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Expatriation Experiences of Chinese Immigrants in New Zealand: Factors Contributing to Adjustment of Older Immigrants

by Christopher Selvarajah

Abstract

This seminal research investigates the adaptation experiences of elderly dependent Chinese immigrants who have come to New Zealand under the Family Reunion Category between 1994 and 1998. The study involved a group-administered questionnaire to measure the various aspects of the adaptation experiences of 105 elderly dependent Chinese from China aged 50 years and over. The data set was subjected to ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis and Factor Analysis to analyse and establish relationships between variables. The results confirmed that there were five main factors that influence the living conditions of the elderly dependent Chinese immigrants in New Zealand. These were, in order of severity, communication in the English language, medical care, transportation, cost of living and interestingly relationships with other family members. The study also confirmed that age, length of time in New Zealand, and the need to stay in New Zealand permanently influenced the adaptability of the elderly Chinese immigrants in New Zealand.

Introduction

In the last decade, the size of the Chinese population in New Zealand has grown from 26,616 in 1986 to 81,309 in 1996 (*Statistics New Zealand*, 1997). About 70 percent of these Chinese New Zealanders were part of the 'new wave' of immigrants who came to New Zealand after 1987. The new wave was a result of the introduction of the Business Immigration Policy in 1987 and the Points System in 1991, designed to import immigrants with professional skills and capital for investment (Ip, 1995).

Following the wave of immigration of younger Chinese, a large number of elderly dependent parents also immigrated to New Zealand under the Family Reunion Category (FRC). According to *Statistics New Zealand* (1997), the number of elderly dependent Chinese immigrants aged 50 years and over increased from 2,641 in 1986 to 7,089 in 1996. For the purpose of this research, an elderly dependent immigrant is defined as an ethnic Chinese above the age of 50 and who has immigrated to New Zealand under FRC between 1994 and 1998 from China. In a new environment, many of the new elderly Chinese immigrants are perceived to be suffering from language difficulty, the effect of changing family filial relationships, discon-

tent, stress and culture shock. As elderly dependent family members of an ethnic minority group, they have also not received much attention in the New Zealand society.

This research is seminal in the sense that this is the only study known to the researchers that looks at the adaptation patterns of elderly parents who have migrated to be with their children in an adopted country.

Literature Review

New Zealand is an immigrant nation on the Pacific rim, similar to Australia, Canada and the United States. Until the mid-1980s, immigration policies favoured the entry of people from Australia, the United Kingdom and countries in Western Europe. With the abandonment of the preference or selective immigration in 1986, immigration to New Zealand was open to all nationalities based on equitable selection criteria. The new immigrants to New Zealand are culturally different to the immigrants who had come from the more traditional nations, such as the United Kingdom and other Western nations. Understanding these differences, in a small way is what this research intends to do. Specifically, this research looks at the impact of the cultural variable 'filial piety', a highly cherished value among the Chinese, on the expatriation process of the elderly dependent Chinese.

Filial Piety

The beliefs that form the basis of the Chinese family unit can be traced directly to Confucius (551-479 BC), whose philosophies had an over-arching influence on Chinese social and political life for more than 2000 years (Smith, 1991). The core values that are cherished among the traditional Chinese families includes, the patriarchal nature of the society, filial piety as a set of moral principles, duty, obligation, service, importance of family name, and self-sacrifice to maintain order. These core values characterised Chinese family relationships. According to Li (1985), filial piety is three-fold: to have gratitude for the care given by one's parents, to respect and love one's parents, and to be attentive to one's parents' desires. Complete devotion to parents was expected (Ho, 1986). Such devotion was taught in childhood through emphasis on obedience, proper conduct, moral training, and acceptance of social obligations.

The preferred parent-child relationship remains one of mutual interdependence (Davis-Friedmann, 1991). This aspect of the Chinese culture is different to the western norms where, independence between family members is stressed from an early age.

In recent studies on overseas Chinese communities, the research findings indicates a shift from the traditional extended family, where two or more nuclear families related by blood under patriarchal lineage live together as a single family unit, to the nuclear family made up of parents and their de-

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pendent children (Chow, 1983; Li, 1988). These changes, taking place in a single generation and away from familiar surroundings, can be extremely testing for the elderly who have been brought up to respect and honour filial piety. The deviation from cultural values by the younger generation and the gerontological issues that the elderly Chinese face in a new environment can be highly stressful.

The Theory of Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Generally, cross-culture adjustment is conceptualized as the degree of psychological comfort with various aspects of a host country (Black, 1988; Oberg, 1960; Nicholson, 1984). In the past, researchers such as, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1962), Oberg (1960), and Torbiorn (1982) have viewed cross-culture adjustment as a unidimensional phenomenon. In recent years, however, researchers have looked at cross-cultural adjustment as a multifaceted phenomena where the expatriate and spouse adjust to work, the host environment and interact with host nationals (Black and Stephens, 1989).

Much of the theoretical foundation for cross-cultural adjustment research is based on Oberg's (1960) work on culture shock. Later, scholars such as Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1962) and Torbiorn (1982) also added important contributions. Essentially, these scholars suggest that when people first enter a new culture, they are not sure what behaviour is acceptable. Over time they discover that many behaviours which were acceptable in their home country are not acceptable in the host country and vice versa. Consequently, many symptoms of culture shock are in part a function of the stress induced by the behavioural expectation, differences and the accompanying uncertainty with which the individual must cope. Thus, the basic cross-cultural adjustment process is the reduction of uncertainty by learning which behaviours are appropriate in the new culture and which ones are not. Therefore, factors that tend to reduce the uncertainty of what to do and when to do it or what not to do and when not to do it in the host country culture generally facilitate adjustment (Brett, 1980; Black, 1988; Church, 1982). On the other hand, factors that increase the uncertainty tend to inhibit adjustment.

Once an individual has arrived in a foreign culture, there is usually a short "honeymoon" phase before the "adjustment" phase (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1962; Harris and Moran, 1991; Selvarajah, 1998; 2000; Torbiorn, 1982). The honeymoon phase usually occurs within the first few weeks to two months after arrival and is characterised by fascination with all the "new" and "interesting" aspects of the culture (Adler, 1986). This fascination occurs because the individual has not yet had to cope seriously with demands of day-to-day life in the new culture. However, once the individual is past the honeymoon phase, then there is usually a decline in morale, after which the individual gradually, over time and to some extent through trial

and error, learns what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. This learning usually results in adjustment to the new culture.

Since immigrants go through a similar process of cross-cultural adjustment as expatriates (Kim, 1977, 1988; Kim and Gudykunst, 1987), many of the adjustment issues raised in expatriate studies are equally relevant to immigrants. Unless stated, reference to expatriate studies is deemed to be of relevance to the current study on elderly dependent Chinese immigrants to New Zealand.

Gerontological Literature

A review of the gerontological literature indicates that information and studies about elderly immigrants is deficient despite the changing racial composition of countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the US that have received large number of immigrants from Asia. The implication of aging within ethnic groups is still largely unexplored. The elderly Chinese in New Zealand, for example, have received little attention in articles written on immigration groups and in the planning of community-based services for the elderly or consumers of social services.

A number of theories have been forwarded in support of acculturation experiences of the elderly. Some of the commonly discussed theories include disengagement theory, assimilation theory and modernisation theory. Disengagement is defined as an inevitable process in which the elderly individual and society made a gradual and mutual withdrawal from each other (Cumming, 1976). This process is described as universal, desirable and satisfying. The disengagement theory claims that an increased preoccupation with the self occurs when the elderly withdraw completely from the society by means of decreased emotional investment in people and objects in the environment as well as decreased interaction with others (Driedger and Chappell, 1987:14).

As a corollary, the activity theory assumes that moral and life satisfactions are a function of continued active participation in vital spheres of life (Colen and McNeely, 1983:18). This theory claims that high social involvement and activity are major elements of successful aging (Markides and Mindel, 1987:26). This view suggests that the elderly have similar social and psychological needs to middle aged people (Driedger and Chappell, 1987:14). Activity theory thus indicates that the individual who continues to be active experiences optimal aging.

The disengagement theory and activity theory places emphasis on the 'pathology' of elderly people who are maladjusted, or with low morale and life satisfaction (Kart, 1987:79). As a result, social inequality and other structural bases of health and social problems of the aged are ignored (Colen and McNeely, 1983:19). They therefore do not reflect the historical and everyday experiences of the elderly within ethnic minorities.

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Until the 1960s, the theme of assimilation dominated race and ethnic studies in New Zealand and overseas (Li, 1986; Pearson and Thorns, 1983). Assimilation is defined as 'the process whereby people of diverse origins conform to a single or amalgamated culture' (Li, 1988:129). As Gordon (1961:67) indicates, assimilation implies that immigrants are expected to abandon their tradition, customs and practices in order to conform to the values and norms of the majority. He distinguished, in the process of assimilation, two types: behavioural assimilation (also referred as acculturation), and structural assimilation. The behavioural assimilation involves changes in cultural patterns of the immigrant to those of the host society. The behavioural assimilation consists of intrinsic and extrinsic traits. The intrinsic traits are norms such as religious beliefs, ethical values, customs and practices, sense of common past, language and music tastes. The extrinsic traits include dressing, manners, and emotional expression.

Structural assimilation applies when the immigrant becomes a member of cliques, clubs and institutions of the host society (Gordon, 1961:70). In primary group relations, the immigrant forms intimate, face-to-face relationships with close friends and in social groups. Secondary group relations occur when the immigrant participates in association and church activities where relationships are impersonal.

In the assimilation theorist point of view, the ethnic family immigrating to a host country is assumed to lose its cultural traits and distinctiveness over time as members become assimilated into the host society. Thus, this theory implies that the provision of support for the elderly in a traditional Chinese immigrant family is expected to decline from the first generation to the next as the family assimilates into the host community.

Modernisation theorist claim that as nations modernize and industrialise, the agrarian fabric of society where the elderly are an integral part of the family changes. The status of the elderly tends to decline as older people become less useful and less important to society (Driedger and Chappell, 1987; Markides and Mindel, 1987). The theory tends to romanticise ethnic family life and argues that traditional families are supportive of their elders, whereas modern families are less supportive (Payne and Strain, 1990; Rosenthal, 1986).

The modernist view is limiting in the sense that it regards culture as static (Markides and Mindel, 1987; Peil, 1991; Rosenthal, 1986). The theory does not accommodate changes that will take place as the traditional family acculturates in the host environment. Empirical evidence seems to also suggest that ethnic subcultures develop in response to circumstances in a host society (Markides and Mindel, 1987). As Rosenthal (1986) forwards the view that ethnic differences in family support for the elderly may be a factor of economic exigencies and the dynamics of discrimination.

Based on the literature above, the research addresses the following question:

What are the cross-cultural adjustment experiences of elderly dependent Chinese immigrants who settled in Auckland in the five-year period 1994-1998?

Specifically, the following three hypotheses developed from the literature review and the research question are forwarded for testing:

- H1:** The age of the elderly dependent Chinese immigrant influences their adaptability in New Zealand.
- H2:** The length of stay in New Zealand influences the adaptability of the elderly dependent Chinese in New Zealand.
- H3:** The need to stay permanently in New Zealand influences the adaptability of elderly Chinese immigrants in New Zealand.

Research Method

Both a questionnaire survey and interview technique were employed in the research. A self-administered questionnaire back translated into Mandarin was distributed randomly to groups of elderly dependent Chinese immigrants living in Auckland. Having identified sixteen groups where the elderly Chinese congregated for social activities such as *Tai Chi* exercises, ballroom dancing, English classes, Chess and *majong* in East Auckland, West Auckland and Central Auckland, the questionnaires were distributed to five of these groups. Each group consisted of 40 to 50 people who participated in group activities once or twice per week. In total 208 questionnaires were distributed to elderly Chinese from the People's Republic of China and who arrived between 1994 and 1998. After appropriate follow-up, a total of 199 questionnaires were returned, yielding an effective return rate of 57.2 percent. Of these 105 were useful.

To capture information about the respondents, the questionnaire consisted of the background of individuals and the family, regular activities engaged in, adjustment patterns and factors that influence their living conditions. The questionnaire had both normative and ordinal measures. The ordinal questions were standardized to 5-point scales anchored at each end where 1 represented low value and 5 represented high value.

The data was subjected to factor analysis, Kruskal-Wallis tests and ANOVA for the purpose of exploring relationships between variables.

Five interviews were conducted with the respondents who agreed to participate in telephone interviews. One of the researchers over a two-week period conducted interviews with three females and two males for approximately 10 to 15 minutes each. The interview focused on issues relating to their relationship with the family members only.

Findings

Table 1 illustrates the demographic profile of the elderly Chinese dependents in this survey (N=105).

Table 1: Demographic and Profile of the Respondents					
Age	%	Sex	%	Overseas experience of spouse	%
50-59	22	Male	50	Yes	74
60-69	67	Female	50	No	26
>70	11				
Employment	%	Number of family members	%	Domicile	%
No looking for job	70	<3	10	Living with son/daughter	85
Seeking job	30	3	13	Living away from son/daughter	12
		4	23	No response	3
		5	34		
		>5	20		
		Regular activities (multiple response)	%	Time in NZ (in years)	%
		Playing majong	13	<6 Months	5
		Dancing	33	6-12 months	17
		Learning English	71	1-2 years	35
		Shopping	31	2-5 years	43
		Exercise	83		
		Taking care of grandchildren	47		

The majority of the respondents are in the 60-69 age group, and the sample has an even distribution of men and women. 43 percent of the sample have been in New Zealand for more than two years (under five years) followed by 35 percent having lived between one and two years. Of the 105 respondents, 89 (85%) are living with their children while 12 percent are living on their own. The distribution of respondent's family members indicates that the majority have over four family members living in New Zealand (76%). 30 percent of the respondents have responded that they were seeking employment while the majority (70%) have indicated that they were not looking for employment.

Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to measure the differences between responses of factor groups. In this study, this method was used to ex-

plore the relationships between the ordinal variable with selected nominal variables such as age, sex, length of stay in New Zealand and the home providers.

Kruskal-Wallis test					
Age (mean)					
Variables	50-59	60-69	Over 70	P-values	
Q13. Immigration to NZ helpful to the family	4.217	3.603	3.000	0.005	
Q22. Feeling stressed	3.000	2.250	1.667	0.002	
Kruskal-Wallis test					
Length of stay in New Zealand (mean)					
Variables	<6 months	6-12 months	1-2 years	2-5 years	P-value
Q26. Make effort to learn English	2.800	2.412	3.889	3.091	0.000
Q27. Try to understand local culture	3.000	2.059	3.054	2.767	0.028

Table 2 shows that the respondents felt that immigrating to New Zealand was helpful to the family ($p=0.005$). This supports the notion of the role played by parents in the extended family. However, being in New Zealand and providing support to the family is now seen to be stressful ($p=0.0002$). The stress may be due to the role being carried out in a different environment where perceptions of the providers and the respondents may be changing. The younger age group (50-59) perceive that their presence is of greater help to the family than the over 70 age group and equally the 50-59 age group also perceive more stress than the older groups.

The length of time spent in New Zealand by the respondents is significantly related to learning English and understanding the local culture. The results seem to indicate that the respondents who have lived in New Zealand between one and two years perceive strongly about studying English and also in trying to understand the local culture. Expatriate studies have shown a 'u-curve' effect, that is, after the initial 'honeymoon' phase, followed by a period of serious psychological reasoning the expatriate looks seriously at the adjustment factors (Furham and Bochner, 1986; Kim, 1988; Oberg, 1960).

ANOVA

In the following section, adjustment and living conditions in the New Zealand environment are tested to identify the effect that these have on the de-

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pendent elderly Chinese. To cross-test this relationship, using ANOVA, two meaningful indices, ‘ADJUSTMENT’ and ‘INF FACTOR’ were composed as interval variables from the sum of selected ordinal variables. Then tests were conducted to explore the relationship between these indices and the nominal or ordinal variables by using the meaningful indices as independent variables, while using nominal or ordinal variables as the dependent variables. Residual analysis was performed to find out if there was significant difference between the indices and each of the nominal variables and the result showed that there were no significant distribution problems that can harm the assumptions of the ANOVA test.

ADAPTATION

The ADAPTATION index was composed of ordinal variables: Q24 Participating actively in ethnic social groups, Q25 Association with New Zealanders, Q26 Making effort to learn English, Q27 Trying to understand the local culture, and Q28 Family coping well in the local culture. In performing ANOVA, a significant result was found between response on time spent in New Zealand and ADJUSTMENT ($p=0.013$). The respondents who have lived in New Zealand between one and two years have the highest level of adaptation. This seems to be the period that the respondents are starting to address the issues relating to their expatriation seriously such as making an effort to learn English and trying to understand the local culture (Table 2). The results also show that the six to 12 months represents the lowest point in their adaptation process. This period is immediately after the ‘honeymoon’ period of the first six months.

When asked if the respondents planned to stay permanently in New Zealand, 32 percent responded in the affirmative, 17 percent have decided to leave New Zealand and the remaining 51 percent are undecided. Significant results were observed when ANOVA test was performed to establish the relationship between staying permanently and ADAPTATION (Table 3). The results show that when the respondents have not adjusted well would prefer to leave New Zealand permanently.

Table 3: Relationship of ADAPTATION to staying permanently in New Zealand				
ADAPTATION (N=89) (Q24 + Q25 + Q26 + Q27 + Q28)	Q29 Staying permanently in NZ	Mean	P-values	N
	Yes	16.719	0.032	33
	No	14.333		18
	Not decided	14.939		49

INF FACTOR

Table 4 defines the five factors that have the highest level of influence in the elderly dependent Chinese. These are language ($X=4.495$), medical care ($X=3.867$), transportation ($X=3.762$), cost of living ($X=3.117$), and relationships with family members ($X=3.106$). The sum of the responses of these five factors composed the index INF FACTOR.

Table 4: Factors Influencing Respondents' Living Conditions				
Variables	Factors	N	Mean	SD
Q31-LAN	Language	103	4.495	0.948
Q32-MCA	Medical Care	98	3.867	1.190
Q31-TRN	Transportation	101	3.762	1.343
Q31-Col	Cost of living	94	3.117	1.277
Q31-RwF	Relationship with family members	94	3.106	1.274
Q31-WO	Work opportunity	90	2.933	1.490
Q31-ACC	Accommodation	96	2.833	1.434
Q31-FO	Food	98	2.541	1.159
Q31-CUL	Local culture	90	2.522	1.134
Q31-RwL	Relationships with locals	92	2.522	1.288
Q31-EDU	Grandchildren's education	86	2.465	1.014
Q31-G&E	Goods and equipment	86	2.314	1.210
Q31-PPE	The New Zealand people	88	2.273	1.080
Q31-GB	Government bureaucracy	89	2.135	1.002
Q31-CLI	Climate	89	2.124	1.397
Q31-REL	Religion	88	2.034	1.129

ANOVA tests were carried out to establish the relationships between INF FACTOR and each nominal variables such as age, sex, length of stay in New Zealand, the home providers, number of family members, and whether the respondents were planning to stay permanently in New Zealand. Two significant results were established between INF FACTOR and length of stay in New Zealand, and the home provider (Table 5).

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Table 5: INF FACTOR and Nominal Variables

Variables (N=86)		Means	P-values	N
Q4. Length of stay in NZ	<6 months	21.000	0.031	4
	6-12 months	19.929		14
	1-2 years	17.380		30
	2-5 years	17.730		41
Q5. Home Provider	Son	18.094	0.029	32
	Daughter	18.651		43
	Friends	17.333		3
	Others	14.250		8

The results in Table 5 suggests that the longer the period of stay in New Zealand, the less the influence of the INF FACTOR on the respondents ($p=0.031$). The results also seems to suggest that when the elderly dependent Chinese stay with providers other than their children, language, medical care, transportation, cost of living and relationships with family members is less of an influence on them ($p=0.029$). This perception may be due to the greater independence the dependent elderly Chinese are able to exhibit when they are not dependent on their children. Being away from their children, they have to have greater communication skills, resort to greater self-care, be self reliant on transportation, manage living expenses, and may perceive less control from family members.

Significant relationships were also found between INF FACTOR and trying to understand the local culture and family coping in the local culture. The results in Table 6 shows that the more the respondents understand the local culture, the less the influence of the INF FACTOR ($p=0.002$). Similarly, when the family is coping well in the local culture the effect of INF FACTOR is less ($p=0.006$). This suggests that the more effort the respondents place on understanding the New Zealand culture and when the family have adapted well in the local culture, the effects of language, medical care, transportation, cost of living, and relationships with family members become less important.

Variables	Scales	Mean	P-value	N
Q27. Trying to understand local culture (N=87) 1 = not trying 5 = trying	1	19.615	0.002	13
	2	18.368		19
	3	18.274		29
	4	18.550		20
	5	9.667		6
Q28. Family coping in the local culture (N=89) 1 = not coping 5 = coping	1	16.667	0.006	6
	2	19.660		10
	3	18.211		38
	4	19.200		25
	5	14.300		10

Factor Analysis

To study the different dimension of the respondent's expatriation experiences, the survey data relating to their experiences was subjected to factor analysis. The data was summarised and four dimensions or factors are identified in Table 7.

Variables	F1	F2	F3	F4	Communality
Q13. Respondent's immigration helpful to family					
Q14. Happiness in home country					
Q15. Happiness in the first two months					
Q17. Experience now		0.775			0.789
Q18. Spouse experience now		0.776			0.712
Q19. Family experience	0.699				0.659
Q20. Level of happiness of family	0.800				0.733
Q21. Feeling useful and needed	0.563		0.504		0.595

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Q22. Feeling stressed				0.783	0.684
Q23. Things to look forward to	0.760				0.721
Q24. Involvement with ethnic groups		0.662			0.615
Q25. Association with locals					
Q26. Effort to learn English					0.684
Q27. Understanding local culture					0.775
Q28. Family coping	0.670				0.524
Principal Component Analysis					
Factor	Eigenvalue (>1)	Cumulative %	Variance %		
Factor 1: Family	4.4024	29.3	20.4		
Factor 2: Experience	1.8353	41.6	14.7		
Factor 3: Effort	1.5588	52.0	13.3		
Factor 4: Contentment	1.2886	60.6 (>60%)	10.8		

Table 7 shows the Varimax rotated loadings for the four factors explaining the dimensions of the respondent's expatriation experiences. In this research, the loadings with absolute value and the communality greater than 0.5 are considered in determining meaningful factors. The four identified factors are:

Factor 1: Family. This factor measures the importance of family-responder adjustment dimensions which are represented by the family's experience in New Zealand, family happiness, family coping in the local culture, the respondent's usefulness and need to the family, and future orientation of the dependent to the family.

Factor 2: Experience. This factor measures the importance of respondent's adjustment dimensions and this single factor represents the respondent's individual experience, the spouse's experience in New Zealand, and the respondents' involvement in activities organised by the Chinese ethnic groups.

Factor 3 Effort: This factor represents the respondents effort in adjusting to the new environment and it measures how they perceive their usefulness and need to the family, effort placed on learning English, and in understanding the local culture.

Factor 4: Contentment. This factor represents a single variable 'feeling stressed' and it suggests that the respondents are generally contented in the

new environment. However, only one variable loaded in this group and as such this factor cannot be considered meaningful. The Varimax rotation clearly states that this variable does not relate to any other variable and is a single dimension in itself. However, this factor forming a separate category by itself indicates its uniqueness and may provide insights into the relationships of the factors. It is with this understanding that this factor will be employed.

ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to study the relationship between each Factor and the nominal variables: age, length of stay in New Zealand and whether the respondent was planning on staying in New Zealand permanently. This is reported in Table 8.

Table 8: Relationship between Factors and age, length of stay and residency		
Q1. Age Groups	Factor 2	Factor 4
50-59	0.2736	0.6147
60-69	0.0257	0.0753
Over 70	-1.2626	1.3993
P-values of ANOVA	0.008	0.000
P-values of Kruskal-Wallis	0.027	0.000
Q4. Length of stay	Factor 3	
Under 6 months	-0.3855	
6-12 months	-0.7796	
1-2 years	0.3928	
2-5 years	-0.0375	
P-value of ANOVA	0.008	
P-value of Kruskal-Wallis	0.007	
Q29. Staying permanently in NZ	Factor 1	Factor 2
Yes	0.3138	0.3361
No	-0.7781	-0.0393
Not decided	-0.0288	-0.2312
P-value of ANOVA	0.01	0.07
P-value of Kruskal-Wallis	0.03	0.05

Table 8 shows that the younger the respondents, the more involved they are in activities organised by the Chinese ethnic groups and they per-

ceive that their spouses are happy in New Zealand. However, in regard to contentment, the Over 70 age group have reported that they are less stressed. This finding is perhaps due to less expectation and pressure by the family and society generally places on people in the much older age group.

Respondents who have lived between one and two years in New Zealand have reported that they perceive themselves to be more useful and needed by the family and in support of adapting to the environment are keen in learning English and in understanding the local culture. In interpretation of the results, one has to look for support of the U-curve theory (Oberg, 1960) where it is stated that active adjustment to a new environment is usually after a period of six to 12 months and this is reflected in this study.

The respondents who are planning to stay permanently in New Zealand are in support of their involvement in the family and perceive themselves as being useful and needed, their spouses are happy in the new environment and they are able to balance their lifestyle by involving in ethnic group activities, and generally are optimistic of their future. The opposite effect is witnessed in the groups that have decided to leave and who are undecided about staying in New Zealand.

Discussion

In this study, language difficulty was selected by the elderly dependent Chinese as the first dominant factor influencing their living conditions in New Zealand. The ability to communicate in English seems to be the most critical measure of successful integration. The effort to learn English is compounded as older people generally find mastery of a new language difficult and the older Chinese have usually a stronger affinity to maintain and perhaps preserve the Chinese language and culture in a new environment. Living condition factors impacting on the elderly, such as language, medical care, transport, and cost of living limit their choice of where they can live. Living with their children is seen as of mutual benefit where children provide security while the elderly provide physical help.

Relationship with family members was listed as the fifth important factor that influenced their living conditions. 85 percent of the respondents live with their children while 12 percent live away from their children. The traditional role of elderly Chinese parents in the extended family system is based on filial piety where children honour the parents and parents are duty-bound to provide nurturing support to a growing patriarchal family environment. Davis-Friedmann (1991) states that younger family members regard the role of the elderly in household work and childcare as being important for the maintenance of the family's lifestyle in traditional Chinese families. This lifestyle may, however, not remain the same in a different environment as explained by two interview participants. The first interviewee

remarked on the change in environment and the pressure placed on the family as a factor for this change.

Of course, it is good if my children can take care of me. However, it is very difficult to achieve this in New Zealand because they have their own lives to live, and are constantly under pressure to earn a living. In reality, I cannot expect them to look after me.

The second interviewee's response related to the 'loss of face' in getting support from a daughter's family, especially in a new environment where day-to-day demands are greater and may lead to remarks that may hurt them.

No matter how good my relationship with my daughter was when we were in China, it won't be the same in New Zealand. It (closeness) will spoil the relationship if I stayed long periods with her family.

These insights may provide an understanding of the different lifestyles of their children in New Zealand compared to that in their home country. The above comments may appear to contradict the concept of filial piety among some new Chinese immigrant families and challenge the commonly held view that the elderly members of Chinese families live comfortably in a multigenerational household.

The results of this study suggest that the adjustment process experienced by the elderly dependent Chinese immigrants in the New Zealand environment is based on a number of factors. The acculturation process is particularly influenced by several variables such as age of the dependents, length of time in New Zealand, the experiences of the family members, and the ability to cope in the new environment.

The younger group (50-59) of elderly dependent Chinese immigrants thought that immigration to New Zealand was helpful to their children's families ($p=0.005$). However, they have indicated high stress levels ($p=0.002$). The high stress may be attributed to their inability to gain employment as a way of supporting the family income. A majority in this age group have been looking for employment. This age group have also indicated that seeking the comforts of their own culture to socialize is a way of adjusting to the new environment.

The elderly dependent Chinese who have lived in New Zealand between one and two years perceive greater need to learn English ($p=0.000$) and greater need to understand the local culture ($p=0.028$). The respondents who have lived for a period of six to 12 months perceive less need to learn English or to understand the local culture. The results also implies that the longer the period of stay in New Zealand, the less influence by factors such as language, transportation, medical care, cost of living and relationship with family members. Oberg (1960) and Selvarajah (2000) indicate that

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people in the honeymoon phase are characterised by fascination and enthusiasm, and maintain friendly but superficial relations with the locals. The experiences of the dependent immigrants seem to reflect the acculturation models of honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment (Oberg, 1960) and pre-departure, initial experience, gestation and adjustments (Selvarajah, 2000).

The results of this study showed that the more the respondents understand the local culture ($p=0.002$), and the more the family copes in the local culture ($p=0.006$) the less the effect of living conditions, such as language, medical care, transportation, cost of living, and relationship with family members impacting on the adjustment process of the dependent Chinese immigrant. Selvarajah (2000) and Thompson (1986) suggests that the experiences of the family can influence the expatriate's adjustment to the host environment and play a key role in the success or failure of the expatriate. The total positive and negative experiences of the immigrant and the family may affect how the elderly dependent Chinese immigrant adjusts and reacts to the foreign environment.

In this study, factor analysis showed that the respondents who plan to stay permanently in New Zealand, responded positively ($p=0.01$) to 1) feeling useful and needed by the family, 2) the spouse is happy, 3) involvement in activities organised by ethnic groups, and 4) positive outlook for the future. The people who responded that they wish to leave New Zealand permanently had lower level of adjustment, adaptation and participation ($p=0.03$). The results demonstrate the interrelationship between the level of adaptation, cooperativeness, and participation with the perceived mood of frustration and contentment. When older immigrants are faced with differences in culture and host environments and if they are willing to understand and socialise with people of the local culture they may achieve higher levels of adaptation, become cooperative and participative leading to higher levels of contentment. As a corollary, lower levels of adaptation, cooperativeness and participation may lead to higher levels of frustration and eventually may lead to exit from the country (Selvarajah, 2000).

Conclusion

Based on the findings in the study, all three hypotheses that were forwarded for testing are supported and the research objectives fulfilled by (1) identifying the five main factors that influence the living conditions of elderly dependent Chinese immigrants, (2) discussing the change in relationship between the elderly dependent Chinese immigrant and the family, (3) exploring the factors such as age, length of time in New Zealand, experiences of spouse and family, and the ability to cope in the new environment in explaining the adaptation process of the elderly dependent Chinese immigrant in New Zealand.

Each of the foregoing discussion has briefly described different aspects in understanding the elderly dependent Chinese immigrant in the New Zealand environment. Acculturation approaches such as the assimilation and modernization theories; the disengagement and activity theories do not by themselves offer an adequate framework for interpreting and understanding the elderly dependent Chinese expatriation experiences in New Zealand. However, though not in totality, they do offer some explanation to the process observed in this study.

The purpose of this research was to highlight cultural variables on the adjustment experiences of the elderly dependent Chinese in New Zealand. The research goes further to also suggest that the cultural factors seen to be important to Chinese immigrants be discussed in the context of culture being dynamic and vulnerable to change.

The study of the elderly among ethnic minorities is lacking and it was the intention of this study to provide some insight to the acculturation process of new elderly Chinese immigrants who have immigrated to New Zealand as part of the family reunion scheme. This research may provide useful information to healthcare professionals, social workers, policy makers, and researchers in the field of the aged within ethnic minorities. This seminal study focused only on one ethnic group for the sake of simplicity and to remove complex issues and interpretations that may arise in a study involving multiple ethnic groups. Future studies may want to consider the acculturation processes of elderly Chinese on a cross-nationality basis involving Chinese from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, as the needs of overseas Chinese may be different to Chinese from mainland China.

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