. Coates and T. Winston, "Counteracting the Deviance of Depressions: Peer Support Groups For Victims", Journal of Social Issues, 39, 1983, pp. 164-194.
96. Bernard, (1980), p. 293.
97. A. Pearlin in Stein, (1981), pp. 165-178.
98. Nguyen, (1982), p. 28.
99. Ibid.
100. R. E. Pearson, "Issues and Procedures in the Assessment of Social Support: Cross-Cultural Perspectives", p. 14.  
Paper presented to the Society for Intercultural Education Training and Research Annual Conference in Montreal, Quebec, May, 1987.

101. B. J. Hirsch, "Natural Support Systems and Coping with Major Life Changes", American Journal of Community Psychology, 1980, pp. 159-172.
102. V. B. Mpumlwana, Adaptation and Stress in African Immigrants to Canada, M.A. Thesis, Winnipeg, University of Manitoba, 1986, pp. 60, 67.
103. Pearson, (1987), p. 17.
104. Ibid.
105. It is the researcher's professional knowledge that to effectively problem solve requires cognitive and affect insights about the issue, as well as the skill to implement the identified strategy to achieve change objective.
106. Bernard, (1981), pp. 289-291.
107. Ibid.
108. G. W. Brown and T. Harris, Social Origins of Depression, Tavistock, 1978. Mentioned in Huntington, (1982), p. 14. Both found that the lack of a confidante, particularly in the husband or boyfriend, exacerbated depression experienced by the women in their study.
109. Huntington, (1982), pp. 14-15.
110. J. S. House, Work, Stress and Social Support, Reading, MA: Addison - Wesley, 1981. Mentioned in Pearson, (1987), p. 4. Also, Pearson, (1987), pp. 4-7.
111. Ibid., p. 18.
112. Weiss, (1973), p. 90.



113. Weiss, (1975), Chapter 4.
114. Brislin, (1981).
115. S. Bochner, (Ed.), The Mediating Person: Bridges Between Cultures, Boston, MA: G. R. Hall & Co., 1981.
116. T. L. Albrecht and M. B. Adelman, "Social Support and Life Stress: New Directions for Communication Research", Human Communication Research, 11, 1984, pp. 3-32.
117. Y. Y. Kim, "Facilitating Immigrant Adaptation: Ethnic Support Systems", in T. L. Albrecht, M.B. Adelman and Associates, Communicating Social Support, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987, pp. 199-202.
118. Huntington, (1982), pp. 12-15.
119. Bernard, (1980), pp. 281-289.
120. Scarfe, mentioned in Huntington, (1982), p. 15.
121. Barkas, (1980), p. 148.
122. B. J. Hirsch, "Social Networks and the Coping Process: Creating Personal Communities:", in Social Networks and Social Support, (Ed.), B. H. Gottlies, London: Sage Publications, 1981, pp. 149-170.
123. Ibid., p. 161.
124. Whittaker & Garbarino, (1983), p. 5.
125. The mentioned statements are derived from personal observations.
126. Ibid.
127. Stein, (1976), pp. 26, 29-30.

128. A. H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality, (2nd ed.), New York, 1970.

According to the Maslow need hierarchy theory, the need to master basic human needs such as food, clothing and shelter precede the higher hierarchical needs such as emotional fulfillment. Progressing up the hierarchy toward self-actualization, involves the individual overcoming loneliness and overcoming self-disorientation.

129. Arnopoulos, (1979), p. 3.
130. Boyd, (1975), p. 1096.
131. Warren in Bernard, (1980), p. 293.
132. Gladieux in Bernard, (1980), p. 284.
133. Stein, (1976), p. 29.
134. Campbell in Holmes, (1983), p. 102.
135. Even as legitimate members of the "working poor", the woman and her family were not eligible to apply for SAFER Program or subsidized housing because of their sponsored immigrant status. Faced with financial difficulties, aid from these subsidized programs would have helped in alleviating their desperate condition.
136. See Note #76.
137. Huntington, (1982), pp. 12-15.
138. This is based on personal observation only.
139. Thomas and Novogrodsky, (1983), p. 21.
140. Bardwick, (1971), p. 210.
141. O'Brien, (1973), p. 44.

142. Weiss, (1975), Chapter 4.
143. Pearlin in Stein, 1981, pp. 165-178.
144. Barkas, (1980), p. 148.
145. Ibid.
146. Finding a husband was not an easy process. However, most women experienced obstacles in these areas:
- 1) The absence of a dating system - This was especially a concern for some of the East Indian women who had expressed the desire of wanting to date the man before getting married. Because of the cultural practice of arranged marriages, the women often found themselves experiencing conflicts.
  - 2) The unwillingness to live in a common-law relationship - In the interviews where common-law relationships were discussed, all stated that they would not want to live common-law with a man. This was mostly due to social and cultural expectations ("it's shameful to live together"), although one woman indicated that the reason she would not want to live common-law was that this arrangement would put her in a vulnerable position ("one day he may decide to leave me, leaving me without anything"). Although it is difficult to assess the impact this value has over the women's ability to find a husband, it certainly limits the available options and hence the opportunity to develop intimate long term relationships.
  - 3) Other reasons - Being employed in the type of jobs that are

isolating (domestic work, chambermaid) and female dominated (sewing machine operator) as well as length of stay in Canada (hence not "knowing their way around") limited the women's opportunity to meet a potentially suitable husband. The reduced opportunity to meet a suitable mate, the urgent desire to have a long term relationship and the absence of adequate social support could lead to the temptation to be less choosy about their future husbands as mentioned previously.

147. The data indicates that oftenly immigrant women are not being made aware of the availability of certain programs and services, the criteria for using such programs and services and how to access them.
148. Albrecht and Adelman proposed five types of supportive messages in reducing a distressed person's anxiety and enhancing his/her sense of control over his/her own situation. This includes 1) sharing of coping strategies by individuals who underwent similar experiences, 2) assisting the distressed individual in acquiring skills to problem solve eg. cross-cultural communication skills, 3) providing the distressed person with concrete and practical assistance, 4) providing emotional support by conveying messages of acceptance and assurance, and 5) being available as a sympathetic listener. (Albrecht and Adelman, 1987, pp. 4-6). These five types of supportive messages in anxiety reduction and control suggest a framework for a comprehensive life and social skills training package in an informal, non-threatening setting,

with a peer support component attached to it. The latter is essential because aside from Albrecht and Adelman's finding, evidence from this study indicates that although cognitive restructuring of an individual's perception of a problem may assist the individual better evaluate the situation (as result of improved understanding through knowledge gained), to be able to actively problem solve requires the acquisition of affective insight as well. Peer support in an informal setting would provide the participants with the emotional support through acceptance and reaffirmation of selves as well as enhancing motivation to improve their circumstances. The complimentary presence of both would motivate the acquisition of new skills.

149. Evidence from this study shows that immigrant women are intimidated by some government services because: (1) previous negative experiences, and (2) lack of social and life skills which are compounded by anxiety, disorientation and overwhelming feelings associated with being in a new environment.
150. Evidence from this study and that of Whittaker and Garbarino (1983, p. 27) confirms that individuals in distress seldom turn to formal support systems to seek help unless someone (often service personnel) takes the initiative to lead them into participation. The data shows that this could be due to various reasons: (1) temporary incapacitation on the cognitive and/or affect levels of the distressed person thus preventing him/her from effectively problem solving. This is due to the person experiencing anxiety,

overwhelming feelings and lack of self confidence, (2) lack of Canadian social and life skills to access services, and (3) not being made aware of the availability of services. An outreach program would overcome these obstacles.

151. The data shows that female support is crucial for the single immigrant women, thus the suggestion of a "Big Sister" program.
152. Someone who has "gone through it" so to speak, can best share their experience with the women and "show" them "the ropes".
153. Similar reasons given in #150.
154. Similar reasons given in #148.
155. These criteria in the group facilitator are crucial because from practice experience, the researcher has found that individuals who have not adequately resolved their personal situations regarding the issue at hand, tended to "take over" the group which then acts as their sounding board to meet their own personal needs. Such individuals tend not to listen carefully but to actively provide advice and solve problems, thus prevents the occurrence of group support. Having personal insight into one's own situation and having group work skills would allow the individual to be more effective in the supportive role.

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## APPENDIX A

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. What name do you wish us to call you?
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years
3. Place of birth
4. Place you were raised/spent most of your life  
How long were you there? \_\_\_\_\_ years
5. No. of years of formal schooling: \_\_\_\_\_ years
6. What was your occupation in your country of origin?
7. What was your marital status before you left your country of origin?
 

married _____	divorced _____	engaged _____
widowed _____	separated _____	going steady _____
single _____		
8. What is your present marital status?
 

married _____	divorced _____	engaged _____
married _____	separated _____	going steady _____
single _____		

If different from #7, when did the change take place?
9. When did you come to Canada? How old were you then?
10. When did you arrive in Winnipeg?

11. Did you go directly to Canada or another country  
(If interviews did not go directly to Canada, ask:)

a. How long were you in \_\_\_\_\_?

b. What did you do there? Work? Study? Tourist?

12. Why did you decide to come to Canada?

Probes: - Better job opportunities?

- Social and political stability?

- Travel and adventure?

- Dissatisfied with former job?

- Family was here?

- Other (specified) \_\_\_\_\_

13. Did you travel alone? If not, who did you travel with to come to Canada?

14. Are you living alone now?

15. Who else that is important to you is still living in your country of origin?

## APPENDIX B

## LINE OF QUESTIONING\*

1. Were you happy to leave your country of origin? Why?/Why not?
2. In general, describe your life before you left your country or origin?  
  
Probes: What was it that you liked and disliked about it?
3. What do you miss about your country of origin?  
  
Probes: Do you miss for example, the relatives and friends, political and social development, climate, food, customs and traditions?
4. What were your expectations about life and living in Canada?
5. In general, describe your life when you first arrived in Canada?
  - a. What were your first impressions?
  - b. What was it that you liked/didn't like?
  - c. What would you say were the most difficult things for you to adjust to initially?
6. In general, describe your life now.

a. What do you like/not like about living in Canada?

b. What is a typical day like for you?

c. What do you do in your spare time?

7. What would you say are some of the problems you still have in adjusting to life in Canada? Describe.

Probes: Language difficulties, un/under/employment; lack of job skill training; cultural barriers; discrimination; pace of life; climate; housing; adjusting to urban living; not having the information about services etc.; not being able to find my way around; no time for myself; financial problems; not respected/recognized by mainstream people; no family or friends I can talk to; no husband.

8. What does not having a husband mean to you?

Probes: Discrimination (how and by whom?); stigmatization (how and by whom?); loneliness.

9. Is it harder to be single and a woman for you? How? Why?

10. Do you think you are in a better/worse position as a single immigrant woman in comparison to

a. married immigrant woman? How? Why?

b. married mainstream woman? How? Why?

c. single mainstream woman? How? Why?

11. Do you eventually wish to get married (or live common-law with someone)?
12. How important is it to you to get married (or live common-law with someone)?
13. I was told that having a job is very important for a single person. Would you agree? If so, in what way(s) is it important for you?
14. More about employment...
  - a. In your country of origin, what did you do for a living?
  - b. How did you obtain that job?
  - c. In Canada, how did you go about looking for a job when you first arrived here?
  - d. How did you hear about job vacancies? Manpower? Friends? Relatives? English teacher? Newspaper? Classmates? Other Services?
  - e. What was it that you had the most difficulty with when you were looking for a job?

Probes: - Language difficulties?  
- Racial discrimination?  
- Lack of Canadian experience?  
- Over (under) qualified for job you were seeking?  
- Other (specified)?
- d. What aspect(s) of your job do you like the most?

Probes: - Opportunity to meet people?  
- The job is challenging?  
- Opportunity to use your training and qualifications?  
- Help you to become self-sufficient?  
- Other (specified)

- e. What aspects of your job do you like the least?
- f. Are there any specific people you go with for lunch or coffee breaks?

Probes: - People from same ethnic background? What do you like about being with them?

- People with same qualifications? What do you like about being with them?

- Do you see these people outside of work? If yes, how often do you get together and what do you talk about?

- g. In general, how does your work experience here in Canada differ than that in your country of origin?

15. I am interested in finding out why you chose to live where you are living now.

Probes: Friends' influence; many people from the same ethnic origin living there; low rent; close to work.

16. I have been told that family, relatives and friends are very important to immigrant women, but specifically to the single women; do you agree? If yes, in what ways are then important?

17. Regarding your family, relatives and friends, both here in Canada and in your country of origin...

- a. Who did you stay with when you first arrived?
- b. Do you still maintain contact with family, relatives and friends in your country of origin? How? How often? With whom?
- c. If you have sponsored family members, who are they?
- d. Here in Canada, who would you ask to join you in a casual outing to a film or musical event? How often do you have contact with them? Who initiates most of the contacts?



How satisfied are you with these relationships and how important are these relationships to you?

- e. Who would you spend time with in a personal conversation where you share the same belief? How often do you see or hear from them? Who initiates most of the contacts? How satisfied are you with these relationships? How important are these relationships to you?
- f. Who would you ask to join you in discussing an intimate problem concerning your feelings about a member of your family? Who initiates most of the contacts? How satisfied are you with these relationships? How important are these relationships to you?
- g. Do these people in questions d - f know each other? How would the nature of your contacts with the above mentioned individuals differ from the contacts you had with your mother, sister, brother, father, friend, aunt/uncle, cousins in your country of origin or in Canada?
- h. Who are the individuals upon whom you could depend for information, say about day care, hydro, legal services, or practical help? How often do you have contact with them? Who initiate most of the contacts? How satisfied are you with these relationships? How important are these relationships to you?
- i. As long as you have been in Canada, who has helped you when you were faced with changes/crisis in your life?
- j. How important are female friends, female family members/relatives to you? What do you mostly talk about that is different than what you would talk about with your male friends, relatives and family? How often do you see each other?
- k. What sort of support/help do you find lacking?

1. How do you feel the situation could be corrected/improved?
18. About health and social services in Canada, specifically in Manitoba...
- Could you name some of the services that you are aware of?
  - Have you yourself ever used any of these services?  
Probe: And if so, which one?
  - If not, would you likely be using any of these services in the future?
  - What is your opinion about these services?
  - Do you feel that you have enough information on services?
19. Have you ever belonged to clubs, churches, organizations and groups (ethnic/mainstream; formal/informal), especially women groups? When? For what reasons?

How have you found them so far?

20. In general, do you tend to have more friends from 1. the same region in your country of origin, 2. same ethnic group, 3. same ethnic group but born in Canada, 4. other ethnic group(s), or 5. Caucasian Canadian(s)? Describe the relationships.

Probes: How did you make friends in your country of origin and in Canada?

- How often do you get together? What do you talk about?

21. What do you think of individuals of the same ethnic origin whom you have met in Canada? For example, what do you like about them? Dislike about them? Have you encountered any problems in dealing with people from your same ethnic origin? If so, what are they? (gossip, envy, back-biting, emphasis on material possessions and keeping up with each other, showing off, cliques and in-groups etc.)

22. How do you feel about the future? What are your plans?

Probes: - Do you hope to return to live in your country of origin? Why? Why not?

- If you are planning to return to live in your country of origin, when will that be? Under what circumstances?

23. Having discussed some of the issues that are important to you, would you consider yourself to be lonely and isolated?

Probes: - Not having someone you can socialize with.

- Not having someone you can confide personal situations/problems with.
- Not having someone with whom you can always count upon in crisis situation.
- Not having a husband/male companion (elaborate)
- Not having the English language ability (elaborate)
- Not having the Canadian work experience.
- Not understanding the Canadian mainstream culture (elaborate)
- Being discriminated by others (elaborate)
- Other reasons (Specified)

24. How do you think being a single person and an immigrant woman has had an impact on your feeling of isolation now or in the past?

25. What are the characteristics (personality trait; not having a husband; educational background; ability of the English language; length of stay in Canada; ethnic background; gener; age; social support network; organizational involvement; closeknit ethnic community etc.) you have that you feel may have helped/prevented you from fitting into the mainstream Canadian society?

\* The researcher would start with very general probes and let the respondent initiate what would be considered the most important issues to her. These important issues will be followed throughout the interview. The researcher would get more specific only if the respondent did not know how to reply etc. It is not necessary that all the questions in the questionnaire be asked, nor is it necessary that they be posed in a chronological manner.

Adapted from the following: 1. C.L. Attneave, Family Network Map, Copyright 1975, 5206 Ivanhoe Place, N.E. Seattle, Washington, 98025, 2975. 2. Linda Carroll, Changes in Loneliness: The Effects of Attributions, Coping Strategies, Changes in Personality Variables and Changes in Social Networks, Ph.d. Thesis, Department of Psychology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1983. 3. Charles J. Holahan and Brian L. Wilcox, Ecological Strategies in Community Psychology: A Case Study in Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1977. 4. Eleanor R. Laquian, Study of Filipino Immigration to Canada, 1962-1972.

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**APPENDIX C**  
**SOCIAL HISTORIES**

## BARBARA

<u>Age:</u>	25	<u>Ethnic Origin:</u>	East Indian
<u>Marital Status:</u>	Single, never Married	<u>Place of Birth:</u>	Punjab, India
<u>Education:</u>	12 years	<u>English Language Ability:</u>	Fair
<u>Date of Arrival to Canada:</u>	July 2, 1980	<u>Place Raised/Spent Most of Her Life:</u>	Punjab
<u>Occupation:</u>	Sewing Machine Operator		

A. Social Situation Prior to Coming to Canada

1. Living Arrangement: Lived with family on a farm.
2. Employment/Education: Was a student.
3. Reasons/Circumstances for coming to Canada: For better job opportunities, stable social and political conditions, and independent life. However, had ambivalent feelings about leaving home.

B. Social Situation when Initial Arrival to Canada

1. Living Arrangement: Came alone to Toronto where she lived with a relative.
2. Employment/Education: Worked as a dishwasher in a restaurant in Toronto - hated it; went to take a typing course.
3. Initial Impression: Liked Toronto but could not find a job after the course.
4. Adjustment Issue: Language was the most difficult thing for her to adjust to initially.

C. Social Situation at the Time of the Interview

1. Living Arrangement: Was living alone in a suite in the Maples.
2. Employment/Education: Worked full time as a sewing machine operator. Also has another part time sewing machine operator job. In addition, she went to evening school for English classes.

Aspects of the job she liked the most were the challenge of the job but hated the piece work nature of the job.

3. Services/Organizations: Would find out information through the Newcomers Guide. For services, found the International Centre and IWECS very helpful. Would likely continue using IWECS in the future. Did not feel that she had enough information on services.
  - Went to temple on Sundays where she met people.
4. Relationships:
  - i) Coworkers: Had 2 good friends (Filipino) whom she met at work. She could talk to them but seldom saw the coworkers outside of work due to lack of time.
  - ii) Friendship: Would go to coffee with friends sometime - the contacts were initiated by both sides. Best friend was a married East Indian woman. Also had a good friend with whom she could share some personal information but not her most private concerns.
  - iii) Family: She had put in an application to sponsor her parents and a younger sister to come over here.
  - iv) Comment on relationship: Family, relatives and friends were important to single women; specifically friends if one had no family.
    - Still maintained contacts with relationships in India, writing them regularly.
    - Felt she was better understood by friends of her own ethnic origin. However, she found them very gossipy.
5. Single Status: She was going to have an arranged marriage - in fact, her fiance would be arriving in two years time. However, she would have preferred to go out first on dates.
  - Not having a husband meant loneliness but she still preferred to be single because she liked her freedom.
  - However, she also felt that one would be in a better position if one were married because of an additional income.
  - Having a job was very important for a single person because it allowed her to be self-sufficient.

6. Adjustment Problems:

- Isolation - due to a lack of someone to count on in a crisis situation, not having a husband/companion, and not having the English language ability.
- Sometimes when she did not understand things about the Canadian mainstream culture, her cousin would help to explain the issues to her.
- In general, her personality (hardworking, determined), and her social support network had helped her to somewhat fit into mainstream Canadian society.

7. Future Plan: Did not wish to go back to India as she preferred Canada.

- Felt that her situation could be improved after she improved her English. Would like to take a bookkeeping course.
- In the future, would go back to get married in India and come back to Canada. She hoped to have a big house and perhaps one child.



## BONNIE

<u>Age:</u>	58	<u>Ethnic Origin:</u>	Chinese
<u>Marital Status:</u>	Widowed	<u>Place of Birth:</u>	Hong Kong
<u>Education:</u>	14 years of formal training	<u>English Language Ability:</u>	Limited
<u>Date of Arrival to Canada:</u>	July, 1982	<u>Place Raised/Spent Most of Her Life:</u>	Hong Kong
<u>Occupation in Country of Origin:</u>	Educator		

A. Social Situation Prior to Coming to Winnipeg

1. Living Arrangement: Lived alone.
2. Reasons/Circumstances for Coming to Canada: Immigrated to Winnipeg to be with her children in July 1982, a few months after the death of her husband, intending to eventually go back to Hong Kong.

B. Social Situation on Initial Arrival to Winnipeg

1. Living Arrangement: Lived between two children's households since her arrival in Winnipeg, assisting them with household chores and looking after the children.
2. Employment/Education: When she first came, sought employment but had difficulty in finding a job she was trained for.
3. Adjustment Issues:
  - (a) Overall Impressions: Quiet city; initially excited by snow, later made her feel shut in; no fresh food, like in Hong Kong; housing was better here; getting out was hindered by cold and not knowing her way around.
  - (b) First Three Months: Major Problems: Not knowing the English language, particularly if a crisis arose; neighbours were not friendly.
  - (c) After Three Months: She went to the International Centre to study E.S.L. for a few months. During the cold months she quit because of difficulties with transportation.

- (d) First Year: Felt bored, lonely, excluded from mainstream society (could not understand T.V., radio, newspaper). Most significant adjustment factors in the first year were a lack of friends, difficulties in communicating, experiencing racism, not being used to the lifestyle here and the cold weather, and lack of familiarity with her new environment. With improvement of her language skills and an increase in her length of stay in Winnipeg, she could remember directions, street names and thus became more mobile and less lonely, bored or apprehensive. The first year was the most difficult time for her.
- (e) After One Year: Got to know the classmates she had met at the International Centre. She then had more telephone contacts and opportunities to go out, thus she felt less lonely and bored.

C. Social Situation at the Time of the Interview:

1. Living Arrangement: Lived with son, did the housekeeping and looked after his children.
2. Education/Occupation: Attended English classes which also taught her practical life skills.
3. Typical Day:
  - In summer, she attended E.S.L. classes at the International Centre. She would socialize after class with friends and classmates.
  - In winter, would go out occasionally on weekdays, have tea with friends on weekends or go out shopping with family, spend time at the library. At the time of the interview, was taking citizenship classes for 2 hours a week at the International Centre.
4. Services/Organizations:
  - See under Adjustment Issues
5. Relationships:
  - (a) Friendship (developed after 1 year)
 

Felt that there were 4 types of friends:

- (i) "Going-out friends" - group of friends to have coffee with, go to a movie or travel with. Of this group, she had two confidantes with whom she could discuss personal problems.
- (ii) "Seldom-going-out-together friends" - friends with whom she could share some personal information but were not confidantes.
- (iii) Acquaintances - met through the International Centre. Had no contacts with them after school term was over.
- (iv) Acquaintances met through children - People she met in family type of get-togethers.
- (v) Friends in Hong Kong - Still maintained contacts with friends in Hong Kong. Had 3 very good friends (confidantes) there.
  - Felt lonely at times due to limited socializing network. This made her become withdrawn and obsessed with worries. This was contrary to her lifestyle in Hong Kong.
- (c) Family: Two sons remained in Hong Kong, as did some other relatives. Visited occasionally, and felt more comfortable in Hong Kong as she had her own place there.

#### 6. Adjustment Issues:

- (a) Language: Lack of English impacted most significantly on practical, day to day issues and made her feel disconnected and at the periphery of society. This was largely due to problem in accessing updated information (thus dependent on others). Also could not access mainstream due to her non-involvement in the wage sector. In addition, felt at periphery because of no spiritual/intellectual dialogue with others - felt isolated because of this.
  - Children gave her some information, but did not want to depend on her children for everything. Was concerned about dealing with the mainstream ie. banking, with its special lingo, was very intimidating to her. Also experienced an inferiority complex because she did not understand what people were saying to her.
  - Felt better when she was introduced to one of the IWECS staff 2 years ago - knew she could go there if needed help.

- (b) Single Status: Felt singleness did not provide her with a sense of security - had no one to help out especially in a crisis situation and no one to talk to and consult with.
- Did not want to go to social settings because she was faced with couples there and felt "like a single, lonely boat all alone in the sea". Felt that both Hong Kong and Canadian cultures emphasized coupling.
  - When husband was still living, she could mix socially with friends of her husband. Since his death, his friends did not feel comfortable visiting her often.
- (c) Boredom and Loneliness: Becoming more used to being bored. Lack of support network created feelings of loneliness, but made a point of getting to know people, especially single people.
- (d) Cultural Barriers/Lifestyle Differences:
- Still trying to get used to the mainstream individualistic approach to life, e.g. when going together in a group, the mainstream way is to chip in to buy coffee. A Chinese person, on the other hand, would have bought coffee for the whole group. Felt like being an aquatic and a terrestrial animal at the same time living between 2 worlds.
  - Liked the pace of life here better than that in Hong Kong - slower pace and more relaxing. In Hong Kong, everyone was very impatient. Life here was more suitable for her.
  - As well, Hong Kong was not an orderly society - very competitive and had no life security. Here people had U.I.C., and other securities and relative absence of poverty. However, here one lacked the mutual aid support system as in Hong Kong.
  - Was still not used to Canadian food.
- (e) Services/Organizations: Lacked knowledge of available services; had difficulty accessing services.
- (f) Not enough time for self: Because of household tasks and caring for the children, she did not have enough time for herself. This increased her feelings of loneliness, boredom and isolation.

- (g) Not being able to find her way around: Would like to attend a Senior Citizen Drop-In Centre or a neighbourhood club, but does not know how to get to them.
- (h) Climate: Still not used to the darkness in the winter and the short days.
- (i) Lack of job skill training: Had no Canadian specialized training - no education license.

## CANDICE

<u>Age:</u>	32	<u>Ethnic Origin:</u>	Chinese
<u>Marital Status:</u>	Single, never Married	<u>Place of Birth:</u>	Hong Kong
<u>Education:</u>	11 years of formal schooling	<u>English Language Ability:</u>	Limited
<u>Date of Arrival to Canada:</u>	1983	<u>Place Raised/Spent Most of Her Life:</u>	Hong Kong
<u>Occupation:</u>	Sewing Machine Operator		

A. Social Situation Prior to Coming to Canada

1. Living Arrangement: Lived in a 3-storey house with family.
2. Employment/Education: Was a teacher for 9 years.
3. Reasons/Circumstances for Coming to Canada: Was dissatisfied with former job - wanted changes in both living and work environments. Other minor reasons included: some concerns over the social and political instability in Hong Kong as well as the desire to travel and to seek adventure. She co-invested in a business in Canada with a friend.

B. Social Situation After Initial Arrival in Canada

1. Living Arrangement: Lived with the business partner for a while before she moved away. Found the latter arrangement to be inconvenient because of differences in lifestyle.
2. Employment/Education: Worked in the business before finding a job as a sewing machine operator. Also started taking E.S.L. courses.
3. Relationship: Met some friends when she took E.S.L. course.
4. Initial Adjustment Problems:
  - Disappointed by business partner who was dishonest. Felt isolated, lonely, worried about not having a job.
  - Not used to the "environment" (bus services etc.).

- Had difficulties due to language barrier.
- First few months were the most difficult - considered going back to Hong Kong. However, decided to get her citizenship and then go back to Hong Kong, which gave her a goal.

C. Social Situation at the Time of the Interview

1. Living Arrangement: Living alone now.
2. Employment/Education: Obtained present job through recommendation of friend and IWECS. Normally, she heard about job vacancies through IWECS, word of mouth through friends and reading the newspaper.
  - Disliked not having enough work to do at her job and that it paid only minimum wage.
  - Knowing the English language at work was not an important factor - she only needed some basic understanding.
  - Could not work as a teacher as her qualifications were not recognized locally, and thus was limited in her employment. Lack of fluency in English was also a limiting factor.
3. Services/Organizations: Did not belong to any clubs or churches. Aware of International Centre (for E.S.L.) and IWECS (for U.I.C. employment, etc.).
4. Relationships:
  - i) Friendship: "When one did not have family in Canada, one depended on friends."
    - For information on services, etc. and practical help, she would approach 2-3 friends whom she would meet at least once per month.
    - Would still see some friends she had met initially through E.S.L. classes - some became good friends (3-4), although they were not very close; one of the reasons for this was because some of them could be gossipy.
    - Through work, she met some people and became friends (5-6 people). All of them were Chinese. They were not close friends but were people she could socialize with. All of them were women about the same age, most of them were married.

- Did not have confidantes. Felt lonely - needed friends for companionship and in whom she could confide personal problems.

ii) Family: Still had some family, relatives and friends living in Hong Kong. Maintained contacts through telephone conversations and correspondence.

iii) Female Contacts: Most of her contacts were with women friends.

iv) Boyfriend: Dating one mainstream, "Western" boyfriend.

6. Single Status: It was harder to be a single woman than be a married woman. Married woman had more options, e.g. husband supporting the wife to allow her to take courses. Husband and wife were interdependent on each other - unlike single women who were all alone and had no-one to depend on.

- Due to mainly economic reasons, it was difficult for single people to take chances in life, e.g. change career, take courses, etc. because they had no husband to help out.
- In the past, marriage had never been terribly important to her. Felt that people marry for security reasons. After she came to Canada, she has given more thought to marrying due to loneliness. Felt in need of long-term companion, i.e. more in need of a male companion. Admitted to be perhaps "less choosy" because of change of environment.

7. Adjustment Issues:

- The things she liked about living in Canada were the fact that she found people to be more honest, better services (U.I.C., medicare), easier to find jobs i.e. jobs with minimum wage, and hence more security. Disliked feeling bored in Canada because she had few friends/family with whom to socialize. Also disliked cold weather.
- Language was still a problem, although now had friends to help if she had a problem with the language.
- Some of the problems she still had in adjusting to life in Canada also included underemployment (not having a satisfying job); lack of job skill training (to improve marketability and income); cultural barriers; discrimination (felt discriminated on the job and through contacts with other people); not having the information about services, etc.; not being able to find her way around; financial problems; not understood/respected/recognized by mainstream people; no



family she could talk to; no husband (which leads to loneliness and absence of goal). Otherwise had coped due to 1) independent minded personality, 2) educational level and life experience had provided her with problem-solving skill, 3) goal to get citizenship and return to Hong Kong, and 4) some friends.

- When she felt lonely and depressed she would deal with these feelings through watching T.V. or going out with friends and confiding in friends about issues of concern.

8. Comments on -

- i) Support/Help: Most of the support/help she had received were of an emotional and practical nature - friends had been quite responsive in these areas. However, the lack of confidantes was a major problem, especially in crisis situations - financial and emotional supports would be critical in such situations.
- ii) Individuals of same ethnic origin whom she has met in Canada: Some were willing to help but generally found them lacking in providing mutual help/support. Finds those who had been in Canada for a shorter length of time to be more helpful.
  - Generally, found the individuals of the same ethnic minority to be gossipy, envious of others, selfish and back-biting. They were overconcerned with material possessions and keeping up with each other. Also, they were cliquish and it was difficult to break into their groups.
- iii) Issues that help her deal with difficulties in her life: Besides having friends who helped her to overcome difficulties, she managed to deal with problems because of her a) independent minded and extroverted personality and b) attitude towards her monies being swindled by her business partner.
- iv) About employment: A job provided economic independence, something to do, and thus was important.
- v) About decision to come to Canada: In retrospect, she did not have too many regrets - would have done it again because she had wanted to come and it was important to take risks and make changes. This had added to her life experience and further growth.

9. Future Plan: To remain in Canada.

## BIOGRAPH

<u>Age:</u>	32	<u>Ethnic Origin:</u>	Filipino
<u>Marital Status:</u>	Single, never Married	<u>Place of Birth:</u>	Philippines (Village)
<u>Education:</u>	9 years	<u>English Language Ability:</u>	Very limited
<u>Date of Arrival to Canada:</u>	May 28, 1982	<u>Place Raised/Spent Most of Her Life:</u>	Philippines

A. Social Situation Prior to Coming to Canada

1. Living Arrangement: Came to Winnipeg directly from the Philippines.
2. Employment: Was a sewing machine operator. Had been working since she was 17 years old.
3. Reasons/Circumstances for coming to Canada: For better job opportunities which would allow her to be economically better off. As well, family members here.
4. Other Salient Issues: Had a hard life in the Philippines - not enough money for food, clothes and for self.

B. Social Situation After Initial Arrival in Canada

1. Living Arrangement: Lived with married brother and his family. Came on her own initially. Parents and 2 sisters followed later. Five siblings remained in the Philippines.
2. Employment: Had no difficulty obtaining a job. Knowing English was not a necessity as she was working in a factory and there were many Filipinos also working there. It was however a problem when dealing with others outside of the Filipinos.
3. Initial Impressions: Liked it here: good money, easy to find a job.
4. Adjustment Issues: The most difficult adjustment issues for her were not having the English language skills, most especially outside of the workplace. Also, had difficulty adjusting to not having her parents here.

C. Social Situation at the Time of the Interview

1. Living Arrangement: Was living with her married brother and his family, two sisters and her parents in the brother's home.
2. Employment:
  - Job provided her own income, helped her to be self-sufficient, provided the opportunity to meet people and felt challenged by the demands of the job.
  - Did not like being moved around in her job or working double shifts.
3. Service/Organization: Had never belonged to any clubs, organizations. Needed information re services.
4. Major Concerns: Did not drive due to fear of slippery roads and being unable to read driving manual for written test.
5. Relationships: Felt that family, relatives and friends were very important to immigrant women, especially to single women.
  - Friendship: Had some friends but they were not close friends or confidantes. Most of her friends were Filipino because of the absence of communication barriers. Would see some of these friends outside of work.
  - Female friends and female family members were very important to her.
  - Not much time to socialize outside of family - too busy with making money.
6. Single Status: To her, not having a husband means loneliness (vs. discrimination or stigmatization).
  - It is hard to be single because of absence of a male companion.
  - Generally, did not feel that she was in a better/worse position as a single immigrant woman in comparison to other women because they all had their own set of problems.
  - Eventually wish to get married but not to live common-law. It was very important for her to get married.
  - Having a job is very important for her as a single person as it allowed her to be self-sufficient, to sponsor her fiance and to visit him in the Philippines.

7. Adjustment Issues: The things she liked about living in Canada included (i) having a stable job, and (ii) having a good life - she could buy anything she wanted here. However, she missed the relatives and friends, the climate and the customs and traditions in the Philippines.
- Felt that being a single person and an immigrant woman had an impact on her feelings of isolation because she did not have someone to go out with.
  - She said that she would have experienced more difficulties in fitting into the Canadian society if she did not have her family or the close-knit Filipino community. This could have been further improved if she had a husband. Moreover, she said that with the English language, being discriminated against and her short length of stay in Canada did not yet allow her to get used to a Canadian lifestyle.

## FAY

<u>Age:</u>	21	<u>Ethnic Origin:</u>	Chinese
<u>Marital Status:</u>	Single, never Married	<u>Place of Birth:</u>	Hong Kong
<u>Education:</u>	3rd year University	<u>Place Raised/Spent Most of Her Life:</u>	Hong Kong
<u>Date of Arrival to Canada:</u>	August 1983	<u>English Language Ability:</u>	Adequate
<u>Occupation:</u>	Student	<u>Living Arrangement:</u>	Living with mother and 2 sisters in own home.

A. Social Situation Before Coming to Canada

- Living Arrangement: Was living with family in Hong Kong.
- Employment/Education: Was a high school student.
- Reasons/Circumstances for coming to Canada:
  - to join older sister who sponsored her, her mother and a younger sister.
  - for better job and educational opportunities and improved living conditions.
  - also for travel and adventure - had always been a curious person.

B. Social Situation on Initial Arrival to Winnipeg

- Living Arrangement: Whole family initially lived in an apartment.
- Employment/Education: Went to school.
- Initial Impressions: Felt very positive about Winnipeg - Clean, fresh air, friendly people and quietness (Hong Kong was very noisy) - everything felt good and looked good to her.
- Adjustment Issues: Language and weather were major problems initially.

With the language problem, fortunately, she had a very supportive teacher who took the time to assist with language difficulties as well as taking a personal interest in her.

C. Social Situation at time of Interview

- Living Arrangement: Was living with family in a bungalow.
- Employment/Education: Spent a lot of time studying. Found after coming to Canada and going to University she had to study more. Wanted to be a dentist which meant a professional career for her.
- Spent a lot of time at the International Centre that International Centre was the place to get information but had never been there. Did not belong to any organizations.
- Relationships:
  - (i) Family: Mother provided practical help and also emotional support. Felt that mother/daughter relationship was very important - could confide in her problems. Stated that family was important.
  - (ii) Friendship: Friends helped with transition/adjustment to Canadian living by providing practical help and emotional support. Most of her friends were Chinese female classmates from Hong Kong.
    - Now had little contact with friends in Hong Kong.
    - Had a fiance in Winnipeg. Relationship with fiance was more important than relationship with other friends. Confided personal information to him. Would like to get married before her 30th birthday and have children. Both career and relationship were important to her however felt that career would be less important after one gets married.
- Spent a lot of time with women she felt that she was in a better position because these women depended on their husbands financially. In comparison to married mainstream women she felt that life was easier for them. However, felt that married women might feel more isolated because they could not go out as often.
 

In comparison to single mainstream women, life was easier for some of these women.

- Adjustment Issues: However, she felt that she had adjusted well in comparison to other people. Had a lot of difficulty initially because everything was very different. As well, there was the adjustment to the differences in culture, social, political and economic systems. Felt that her being adaptable had a lot to do with her own willingness to learn and in being able to more easily adapt. The second year in Winnipeg had been the worst for her in terms of adaptation to the new environment. At present she still feels that she is struggling to achieve her goal of obtaining a degree and eventually a career.

With regards to isolation, because she had been focussing her attention on achieving her goal, she had not had time to think about isolation and adjustment issues. However, she sometimes did experience isolation because of cultural barriers (not understanding mainstream culture) and language difficulties - (not speaking the English language fluently).

Although she believed that self-reliance was the most important issue in adjusting to life here, it might take her longer if she had to do it alone. Mother and fiance were the most important persons in helping to facilitate adjustment by helping her feel less isolated.

Felt optimistic about the future. Planned to stay in Winnipeg for a while. Missed family in Hong Kong - they wished to immigrate here.

## KATIE

<u>Age:</u>	33	<u>Ethnic Origin:</u>	East Indian
<u>Marital Status:</u>	Single, never Married	<u>Place of Birth:</u>	Kenya (Small town)
<u>Education:</u>	11 years	<u>English Language Ability:</u>	Good
<u>Date of Arrival to Canada:</u>	May 29, 1980	<u>Place Raised/Spent Most of Her Life:</u>	Kenya

A. Social Situation Prior to Coming to Canada

1. Living Arrangement: Lived with parents.
2. Employment/Education: Office clerk.
3. Circumstances/Reasons for Coming to Canada: Had always dreamed of wanting to come to Canada. Wanted to travel and break away from Kenya, which was restrictive for women. Felt educational and job opportunities were better here. Also wanted to break away from parents who wanted to arrange marriage for her. Had a sister living in Winnipeg.

B. Social Situation on Initial Arrival to Canada

1. Living Arrangement: Initially, came alone on a visitor Visa and stayed in Canada as a visitor for 7 months. Stayed with sister and brother-in-law.
2. Employment/Education: Started working as domestic worker for a family in 1984. Before that, worked for brother-in-law.
  - At the same time, she took some courses in the evenings.
3. First Impression:

First impression about Winnipeg: People were very friendly. She looked forward to the snow. Winnipeg was found to be vast and spread out; in Kenya, everything was very crowded.
4. Adjustment Issues:
  - (a) Employment/Education:
    - As she was on visitor's visa, she was very worried about status, particularly as she was unemployed for one year.



- When looking for a job after working for brother-in-law, she experienced the following problems:

- (i) racial discrimination - many employers wanted to hire Filipino or Eastern European domestic workers because they were more familiar with them.
- (ii) Lack of Canadian work experience - underqualified for job.

- When she applied for her landed immigrant status the first time, she failed because she was told that she did not socialize enough. She then joined the Filipino Domestic Association to get help in getting ready for the second interview. In her first interview, the immigration officer told her "to try harder to socialize to Canadian life... look at yourself". After the interview, she was angry for ending by thanking her.

(b) Relationships:

- (i) Family: Found family-oriented activities to be boring. Sister had been trying to match-make her with East Indian fellows from India.

C. Social Situation at the Time of the Interview

1. Living Arrangement: Worked as a live-in domestic worker.
2. Employment/Education: She worked about 10-12 hours per day but received pay for 8 hours per day.
  - She also took a course at this time.
3. Relationships:
  - Her parents and siblings were still living in Kenya.
  - Usually would telephone family in Kenya but would also write once per month.
  - Up until now, had had 3 attempts of match-making with East Indian fellows from India - found them having traditional expectations, e.g. wanting a dowry and wanting to know if she had property, etc.
4. Services/Organizations:
  - Received most of her information through T.V. and friends. Used Manpower and domestic worker placement agency.

- She would either contact the organizations themselves if she needed information, or ask brother-in-law and sister, friends and employers.
- She did not feel that she had enough information on services.
- Belonged to the Filipino Domestic Association.
- She would also go to the temple sometimes.

5. Adjustment Issues:

(a) Employment/Education:

- Having a job was very important as it allowed her to be self-sufficient, to expand her horizon and gave her something to do.
- Her domestic job, however, was boring, monotonous, lonely; therefore, upgrading was very important to her, so that she could eventually change her career.

(b) Relationships:

(i) People from same ethnic group - Did not understand them that well. Some East Indian groups were too busy-body and behaved as if they looked down on domestic workers. She found them suspicious of others and not very friendly, keeping their distance. They also liked gossiping and liked to place emphasis on material possessions and keeping up with each other.

(ii) Friends: Never had a boyfriend but felt friends to be very important, even after one is married.

- Most of her friends were single Filipino women over 30, who worked as domestics. But amongst them she only had one girlfriend in whom she could confide. Generally, found it hard to find a trusted friend (a very important issue).

(iii) No Husband and own family (children): This was a very important issue for her.

- Not being married, she experienced:

Discrimination: From both mainstream and Indian cultures, both expecting marriage.

Social Expectations: Felt that she should have a husband because a lot of women have husbands.

Stigmatization: Felt people stared at her when she was out alone.

- Re: being a single immigrant woman in comparison to:
  - Married immigrant women - She felt that she was in a better position as a single immigrant woman because she made her own decisions (very important).
  - Married mainstream women - felt she was in a worse position because these women have the security of a family relationship, hence were more assertive i.e. they knew what they wanted (especially in their marital relationship) and went for it.
  - Single Mainstream women: She was in a worse position because of language problems and not knowing how to get a man like they did.
- She wanted to get married so she could have children, and because she was getting older, but she believed it was fate that would bring people together.
- When feeling that she was struggling financially and emotionally, she would want a husband more than ever. Especially when she felt frustrated over her job situation and lifestyle.
- She used to think that maybe once she met a guy it would solve all of her problems.

(iv) Female Contacts: She could talk to them about "female things".

(v) Family: Missed the family back in Kenya. In Canada, her sister and brother-in-law were important to her - they provided her with the emotional and financial support.

(c) Isolation: Experienced isolation because of -

(i) Loneliness: She felt sexually frustrated and emotionally isolated, partly because she had no husband or male companion.

(ii) Insecure Feelings: "I don't know why I am not attractive and do not have qualifications, especially when it comes to having and keeping a

job - I feel dispensable because they can fire me".

- (iii) Being a "limbo"/lacking a sense of direction: Felt she needed more education (upgrading) to help her to find a better job and thus giving her a feeling of security.
  - (iv) Somewhat out of place with the mainstream Canadian Culture: She now knew more about the white lifestyle and culture and was better educated now. Once in a while, she still encountered problems because the lifestyle was so different than hers.
  - (v) Language: Sometimes an issue - not able to use more sophisticated words.
  - (vi) Not having the Canadian work experience: "I wish I was brought up here, everything will be easier".
  - (vii) Underemployment/lack of job skill training: She did not like being a domestic worker.
  - (viii) Discrimination: Felt discriminated sometimes by being Sikh and not being accepted by others because of her skin colour.
  - (ix) Climate: Prevented her from going out often.
  - (x) Other: Family and friends were very important to relieve isolation in Winnipeg.
- (e) Pace of Life: "People always rush around here".
  - (f) Financial Problems: Wished she had more money.
  - (g) Characteristics in relationship to mainstream society:
    - (i) Personality trait: Personality traits which helped in her adjustment include being curious, friendly, having a strong drive to improve herself, being self-disciplined and being independent-minded.
  - (h) Future:
    - Felt that her present situation could be improved and corrected by meeting some trusted friends plus a husband.
    - When she returned from a holiday to Kenya she hoped to find a nurse's aid job. She might want to go for her R.N. training later.

## PATRICIA

Age: 21 Ethnic Origin: Filipino

Marital Status: Single, never Married Place of Birth: Philippines

Education: 11 years of formal schooling Place Raised/Spent Most of Her Life: Philippines

Date of Arrival to Canada: December, 1981 English Language Ability: Good

Occupation: Sewing Machine Operator

Living Arrangement: Living with parents and three siblings in the Maples

A. Social Situation Before Coming to Canada:

1. Living Arrangement: Was living on family's farm in the Philippines (farming allowed the entire family to live comfortably).
2. Employment/Education: Just completed high school before coming to Canada with family.
3. Relationships:  
Family: Came from a big family. Came to Winnipeg with parents and 3 siblings. Married brother sponsored the family to immigrate to Winnipeg.
4. Reasons/Circumstances for Coming to Canada: Was ambivalent about coming because of having to leave boyfriend. Felt compelled to come because did not want to be left behind. Family wanted to immigrate because of perceived better educational and job opportunities in Winnipeg. Besides, the brother was prepared to sponsor them.

B. Social Situation After Having Initially Arrived in Canada:

1. Living Arrangement: Entire family lived together when they first arrived.

2. Employment/Education: When she decided to come to Canada, had expectation that she would go to college. Instead, she ended up supporting the family. A relative assisted in finding her a job as a sewing machine operator - started working one week after arrival to Winnipeg. Had problems with language barrier, lack of work experience and suitable educational background for the type of employment she was looking for.
3. Initial Impressions: Found it easy to obtain a job. Political climate was better here as she perceived Canada as a free country. However, expressed that there is "no place like home".
4. Adjustment Issue: The cold weather was the most difficult adjustment issue for her - felt isolated. Also people had no time here for others.

C. Social Situation At Time of Interview:

1. Employment/Education: A job was important because it allowed her to be self-sufficient and kept her occupied. Also, gave her the opportunity to meet people. But did not like the social status associated with the job. Wished to leave the garment industry sometime in the future.

2. Service/Organization: Was active with the Church. She did not feel she had enough information on services and resources.

3. Relationships:

Coworkers: Co-workers were friendly, socialized with best friend (a non-Filipino) and other Fillipinos at work.

Friendship: Still maintained contacts with friends in the Philippines. In general, had negative experiences with Filipinos in Winnipeg. However, some friends she met through church provided positive experiences as they shared the same beliefs as her.

- Had a caucasian boyfriend but ceased seeing him because of racial remarks he made.
- Best friend was a non-Filipino, who had been raised on a farm.
- Had a lot in common because of this. Would confide personal problems to this best friend. Also would go to her if needed money or information. They spent a lot of time together. She was like a sister.

Family: Main concern had been for parents to find stable jobs which they had not been able to do even with their English language ability. This left her having to support the entire family of six - felt burdened and stressed but laid faith in God.

- Female relatives were very important.

- Comment: Felt that relatives and friends were very important to immigrant women, but specifically to the single woman. This was because if one were married, life would be full with one's own family, husband and relatives. Felt that life would be lonely without family unless one were married.

4. Single Status: Getting married was not the most important thing for her at the time of the interview. Too busy with own family responsibility; also felt psychologically not ready yet. Marriage would be important sometime in the future, especially if she wanted to have children. Generally, she enjoyed being single now because of no marital responsibility (freer).

- She felt bored with married people. She found that the single mainstream women were more morally liberated.

5. Adjustment Issues: Some of the problems she still faced in adjusting to life in Canada included language difficulties (wished she could speak better English); cultural barriers; not being able to find her way around; financial problems; and not being respected/recognized by mainstream people. As well, she had encountered some isolated incidents of racism.

- Generally felt contented with her life now - but wished her father had a better job; that family members in the Philippines could join them here; that she could afford a house and that she knew how to drive. Looking into the future, she hoped "to serve the Lord", get married, have children and to go school.

Isolation: Did feel out of place with the mainstream Canadian culture - felt different. The following were also important issues that made her feel isolated:

- Not having someone she could socialize with.

- Not having someone she could confide personal situations/problems with when her best friend was not available.

- Not having someone she could count upon/lean on, especially in crisis situations.
- Not having a husband/male companion.
- Not having the Canadian work experience, hence not being able to get out of garment factory.
- Being discriminated against by others.
- Not feeling appreciated by friends because of different beliefs.
- Mother not being here.

Although she felt lonely sometimes, she felt she had a clear sense of direction and did not feel restless.

Being an immigrant woman (rather than a single person and an immigrant woman) had an impact on her feelings of isolation now and in the past.

- Characteristics that might have prevented her from fitting into the mainstream Canadian society included her shyness, personality, limited educational background, problem with fluency in English, dependency of family members on her, gender and age (which prevented her from mixing well with coworkers) racism and her inability to get a better job.



## SALLY

<u>Age:</u>	23	<u>Ethnic Origin:</u>	East Indian
<u>Marital Status:</u>	Single, never Married	<u>Place of Birth:</u>	Punjab, India
<u>Education:</u>	15 years of formal education - completed Bachelor of Science	<u>English Language Ability:</u>	Adequate
<u>Date of Arrival to Canada:</u>	August 28, 1983	<u>Place Raised/Spent Most of Her Life:</u>	Small Village in Punjab, India

A. Social Situation Prior to Coming to Canada

1. Living Arrangement: Was living with family in their own home in the village.
2. Employment/Education: Completed her Bachelor of Science degree. After graduation from college, she stayed at home and helped around the home and village.
3. Reasons/Circumstances of Coming to Canada: She and her parents came directly to Winnipeg on August 28, 1983 as landed immigrants, under the sponsorship of an older brother. She came because her parents decided to come and told her that she should come along. They wished to come to Canada because they felt that Canada is a technologically advanced country and hence had more and better jobs.

B. Social Situation After Initial Arrival to Winnipeg

1. Living Arrangement: Stayed with brother's family.
2. Employment/Education:
  - After her arrival she went to the Immigrant Women's Employment Centre where she was advised that she should get a job first, then take courses later. She then worked as a sewing machine operator before she quit the job in hopes of getting into Red River Community College - however, she was too late for the school year. After that, she worked full time in a hotel as a chambermaid.

- In the fall of 1984, she started evening E.S.L. classes. She also took some Grade 12 courses since her B.Sc. from India was recognized as Grade 11 only.

3. Relationship: Mother went back to Punjab in Winter of 1985 to deal with some family property.

4. First Impressions:

- Canada looked the same as in pictures.
- Thought the East Indians were happy here but found out later that they were not happy because of the similar problems they were facing here as they did back home.

5. Adjustment Issue:

- (a) Language: She worked very hard to improve her English language skills: she had a problem with her accent (people did not understand her) and was not fluent in the English language.
- (b) Food: In India, she always ate fresh food, not frozen food; also water and tea tasted different here.
- (c) Smaller accommodation: In India, she had larger accommodations and more of an open feeling because her family had a big farm.
- (d) Family, kin and friends: Missed her relatives, family and friends in India.

### C. Social Situation at the Time of the Interview

1. Living Arrangement: Lived with brother and his family and her father.

2. Spare Time: Helped with housekeeping and babysitting. Sometimes would read books on Canada to help her gain understanding of this country/and compare it with East Indian life.

3. Services/Organizations:

- She contacted Immigrant Access and IWECs about once per month for information on services and practical help, etc. These contacts were important to her.
- She was also aware of Employment and Immigration and the Newcomer's Guide.

- Felt she would need more information on services.
  - Did not belong to any clubs or organizations, but would go to temple once in a while whenever she had time. Would attend wedding ceremonies, etc.
4. Employment/Education: Was taking courses and working as a chambermaid. Hoped to attend the University within the next two years.
5. Adjustment Issues:
- (a) Employment/Education:
- A job was very important to her as a single person because she needed everything. It also provided her with an opportunity to meet people, improve her language and social skills.
  - Did not like menial, labour jobs - wanted something more satisfying because of her 15 years in school. In India, she helped out in the village because she was educated. She was respected for the volunteer work she did.
  - When looking for a job, she had the most difficulty in the following areas:
    - (i) language
    - (ii) lack of Canadian work experience and work skills.
    - (iii) not having the information on available programs and not understanding the regulations of these programs.
    - (iv) knowing where to apply for a job.
    - (v) being under qualified for the job she was seeking - her B.Sc. from India not being equivalent to a B.Sc. from Canada.
    - (vi) tendency to refer her to chambermaid, dishwasher jobs, etc. (rather than white collar work) by the Manpower Counsellor. Felt there was a tendency to underestimate the immigrant women's ability.
- (i) Friendship:
- In India, her friends were classmates, neighbours and family.

- In Canada, she has one good female friend who she knew from back home. This friend was married but they talked alot on the phone.
  - Had also met some of her brother's friends - the whole family would go to their homes for supper.
  - Made friends around the neighbourhood as well.
  - Lacked a confidante, a very important issue for her.
  - Also needed more friends for socialization, to provide encouragement and guidance.
- (ii) Family: Wrote to family back home very often.
- The main reason she lived with her brother was because it was more expensive to live on her own. As well, it would not be seen favourably by others if she lived on her own.
- (iii) Coworkers: She did not meet with any coworkers outside of work. Even at work, she did not take coffee breaks or lunch with anyone.
- (iv) Contact with Ethnic Minority Community: Most of her friends were East Indian friends and most of them were Punjabis. Some gave impression of being superior because they knew English well and had lived here longer.
- Generally speaking, felt social contacts in Canada were important.
- (v) Female Contacts: Female relationships are very important. Because of East Indian society, she could talk to women more comfortably about every situation and circumstance.
- (vi) Support Lacking: She missed her mother who could have helped make decisions and give encouragement, especially with regards to career.
- (vii) Changes/Crisis: Her brother helped her when she was faced with changes and crisis in her life.

- (c) Lack of Money: Necessitated need for a job, limited her options, particularly in regards to going back to school, visiting India. Also meant she had to live with her family.
- (d) Cultural/Lifestyle Differences:
- Did not feel she was better off in Canada because of having to start from "scratch" and problems with adjustment. In India, she felt more respected because of education, volunteer work. Had more leisure time, was financially independent. Had relatives and friends in whom she could confide.
  - Also had difficulty in adjusting to living under sister-in-laws "roof", with her ways of doing things.
- (e) Single Status: Married women had "entertainment" at home, doing things with their children and husband. Single woman had more freedom because she did not have to consult husband about any decisions.
- Not having a husband was not a major issue for her. Felt that married women also have their own set of problems.
  - In comparing herself to married immigrant women, she felt that she was in a better position because married women worried about children, husband, in-laws, house, etc. whilst single women had more freedom from worries and had the freedom to make their own decisions.
  - Comparing herself to the single mainstream woman, she felt that immigrant women had financial problems - they needed to be self-sufficient and have money to send home. Also they had to save money to visit parents back home.
  - Canadian single women had dating problems which did not exist in the East Indian culture. As well, Canadian parents were not responsible for their child after she reached the age of 18. For the immigrant woman, her parents and family would always take an interest in her and she might feel more secure because of her parental concern.
  - Her parents wished her to get married but she preferred to do that only when her career and education were settled.

- (f) Loss of Confidence: Because of difficulties in her English language ability and not being able to get into the various training programs, she lost her confidence.
- (g) Dependency: She and her father felt bad about having to depend on other family members. This led to uncertainty about the future.
- (h) Loneliness: Leads to floundering and losing sense of future direction.
- (i) "Back home": She missed "back home". It was difficult for her to leave the place where she was born and raised and to leave everything (own "real" home) and everyone behind.
- (j) Isolation: - Felt isolated and lonely because of the lack of confidante, not having a husband or boyfriend, not being fluent in the English language, not having the Canadian work experience (very important), not understanding the Canadian mainstream culture and missing her lifestyle and family in India.

In addition, felt isolated because she had no one who could provide good guidance - family did not know the educational system.

- Role of being a single person and an immigrant woman in relationship to isolation:

Being an immigrant woman (someone new in this culture) had a lot to do with her feelings of isolation at present; her isolating feeling had nothing to do with her being a single person, but rather the cultural restrictions imposed by being a woman.

- (k) Characteristics: Issues that might have prevented her from fitting into the mainstream Canadian Society:
  - (i) educational background: degree not being recognized.
  - (ii) lack of fluency in the language.
  - (iii) personality trait: visible minority and seen as quiet and shy.
  - (iv) length of stay in Canada.

(v) racism because of ethnic background. Discrimination against the Sikh's was one of the reasons she did not want to stay here.

- (l) Pace of life ("people are too busy").
- (m) Climate (misses the weather in India).
- (n) Housing (would be an issue if she decided to stay in Canada - would like her own place).
- (o) Not having the information about services, etc.
- (p) Not being able to find her way around.
- (q) No (leisure) time for herself.
- (r) Financial problems.
- (s) Absence of a very close friend she could talk to (about everything).
- (t) Lack of job skill training.
- (u) Future: Would like to finish university and obtain a degree. Afterwards, she would like to go back to India and find a job there - she liked to live there because she did not feel that she fit into this society; she saw India as her homeland.

**APPENDIX D**

**LETTERS OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT**



WOMEN PARTICIPANTS FOR RESEARCH STUDY ARE WANTED!!!!!!

ATTENTION SINGLE ASIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN:

I need your help to participate in a study that focusses on finding out more information about the daily lives of single Asian immigrant women. The information obtained will be used to help IMPROVE Health and Social Services Programs for immigrant women. If you are SINGLE - That is, have no family responsibility (no children you are responsible for) in Canada, have never been married, OR Are separated, Divorced or widowed AND Speak English, (except with Chinese women where both English and non-English speaking Chinese women are needed) Work outside of the home, Came to Canada directly, Have been in Canada between 1 and 5 years, Are at least 18 years old, Have a minimum of Grade 10 education, AND Are either Filipino, East Indian or Chinese Speaking, I NEED YOU.

All information will be kept strictly confidential.

Please call Amoy Ong at \_\_\_\_\_.

Your involvement will be greatly appreciated.

**LETTER OF CONSENT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in this study about the lives of single Asian immigrant women in Manitoba, conducted by Amoy Ong. She has explained that the research will assist her in the completion of her thesis for a Master of Social Work degree. I understand that the interview material will also be used to help professionals to improve their work with immigrant women. Further, Ms. Ong has explained that confidentiality will be strictly respected by disguising materials used publicly. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my involvement at any time.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATED: \_\_\_\_\_