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## The Invisible Handshake: Interpreting the Job-Seeking Communication of Foreign-Born Chinese in the U.S.

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The Invisible Handshake: Interpreting the Job-Seeking  
Communication of Foreign-Born Chinese in the U.S.

by

Hongmei Gao

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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guanxi

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ABSTRACT

Building upon Granovetter's well-known study of the job search behaviors of white males, this research extended the degree to which his findings apply across cultures to Chinese minorities, and across time to the Internet age. Using quantitative and qualitative data collected through systematic observation, questionnaire surveys, and in-depth interviews, this research investigated the impact of culture, Internet usage, gender and age on the communication patterns of foreign-born Chinese jobseekers in the U.S.

It is found that jobseekers adopt either one or a combination of traditional (printed publications and direct application), institutional (the Internet, job fairs, and employment agencies), and personal (personal network) approaches. Within the institutional approach, the Internet job search strategy is a rising preference among younger jobseekers. Through the personal approach, jobseekers enjoy four benefits of personal networks: information, trust building, position creation, and job market expansion. Across culture, guanxi, the Chinese version of the personal network is compared and contrasted with its

American counterpart. Further, Granovetter's argument about the strength of weak ties holds true in today's Internet age. Job-leading weak ties are usually those infrequently contacted professional and social connections working in targeted organizations at the time of a job search.

Meanwhile, Chinese jobseekers mainly encounter six obstacles in the U.S.: racial discrimination, cultural obstacle, linguistic obstacle, insufficient network, immigration background, and an intercultural communication gap. Multiple regression results indicate that English proficiency, gender, and the degree of Westernization of the jobseekers' origin are significantly associated with the extent to which each jobseeker encountered these obstacles. Qualitative data show that between American employers and Chinese jobseekers, there is an intercultural communication gap marked by four dimensions: directness-subtleness, aggressiveness-modesty, courtesy-command, and American-Chinese experiences.

Consequently, Chinese minorities are encouraged to develop English proficiency, a cross-ethnic personal network, and cultural multiphrenia for future job search success. Employers are recommended to acquire cultural sensitivity and to publicize job positions through multiple channels. In addition, topics for future research in global job mobility are suggested, and the limitations of this research are discussed.

# CHAPTER ONE: GLOBALIZATION'S CONSEQUENCES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION STUDY

## Introduction

Since late 1970s, globalization has been shrinking the world to a “global village” (McLuhan & McLuhan, 1988; McLuhan & Powers, 1989). Messages can now travel across global space and time zones with a simple click of a mouse. There is a greater interconnection, interpenetration, and interdependency of individuals, peoples, communities and nations than ever before. Scholars have used different terminologies to capture this unprecedented “global-spatial proximity” (Chan & Ma, 2002, p.5), including David Harvey’s (2000) “time-space compression”, United Nation’s declaration of “Our Global Neighborhood” (Webster, 2002), and Anthony Giddens’ (1991) “intensification of worldwide social relations” (Tomlinson, 1999). This ongoing globalization process is shaping our lives politically, economically, and culturally (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1997; Friedman, 1999; Held et al., 1999; Lewis, 1996; Taylor, 2002).

Globalization is a process that “embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity, and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and

networks of activity, interaction, and exercise of power” (Held et al., 1999, p. 16).

Globalization creates a worldwide structure of cultural, social, political, and economic networks that dominate movements of people, capital and information unprecedented in human history (Mosler & Catley, 2000). Globalization seems to wear a “Made in the USA” label (Nye, 2002) with the U.S. functioning as a political and economic superpower and a cultural hegemonic force (Harvey, 2000). Globalization began for economic reasons when multinational corporations expanded beyond national borders to develop new markets and to search for low cost raw materials and human labor (Feigenbaum, 2002; Love, 2003).

The advancement of communication and transportation technologies makes such a global-spatial proximity possible (Monge & Contractor, 2003). New communication technologies enable individuals, corporations, and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, and cheaper (Friedman, 1999). These critical communication technologies include, but are not limited to, the rise of the Internet and the invention of computers, laptops, palmtops, cell phones, fax machines, copy machines, computer networks, IP technologies, chat rooms, and virtual conference rooms. People in organizations can communicate by email, telephone, fax, and teleconference nearly at any time and in any place. In the 1980s, most people had never heard of the Internet and very few had an email address. Today with the Internet, online community, email, instant



messenger, and weblog<sup>1</sup> have become part of daily routines for many people worldwide.

Globalization is widely regarded as a “multidimensional phenomenon” (Tomlinson, 1999, p.13), impacting every aspect in human societies. One critical dimension of globalization is human migration across national borders (Held et al., 1999). In this chapter, I argue that the human migration dimension of globalization has direct consequences for contemporary organizational communication study and it, therefore, serves as a context of my dissertation research.

Human migration is an integral component in the formation of a global labor market (Clark, 1999). Global occupational mobility, especially job-seeking behavioral patterns of foreign-born immigrants in the U.S. is at the heart of this study. In particular, the job-seeking communication strategies and obstacles of foreign-born Chinese in the U.S. form the focus of this study. By reviewing the contemporary globalization literature and analyzing the consequences of globalization to organizational communication research, this chapter sets a stage for the dissertation.

## Human Migration

Human migration is a critical dimension of globalization. Held et al. (1999) define

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<sup>1</sup> Weblog: A “weblog”, “web log” or simply a “blog”, is a web application that contains periodic time-stamped posts with numerous embedded hyperlinks on a common webpage. “Weblog” is a portmanteau of “web” and “log”. The term “blog” is used to avoid confusion with the term “server log.” Blogs run from individual diaries to arms of political campaigns, media programs and corporations, and from one occasional author to having large communities of writers. Many weblogs enable visitors to leave public comments, which can lead to a community of readers gathered around the blog; others are non-interactive, but accessible to any Internet users. A weblog is often run through a content management system or CMS (Wikipedia, 2005).

global human migration as “movements of people across regions and between continents, be they labor migrations, diasporas or processes of conquest and colonization” (p. 284). Recent advancement in transportation and communication technologies has influenced the pace and pattern of global human migration. The relative convenience of international air travel, low-cost calling cards, and instant email create a greater possibility of human migration within and between nations. In 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the convenience of international travel expedited global mobility, although this has been lessened somewhat since September 11, 2001<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, the extensity, intensity, and velocity of global migration have reached a level unprecedented in human history.

#### *Global human mobility*

Human migration happens both *within* national borders through domestic travel and *across* national borders through international travel. For instance, people’s mobility inside China has dramatically increased in the past twenty years. By adopting a free market economy and integrating its economy with the world, China has been experiencing exceptional social and cultural changes. Consequently, there is more extensive and intensive migration inside China between different economic regions.

Millions of migrant workers who were formerly peasants in rural areas have relocated to cities for temporary jobs. Most of female migrant workers find jobs in textile factories in coastal economic development zones, while the majority of male migrant workers secure

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<sup>2</sup> September 11, 2001: The terrorist attack to the World Trade Towers in New York on September 11, 2001 caused the U.S. Congress to pass additional laws and regulations on international travel and visa application to the U.S. (<http://www.counterterrorismtraining.gov/leg>)

temporary positions as construction workers for the massive urbanization. During much of the year, these migrant workers stay in industrialized coastal cities, and during holidays, they return home in remote rural areas. Increased disposable income mobilizes more Chinese citizens' travel within and beyond China for personal and professional visits. In 2004, passenger flow hit a total of 1.9 billion individual trips during the one month Spring Festival holiday season (China planner website, 2004). Such increased domestic travel intensity is true for other industrialized and Third World countries based on the betterment of transportation and communication systems worldwide.

Meanwhile, mobility across national borders is intensified. The formation of the European Union (EU)<sup>3</sup> promised its citizens the convenience of hassle-free travels among various EU countries. Foreign businesspersons and tourists can now apply for a visa to one of the fifteen Schengen countries<sup>4</sup> within EU while visiting all of them.

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<sup>3</sup> The European Union (EU): EU is not a State intended to replace existing states, but it enjoys higher authority than a common international organization. Its Member States have set up common institutions to which they delegate some of their sovereignty so that decisions on specific matters of joint interest can be made democratically at European level. This pooling of sovereignty is termed "European integration." Initially, the EU consisted of six countries: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom joined in 1973, Greece in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986, Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995. In 2004, ten more European countries joined (Europa website, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Schengen countries: The name "Schengen" originates from a small town in Luxembourg. In June 1985, seven European Union countries signed a treaty to end internal border checkpoints and controls. More countries have joined the treaty over the past years. At present, there are 15 Schengen countries, all in Europe. The 15 Schengen countries are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. All these countries except Norway and Iceland are European Union members (Eurovisa website, 2004).

Aside from short-term travels, human migration includes long-term or terminal immigration. Globalization drives new countries to receive new waves of immigrants. Since the 1970s, the oil rich Persian Gulf countries of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the four “Asian Tiger” countries/regions of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore have emerged to be new recipient countries/regions for temporary immigrant labor. Japan and Germany are functioning as de facto recipient countries. Traditional immigrant-receiving countries, such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina continue to absorb new immigrants from less developed countries (Massey et al., 1998).

As a traditional immigrant country, the U.S. remains the world’s leading recipient of global immigration. In fact, California alone takes in more permanent immigrants than any nation in the world (Census 2000 data, 2004c). Between 1980 and 1989, the U.S. received roughly a third of all of the world’s international immigrants. In 1990, the U.S. accommodated 19.8 million foreign-born residents. Eight percent of the total U.S. population is foreign-born (Massey et al., 1998). Based on the U.S. Census 2000, the majority of recent immigrants to the U.S. have been Asian and Latin American. Its foreign-born population is becoming an increasingly important sector in the U.S.

Some scholars and politicians argue that globalization strengthens people’s ambition to immigrate to the U.S. in pursuit of their American dream. The U.S. has long held a fascination for many as a land of unlimited opportunities. Sun (2002) argues that people

in Asia are influenced by the American dream portrayed in the media. In the 1990s, the theme of “going to America” has been reflected in popular cultural forms in China. Since 1978 when China adopted economic reform and the “open-door” policy, the country has seen thousands of people leaving China to settle in Western countries. Sun’s (2002) research shows that to most Chinese, “the West” is often synonymous with the United States. Among the tiny fraction of people who end up immigrating to a foreign country, their first choice of destination is usually the United States. In some Chinese media outlets, “America” is portrayed as the country of “collective fantasy” (Sun, 2002).

Different from the mass migration that occurred at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the contemporary trend has been categorized as *elite migration* (Held et. al., 1999). Such elite migration stimulates the immigrants’ home countries to criticize it as unfair “brain drain,” namely, the best and brightest individuals are leaving for the West. In order to keep its own technological competitiveness, the German government has recently decided to issue “green cards” to Indian software engineers (Naim, 2002). In the U.S., a third of software engineers in the Silicon Valley are of Chinese or Indian origin.

At the same time, problems of illegal immigration<sup>5</sup> remain unresolved. For

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<sup>5</sup> Illegal immigrants: Each year the Border Patrol is making more than a million apprehensions of people who unlawfully cross U.S. borders to work and to receive publicly-funded services, often with the aid of fraudulent documents. Such entry is a misdemeanor and, if repeated, becomes punishable as a felony. In addition to sneaking into the country in violation of the immigration law that requires that aliens be documented for legal entry (referred to as "entry without inspection -- EWI"), others enter with legal documentation and then violate the terms on which they have been admitted by taking jobs that are not authorized or overstaying the authorized period. The INS estimated in 1996 that about 60 percent of the then estimated five million illegal immigrants were EWI and 40 percent were overstayers. Both types of illegal immigrants are deportable under Immigration and Nationality Act Section 237 (a)(1)(B) which says: "Any alien who is present in the United States in violation of

example, human trafficking is a billion-dollar business in China's Fujian Province and Mexico. However, this sector of immigrant population will not be the focus of this study.

Virtual migration is on the rise. Globalization has expanded the means through which people in one country participate in another country's cultural, economic, and political life. People can now act virtually in one country while live physically in another. For instance, investors can trade Chinese stocks online while living in the United States and vice versa. Scholars who were most concerned with "brain drain" now consider it "brain gain" (Naim, 2002). With improved communication and transportation facilities, third-world immigrants in the West transport economic and cultural opportunities back to their home countries.

Ongoing immigration from less developed countries and regions to more developed countries and regions is supported by neo-classical economic theories. According to *macro* neoclassical theory, international migration is caused by geographic differences in the supply and demand of labor. A country with a larger endowment of labor relative to that of capital will have a lower equilibrium market wage and a higher labor surplus. A nation with a limited endowment of labor relative to that of capital will be categorized by a higher market wage and a greater labor shortage (Massey et al., 1998). Based on *micro* neoclassical theories, rational individuals decide to migrate because the cost-benefit calculation leads them to expect a positive net return from their movement

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this Act or any other law of the United States is deportable." (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2005)

to a new country. Such returns are usually monetary. To some scholars, international migration is conceptualized as a form of human capital relocation (Massey et al., 1998). Neo-classical economic theories predict that global migration will continue indefinitely as there will always be stratification in global economic development and labor distribution.

#### *Asian immigration to the U.S.*

For the purpose of this dissertation research, I examined the job seeking behaviors of foreign-born Chinese immigrants in the U.S. I chose to study foreign-born Chinese in the U.S. because Census 2000 data indicate that Asians have become one of the largest groups of incoming immigrants in the past ten years. About 26% of the nation's total foreign-born population comes from Asia. More than 70% of America's current Asian American population is foreign-born first generation immigrants (Census 2000 data, 2004f). Among the foreign-born Asian population, at least 25% of them are foreign-born Chinese (Cable TV Ad Bureau, 2004).

The U.S. Census 2000 indicated the population of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders had been on a steady rise in the past decade. More than 2.3 million Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants and refugees arrived in the U.S. between 1981 and 1988 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990). In 1995, the Asian and Pacific Islander population in the U.S. reached 10 million, and are estimated to reach 17 million by 2010 (Louie, 2000).

Asia, where 64% of world's population resides, is a significant origin of world

migration flows. This influx is primarily facilitated by three factors. First, global media's coverage of the U.S. has inspired millions to the new continent in search of American dream. Second, changing U.S. laws and policies permits more Asians migrating into the U.S. In 1965, the U.S. Congress passed a new immigration law, which no longer restricted immigration from Asia based on limited quotas<sup>6</sup> (Sowell, 1996; Sassen, 1999; Tien, 2000). Further, for the Chinese in particular, the U.S. government imposed the Chinese exclusion act<sup>7</sup>, limiting the quantity of immigrants from China for about a century since the mid-1880s. Such policies against Chinese immigration have been abolished. Third, the convenience of air travel presents the Western Hemisphere, especially the U.S., within practical reach to immigrants in Asia. While Asians previously represented a negligible percentage of minorities in the U.S., they now

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<sup>6</sup> Asian immigration quota policy: Earlier agreements barred Chinese labor immigration (1882), restricted Japanese immigration (1907), and culminated in the 1924 National Origins Act. This act was the first general immigration law in that it brought together the growing number of restrictions and controls that had been established over a period of time: the creation of classes of inadmissible aliens, deportation laws, literacy requirements, etc. The 1965 immigration law ended these restrictions. In this sense it was part of a much broader legislative effort to end various forms of discrimination in the United States, such as discrimination against minorities and women (Sassen, 1999, pp. 237-238).

<sup>7</sup> Chinese Exclusion Act: In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur. This act provided an absolute 10-year moratorium on Chinese labor immigration. For the first time, Federal law proscribed entry of an ethnic working group on the premise that it endangered the good order of certain localities. Thus very few Chinese could enter the country under the 1882 law. The 1882 exclusion act also placed new requirements on Chinese who had already entered the country. If they left the United States, they had to obtain certifications to re-enter. Congress, moreover, refused State and Federal courts the right to grant citizenship to Chinese resident aliens, although these courts could still deport them. When the exclusion act expired in 1892, Congress extended it for 10 years in the form of the Geary Act. This extension, made permanent in 1902, added restrictions by requiring each Chinese resident to register and obtain a certificate of residence. Without a certificate, a Chinese immigrant faced deportation. The Geary Act regulated Chinese immigration until the 1920s. With increased postwar immigration, Congress adopted new means for regulation: quotas and requirements pertaining to national origin, among which, Asian immigration quota policy is one important measure (<http://www.usnews.com>).



become the largest single group of incoming immigrants (Sowell, 1996).

For economic, political and cultural reasons, most of those who emigrate from China and other Asian countries and regions choose the U.S. as their final destination. In 1965 a mere 17,000 Asians immigrated to the U.S. In the mid-1980s, annual migration was around 250,000, constituting nearly 45 % of all legal migration to the U.S. The Statistical Abstracts of various years from the U.S. Department of Commerce (as cited in Held et al., 1999, p. 300) show that “by the late 1980s and early 1990s, the number of Asians residing in the U.S. climbed to 6.9 million, making up to 4.2% of the total U.S. population.” The 2000 census showed that the total Asian population rose from 6,908,638 in 1990 to 10,242,998 in 2000, a nearly 68 % increase in a decade. Asians now make up 4.2 % of the population of the U.S., compared to 2.8 % in 1990. More than 70% of America’s current Asian American population is foreign-born (Census 2000 data, 2004f).

### Consequences of Globalization

Human migration is an integral dimension of globalization. I claim that global human migration has two direct implications for contemporary organizational communication study. Globalization directs attention to the analysis of immigration networks, and to studies conducted in intercultural settings.

*Consequence one: More research on immigrant networks*

When people migrate, they must establish themselves in the new society. They need to find jobs, establish and maintain immigration status, and participate in local social activities. How do the newly arrived immigrants fulfill these tasks? According to the existing literature on immigration studies (Warldorf, 1998; Massey et al., 1998), immigrants primarily rely on personal networks among a plethora of means.

Sociologists have long recognized the importance of social networks in promoting international movement. Drawing on social ties to relatives and friends who have migrated previously, non-immigrants gained access to knowledge, assistance, and other resources that facilitated movement. Scholars have referred to such immigration ties as the “auspices of migration,” “migration chains,” and “family and friends effect” (Massey et al., 1998).

Such migrant networks have been identified as possessing *social capital*, a concept first proposed by Coleman (1988). Social capital pertains to a “*whom* you know”, rather than “*what* you know” framework. Social capital is generated from one’s social networks. “The structure of the player’s network and the location of the player’s contacts in the social structure of the arena add up to a competitive advantage in getting higher rates of return on investment” (Burt, 1992b, p. 59). Such a return is yielded by investment in social capital, and such an investment is executed through relationship development and maintenance.

Social capital does not perform in the same way as financial capital and human capital (Lesser, 2000). Financial capital and human capital are owned by individuals or groups in isolation, while social capital is owned by relational participants in cooperation. Compared with social capital, human capital focuses on attributes of individuals, such as education, experience, seniority, intelligence, appearance, and personality (Monge & Contractor, 2001). Social capital consists of information about relationships among people in personal networks (Lipnack & Stamps, 1994).

Massey et al. (1998) identify new immigrants as ties in transforming home country social relations to immigration social capital. Daily ties of friendship and kinship provide advantages to people seeking foreign citizenship. Once someone in a personal network has migrated, the ties are transformed into a resource that can be used to gain access to foreign employment, education, and other opportunities. Each new immigrant creates new chances for future immigration of other members in their networks.

Immigration networks serve as a source of social capital, providing information, aiding in intercultural assimilation, and assisting in overseas family reunification. Since these social ties require the existence of an immigrant community abroad, network effects play a role in the perpetuation of international migration flows. Social networks thus become a mechanism for the operation of international migration systems (Waldorf, 1998).

The first migrant who leaves for a new destination has no social ties to draw upon

and, therefore, migration for him/her is costly. Things get easier for followers. Networks make international migration attractive as a strategy for risk diversification and utility maximization. Immigrants' personal networks increase the probability of international movement because they lower costs and risks of movement and increase the expected net returns to migration. Every new migrant expands the network and reduces risks of movement for all those to whom he or she is related, eventually making it virtually costless to diversify household labor allocations through emigration (Massey et al., 1998).

Pertaining to this dissertation study, I was interested in these questions: Does this network immigration model apply to contemporary Chinese immigration to the U.S. during a job search? Do foreign-born Chinese immigrants draw on personal networks for employment opportunities? These are some critical questions this research aimed to address. Findings regarding functions of personal networks for a job search will be presented in Chapter Seven.

Hu-Duhart (1999) claims that Asian Americans have become "bridge builders across the Pacific" (p. 3) since the 1970s, with their social networks extending among Pacific Rim countries, including the U.S., Canada, Mexico, China, Japan, Korean, and Southeast Asia countries. The implementation of the post-1965 relaxation of Asian

immigration<sup>8</sup> made such a network expansion possible. Transnational network of Asian immigrants in the U.S. contributes to global human, capital and cultural mobility.

Social capital exists in the overseas Chinese networks. Chinese Americans have a competitive advantage in international business and exchange “because they possess a bilingual and bicultural *network* [emphasis added] that spans to both sides of the Pacific Ocean” (Cheng, 1999, p. 65). Chinese Americans played a crucial role in the establishment of Silicon Valley’s high-tech complexes. A notable number of high-tech corporations are owned by Chinese Americans. These bicultural Chinese Americans are believed to have contributed to the establishment of high-tech industrial complexes in Asia, especially in Mainland China, and Chinese Hong Kong, and Taiwan regions (Cheng, 1999). These ties have been seen as instrumental to the transformation of the free market economy of China by providing entrepreneurship, risk-taking capital investment, and business management capability. “The San Jose Mercury News has reported that overseas Chinese account for 75% to 90% of the roughly USD90 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) in China as of 1993” (Cheng, 1999, p. 67). The overseas

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<sup>8</sup> The post-1965 relaxation of Asian immigration: The 1965 amendment to the Immigration and Naturalization Act was meant to open up the United States to more immigration, but to do so in a way that would allow the government to control entries and reduce illegal immigration. It sought to eliminate the bias against non-Europeans that was built into earlier immigration law and to regulate the influx of immigrants by setting up a series of preference categories within a rather elaborate system of general quotas. Under this system, preference was given to immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and, to a lesser extent, to immigrants possessing skills in short supply in the United States, such as nurses and nannies (Sassen, 1999, p. 230).

Chinese networks connect the West with China, and therefore demonstrate the importance of network communication study.

In summary, globalization suggests more study of network communication (Held et al., 1999; Monge & Contractor, 2003), especially that of immigrant networks. Moreover, the rise of new technologies such as the Internet demands further studies in communication networks (Contractor & Eisenberg, 1990). Involvement in communication networks has been observed as a predictor of organizational commitment (Eisenberg, Monge & Miller, 1984). Monge and Eisenberg (1987) contended most structural analysis could be located in one of three traditions: positional, relational, and cultural. The positional tradition views organizational structure as a pattern of relations among positions. The relational tradition focuses mainly on the linkages that create an emergent communication structure, which connects different people and groups in spite of their formal positions. The cultural tradition investigates symbols, meanings, and interpretations of messages transmitted through communication networks (Giddens, 1976, 1984). This research followed the relational tradition of organizational communication research. I studied the functions of personal networks in job searches for the foreign-born Chinese immigrant communities in the United States. Findings on immigrant networks will be presented in Chapters Seven and Eight.

*Consequence two: More research in intercultural settings*

Eisenberg and Riley (2001, p. 313) states that “[g]lobalization is causing widespread

changes in multiple constructions of culture both in and outside of organizations.”

Global human migration demands further organizational communication research in intercultural settings where two or more cultures meet and converge. Stohl (1993, 2001) urged more intercultural communication research that focuses on organizing processes that permeate all levels of activity and interpretation.

Culture may be defined as “a collective software of the mind” (Hofstede, 1991, 1994) shared by a group of people to interpret the meaning of human society and its relationship with the environment. Intercultural communication happens between members with diverse racial, ethnic, geographic, political, gender, or socioeconomic backgrounds.

When people travel, that they take their cultures with them. “Cultural practices lie at the heart of globalization” (Tomlinson, 1999, p.1). Intensified global migration, increased travel for pleasure and business, and expansion of worldwide communication networks all alert our awareness for a need to understand different cultures (Levitt, 1983; Lewis, 1996). Our effectiveness in communicating with cultural others is influenced by our ability and intention in understanding their cultures (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). It is crucial to understand cultural differences in today’s working environment as we are having an increasingly multiethnic workforce (Stohl, 2001). Featherstone (1995, p. 91) boldly advocates people in “the West to learn to tolerate a greater diversity within their boundaries ... in greater multiculturalism and polyethnicity.”

Researchers and activists of cultural globalization seem to base their arguments on the following three arguments: the *Americanism* argument, the *Protectionism* argument, and the *Cosmopolitanism* argument.

*The Americanism argument*

Advocates of Americanism see little need to learn about cultures other than America since the whole world will eventually be homogenized into the American cultural model (Friedman, 1999). For them, the global culture is formed through the economic and political domination of the U.S., who exports its popular culture to the rest of the world. This line of argument sees globalization as synonymous with Americanization (Wang, 2001; Wasserstrom, 1998).

At the superficial level, this line of argument seems to make sense. From Big Macs to iMacs to Mickey Mouse to Michael Jordan and Michael Jackson, globalization has a distinctly Americanized face and spreads “the best and worst of America” (Friedman, 1999, p.308). Globalization wears Mickey Mouse ears; it eats Big Macs; it drinks Coke or Pepsi; it eats at McDonald, KFC, and Pizza Hut, and it watches Hollywood movies (Keefe, 2001). Globalization speaks American English, and it closes international deals in U.S. dollars. Globalization does its computing on an IBM or Apple laptop; it works with Windows 98, 2000 or Windows XP with an Intel processor.

Unlike colonialism that lays its foundation of expansion on military invasion, Americanism draws its strength by radiating its culture and values outward, exporting



ideologies of freedom, democracy and free market capitalism to the rest of the world.

With the influence of Americanism, global children watch Disney movies and visit Disneyland, global teenagers enjoy MTV and the NBA, and global youth like to wear T-shirts, jeans, sneakers and baseball hats – the American national uniform.

Corporations are profiting from the American dream. People around the world still want to immigrate to America. Even Marlboro cigarettes can represent an inexpensive “psychic down-payment on achieving that American dream” (Barnet & Cavanagh, 1994, p.190). Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell elaborated that images of America were so pervasive that it was almost as if America had immigrated to the world, allowing people to be Americans even in their distant countries (Baughn & Buchanan, 2001).

The Americanism argument claims that in today’s world, there is only one empire – the global empire of the U.S. Unlike its predecessors, this empire rules the world by its *soft power* – American culture (Kurth, 2003). This argument states that the U.S. can lead the world by soft power through its cultural influence in the metaphor of carrots. As such, other countries will be actively willing to follow the U.S., admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness.

However, after the terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001, the U.S. government has been executing more “hard power” in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere with military might. The traditional rule of force is

again being exercised. The new direction of Americanism has yet to be seen.

### *The Protectionism argument*

Resisting the extreme Americanism argument, intellectuals and government officials outside the U.S., especially those in Third-World countries advocate cultural protectionism. They envision a multi-polar world with all cultures respected and protected. Cultural protectionism reflects the growing list of tensions that arise as the global commodification of American culture affects the sovereignty of nation states, especially in third world countries (Tomlinson, 1999). It is commonly accepted that benefits of globalization have been spread unevenly, with a few developed countries grabbing the profits (Dayle, 2003). Cultural protectionism is often directed against onslaughts of America's "cultural machine." It accuses the U.S. of "cultural imperialism," "cultural colonialism," and "cultural hegemony" (Baughn & Buchanan, 2001; Kim & Shin, 2002).

Appeals for cultural protectionism revolve around three interrelated threats: First, there is the potential contamination and destabilization posed by the cultural goods themselves. Cultural goods such as movies, television programming, and publications are vehicles for the transmission of ideologies, values, and lifestyles that may be seen as corrosive or corrupting to the recipient culture.

Second, there are fears that imported cultural goods will displace local culture, thereby contribute to cultural homogenization. Foreign cultural goods may also be seen

as threatening, not so much on the basis of their content per se but on their ability to displace domestic cultural work and traditions. Critics in several nations have voiced concerns that their cultural heritage is vulnerable to the “monoculture” spread through U.S. films, broadcasts, and publications.

Third, there are economic threats caused by foreign domination of certain cultural industries. Trade in cultural goods affects the livelihood of foreign and domestic producers and currency flows and trade balances. In Beijing, “Titanic” sold \$4.3 million in tickets in the first half of 1998, equaling nearly half of all movie tickets sold in the Chinese box offices that year and tripling that of the best-selling Chinese film (Baughn & Buchanan, 2001).

The cultural protectionism argument claims that in such cultural industries as movies, television, and music, the U.S. is a dominant player. The global reach of American culture is particularly evident in movies and videos. Hollywood has dominated the film industry since the 1920s and now receives roughly half of its revenues from overseas, compared to 30% in 1980. In 1996, the U.S. accounted for 70% of the film market in the European Union (EU), up from 56% in 1987. In 1998, Hollywood movies occupied half of the movie market in Japan (Baughn & Buchanan, 2001).

The most common strategy that countries have employed to counter an Americanized global culture is cultural protectionism. Usually, this has meant limiting

the availability of American products on television and in movies. France, Canada, and Korea, for example, have employed elaborate quotas. The French requires that 60% of prime-time television shows be European productions and of that, 40% be French. Canadians require their television networks to broadcast significant Canadian content, and South Koreans will tolerate large numbers of foreign television shows if only they have scientific or educational content (Feigenbaum, 2002). Chinese officials fear that Western movies pose “spiritual pollution” to the Chinese people. In 1995, China set a quota on foreign cultural imports, especially on Hollywood movies. The effectiveness of such protectionism strategies has yet to be studied.

#### *The Cosmopolitanism argument*

Berge and Huntington (2002) claimed that there were multiple versions of globalization regarding cultural convergence. Tomlinson (1999) suggested cosmopolitanism as an alternative to Americanism and cultural protectionism. Cosmopolitanism seeks to establish a delicate balance between globalization and localization. Cosmopolitanism recognizes the multicultural nature of global communication and emphasizes the intercultural settings of many organizational events on global, regional, local and social levels. The etymology of the term ‘cosmopolitan’ is from the Greek word *kosmos* (meaning “world”) and *polis* (meaning city). Hence, a cosmopolitanist is a citizen of the world. A cosmopolitanist advocates an awareness of the world with multiple cultural traditions. Cosmopolitanism encourages us to carry on

continuous dialogue with cultural others (Bakhtin, 1986).

To illustrate the delicate balance between globalization and localization, Roland Robertson coined the term “*glocalization*” (1992). Glocalization is meant to capture the dialectical relationship between “the global production of the local and the localization of the global” (Chan, 2002, p.227). The idea of glocalization originates from Japanese business discourse where it essentially refers to a “micro-marketing” strategy – “the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets” (Robertson, 1992, Tomlinson, 1999, pp. 195-196).

The term “glocalization” in Japanese is *dochakuka*, which is derived from the term *dochaku*, meaning “living on one’s own land.” Dochaku uses the metaphor of adapting agricultural techniques to suit local conditions to explain that a foreign culture needs to adapt to local soil. The idea of interdependence between the global and the local is at the core of cosmopolitan ideal toward the treatment of other cultures (Tomlinson, 1999). Therefore an immigrant group needs to adapt its old cultural habits to the host society.

Despite the enthusiasm for Americanism and the concern of protectionism, the world is far from being homogenized by American culture. Scholars have found that the idea of American culture being all-conquering is superficial and exaggerated. Wang (2001) recently studied Chinese cultural trends in cities and rural areas and concluded that while traditional Chinese culture may be disintegrating to a certain extent in large

cities, people in most villages still maintain traditional morals, customs, and ethics.

Legrain (2003a) argues that seemingly American cultural products are not as American as they appear because American culture itself is made up of cultures of travelers and immigrants from all over the world. Top actors and directors from foreign countries are acting in Hollywood movies. Some studios in Hollywood are foreign-owned. To an extent, Hollywood is a global industry that just happens to be located in America. Rather than exporting America, it appeals to the global audience as movies' gigantic cost can be absorbed only with the box office income from a broader global audience.

Not only societies but also markets of the world are far from being Americanized. For consumer products, Coke accounts for less than two of the 64 fluid ounces that a typical person drinks per day in Europe. France imported a mere \$620 million in food from U.S. in 2000, while exporting to the U.S. three times that amount. American fast foods are moving into China with more than 600 McDonald's stores (Tian, 2004) and over 1200 KFC stores (Schreiner, 2005). The globalization of Chinese food around the world has also caught scholarly attention (Wang, 1998). In America, we can find a Chinese restaurant or Chinese buffet in almost every town. People of other cultures can choose to drink Coke and eat at McDonald's without becoming American in any meaningful sense, much like Americans can choose to consume Chinese food without becoming Chinese.

Inside the U.S., the one million or so immigrants arriving each year are mostly from Asia and Latin America. With them, the new immigrants bring their cultures. According to recent research, America has indeed become a multi-cultural society. English may be a common international business language outside of the U.S., but within the U.S., English is now second to Spanish in some regions (Legrain, 2003b).

From a cosmopolitanism viewpoint, globalization can be fully understood only in conjunction with localization. Most multinational corporations understand this principle well when developing foreign markets. Naisbitt (1994) suggests that successful businessmen have to “think locally, act globally” (p.24). Coca-Cola is probably the best-known brand name with a universal standard in the world. However, when the Coca-Cola Company began to sell its products in China, contrary to expectation, Sprite was selling much better than Coca-Cola (Lee, 2000). The Chinese prefer the clear, sweet-tasting transparent Sprite to the dark-colored Coke.

The understanding of the convergence of global cultures involves dialectics of opposing principles and tendencies – the global and the local, the American and the foreign, the universalism and the particularism (Featherstone, 1995; Giddens, 1991; Robertson, 1992; Tomlinson, 1999). People travel with their cultures and organizations are composed of a multiethnic workforce. “An essential part of contemporary organizational experience is communicating in a context of global interdependence and multiculturalism. Culture is not a project to be managed, controlled, or contained, but

rather a constitutive feature in organizing” (Stohl, 2001, p. 366). My research was conducted in intercultural settings where American and Chinese cultures meet, overlap, clash and merge in immigrant communities of the U.S.

*Convergence* and *divergence* are two trends that characterize the research on globalization and cultural variability (Inkeles, 1998; Stohl, 2001). The convergence literature refers to a set of imperatives embedded in the global economy that results in similar organizational structuring across nations. This approach tends to look at the commonality across cultures facing globalization. On the contrary, the divergence literature focuses primarily on issues of cultural difference. The focus of this approach is on human interpretation and experience of the world as meaningfully and intersubjectively constructed.

This dissertation followed the divergence trend of globalization in organizational communication study. I obtained general descriptive data and studied the meaning of communication strategies and obstacles involved in intercultural jobseeking.

## Conclusion

While some scholars theorize globalization as a homogenizing force that will engulf the world, the world is far from being homogenized, with old and new boundaries still existing in politics, economics and cultures (Chan & Ma, 2002). Martin Albrow (1996) reminds us that globalization, with a suffix of “ization” implies change, in a sense



similar to the decades-long debate over “urbanization.” Globalization is changing the world in almost every way. Globalization will change organizational communication research. Globalization’s human migration dimension will have a direct impact to the future direction of organizational communication research.

Global human migration is beginning to gain attention in organizational communication study. Thompson (2003) argues that network form drives today’s field of organization theory. He stresses that there is a transformation in the structure of organizational decision-making processes. Organizations are now taking on a network structure, similar to that of personal networks, which are the focus of this dissertation. New systems of network structure are emerging as an efficient way of organizing. Monge and Contractor (2003) state that when juxtaposed against traditional vertical structures, network organizations tend to function in a fluid, spontaneous, and complex manner. The network is emerging as the signature form of organization in the Information Age, just as bureaucracy characterized the Industrial Age, hierarchy the Agricultural Era, and tribes roamed in the Nomadic Era (Lipnack & Stamps, 1994).

The network has become such an efficient form of organizational structure that terrorists have even adopted it. Network organizations are composed of a collection of organizations along with the linkages that tie them to each other, often organized around a focal organization. There are various kinds of network organizations, such as joint partnerships, strategic alliances, cartels, R&D consortia, multinational corporations

(MNC), and even terrorist organizations (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Network organizations differ from functional, multidivisional, and matrix organizations in its emphasis on relationships for cooperative effort, interlocked communication mechanism, proactive employee initiative, and a holistic approach to supply chain management (Miles & Snow, 1992). Due to its geographically dispersed structure, Network organizations demonstrate these unique qualities: adoption of information technology across divisions and locations, flexible and modular organizational structure, team spirit, flat hierarchies, and reliance on intra- and interorganizational markets (Poole, 2004).

When the network form is applied to MNCs, their production and abilities are strengthened. Meanwhile, when the network form is adopted by terrorist organizations, their power of destruction is enhanced. Al Qaeda's global network was created while it was based in Khartoum from December 1992 till May 1996. To coordinate its overt and covert operations, Al Qaeda developed a decentralized, regional network structure. Designated individuals, not divisions, carried out assignments. Al Qaeda, structured in networks, reacted quickly to changing events on the ground. Structured in networks, mobility, flexibility and fluidity were the guiding characteristics of its post-Taliban structure (Gunaratna, 2002).

On the other hand, scholars have analyzed the limitations of network organizations (Krackhardt, 1994). First, previous organizational forms remain in many network organizations therefore keep the original weaknesses of functional, multidivisional and

matrix forms. Second, the “law of N-Squared” of a network states that the number of potential links in a network organization increases geometrically with the number of people, so that a quickly expanding network constantly exceeds its communication capacity. Second, the “law of propinquity” states that the probability of two parties communication is proportional to the distance between them. The advanced communication technology still cannot overcome this challenge for geographically dispersed network organizations. Third, the “law of oligarchy” states that the tendency for groups and social systems to end up under the control of a few people. Network organizations, despite its flat structure, might not necessarily be democratic organizations. Finally, the final draw back of network organizations is the tendency of homophily and “old boy network”, which is named as the principle of overembeddedness. People have a tendency of always going to those whose they always trust and hang out with in their personal networks (Monge & Contractor, 2001).

Part of this dissertation presents research findings on personal networks. A jobseeker’s personal network falls into the category “emergent networks.” Theoretically, it is a designation that originally differentiated informal, naturally occurring networks from formal and imposed networks as modeled in an organizational chart (Monge & Contractor, 2001). As contemporary organizational structure is going through major changes, such as the adoption of matrix and network forms of organizing (Burns & Wholey, 1993; Monge, 1995), I anticipate functionalities of emergent networks of one’s

personal circles will provide important insight for future studies in network forms of organizations.

In conclusion, as a multidimensional phenomenon, human migration is happening with increasing intensity and velocity. Many people now have a greater mobility in traveling between different provinces, different countries and different continents. People travel with their cultures, and culture is at the heart of globalization. From my argument, I have shown that the human migration dimension of globalization has two direct consequences for contemporary organizational communication study.

Global migration urges more attention to the analysis of immigration networks and to studies in the context of intercultural settings. Based on this thesis, I believe my dissertation research studying the job-seeking communication strategies and obstacles of Chinese coming to the U.S. contributes to organizational communication facing globalization. The research population mainly was composed of foreign-born Chinese who were working at professional, technical, and managerial positions (PTM positions) at the time of survey in the Greater Tampa Bay area of Florida. The next chapter reviews relevant literature, explains the present study, supports this study with multiple rationales, and develops research questions and hypotheses.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CURRENT RESEARCH

Positioned in the context of globalization as described in Chapter One, this dissertation research investigated job mobility in intercultural settings. With a multi-method interpretivist approach, I investigated job search communication strategies and obstacles experienced by foreign-born Chinese immigrants in the U.S. In this chapter, I summarize the relevant literature on job mobility, immigration study, and network communication, with a focus on their relationship with culture, gender, age and the Internet. Based on the existing literature, I explain the title of this dissertation, and develop research questions and hypotheses.

### Granovetter's Classic Study

As was presented in Chapter One, global human migration is a common phenomenon in today's world. When people migrate to new locations, they need to either find jobs or become self-employed to support themselves and their families. The labor factor is a critical resource related to human migration (Held et. al., 1999). Migration means not only a relocation of peoples, but also more fundamentally "a redistribution of skills, experience, and other human capital across the planet" (Sowell,

1996, p. 38). How people find jobs is a complex topic that has been the subject of investigation by sociology, economics (Granovetter, 1974) and communication scholars (Wellman, 1999; Lin & Dumin, 1986). Studies on “labor mobility” in economics and “social mobility” in sociology have received much attention (Granovetter, 1974). Brown and Konrad (2001a), Granovetter (1973, 1974, 1995), Krauth (2004), Lin (1998), Lin & Dumin (1986), and Wellman (1999) all concluded from their studies that among various channels of job search, most people found jobs through weak ties embedded in their personal networks.

In his classic study, Granovetter (1974) collected data from several hundred white male professional, technical and managerial workers (PTM workers) in Newton, Massachusetts. Using both questionnaire surveys and structured interviews, Granovetter examined PTM workers’ job-seeking behaviors and employment histories. He discovered that 56% of his respondents found jobs through personal connections. Another 18.8% used formal means such as print advertisements and headhunters, and roughly 20% applied directly to the hiring organizations.

Granovetter’s research findings showed a majority of jobseekers found jobs through personal networks. Further, he learned that of those who found jobs through personal connections, 55.6% saw their contact only “occasionally,” nearly 28% saw the contact “rarely,” and only 16.7% saw their contacts “often.” Granovetter (1974) categorized those job-informants whom were contacted on occasional or rare basis as “weak ties” based on

contact frequency. Therefore, it was summarized that of those job-leading personal connections, a majority (83.6%) were the jobseekers' "weak ties."

People were not getting their jobs through their frequently contacted family members or close friends – the strong ties, but through their acquaintances – the weak ties. It was suggested that when looking for new jobs or new information, "weak ties" were more essential than strong ties. One's close social circles, including family members and close friends, after all, occupy the same social world and therefore share the same information.

The strength of weak ties argument (Granovetter, 1973, 1974, 1995) suggested that the ability to access new information from beyond one's close social network was quintessential to job search success. In fact, weak ties play an important role in any number of social activities, from getting jobs to spreading rumors (Barabasi, 2002). To obtain new information, we must establish and activate weak ties – our low contact acquaintances (Burt, 1992a; Granovetter, 1973, 1974, 1995). These weak ties direct us to critical information in a world beyond our close social circles.

The spread of information about new ideas and opportunities comes through the weak ties that connect people from separate clusters. Weak ties are essential to the flow of information that integrates otherwise disconnected social clusters into a broader society (Burt, 1992a). The *weak-tie* argument is about the strength of relationships at the same time that it is about their location. A weak tie does not necessarily mean that the

relationship is weak. A weak tie is the sole connection between two otherwise separate clusters of strongly interconnected individuals. A *bridge* is at once two things. It is a chasm spanned and the span itself. The structural-hole argument is about the chasm spanned. It is the structural hole that generates information benefits. Whether a relationship is strong or weak, it generates information benefits when it traverses a structural hole (Burt, 1992a, 1992b; Granovetter, 1973).

Burt (1992a) developed the concept of *Structural hole* to define the space that separates different clusters of personal networks. Opportunities can be created if such a space is bridged and different clusters of people are connected. In other words, structural holes are the gaps in a network where different clusters of people are not connected. By filling these structural holes, people may be able to create opportunities for themselves and for others who are in the same network. Burt (1992a, p.65) explained “the hole is a buffer, like an insulator in an electric circuit...As a result of the hole between them; the two contacts provide network benefits that are in some degree additive rather than overlapping.”

Is this still true today for Chinese immigrating to the U.S.? That is, are weak ties still critical in job search for foreign-born Chinese in this Internet Age? What communication strategies do the foreign-born Chinese adopt for job search? These and other questions triggered my research interests.



## Research Overview

For this research, I updated Granovetter's design (1974) with intercultural and information age alterations. I revised Granovetter's survey questionnaire and interview guide for the purpose of this study. The research population was foreign-born Chinese immigrants who were employed on a full time basis in U.S. based organizations. A majority of these employed immigrants were working at PTM (professional, technical, and managerial) positions as were Granovetter's (1974) research population. Using systematic observation, questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, this research examined communication strategies that foreign-born Chinese developed and communication obstacles they encountered when searching for jobs in the U.S. Further, I investigated the relationship between such predictor variables as age, gender, cultural background, and the intensity of Internet usage with job search communication strategies and obstacles.

During the research, I followed, revised, and updated Granovetter's study on job mobility and the strength of weak ties. First, by *following* Granovetter's study, I discovered the various communication strategies that the foreign-born Chinese adopted and various obstacles they faced when searching for jobs in the U.S. This study generated new findings in job mobility, network communication and immigrant study.

Second, by *revising* Granovetter's 1974 study of people's job-seeking behavior, I investigated the influence of race, ethnicity, culture, age and gender on job mobility.

Granovetter studied only white male professional, technical and managerial workers. I included both male and female Chinese professional, technical and managerial workers in my study.

Third, by *updating* Mark Granovetter's 1974 study of people's job-seeking behavior, I studied the impact of the Internet on people's choice of job-seeking strategies in the global marketplace. Due to the historical time constraint of his study, Granovetter did not use computers in his research. The Internet did not exist in the 1970s. I included the Internet as an important facet in my study. Therefore, this study updates Granovetter's study in many important ways.

#### Research Mandate

The mandate for this study was four-fold. First, globalization demands more studies in organizational communication on network communication. Global human migration implies a need for further research in network communication (Held et al., 1999; Monge & Contractor, 2003), especially communication phenomenon within and beyond immigrant networks. My research studied the functions of first generation immigrants' personal networks for job searches. The analysis followed the relational tradition (Monge & Eisenberg, 1987) of organizational communication research.

Second, globalization demands more studies of organization communication conducted in intercultural settings. When people travel, one inevitable fact is that they

take their cultures with them. Therefore, cultural practices compose the nucleus of globalization (Tomlinson, 1999). Intensified global migration alerts our awareness for a higher cultural sensitivity when communicating with others who are culturally distant but physically close. It is critical to understand cultural differences in today's multiethnic workplace (Stohl, 2001). This research followed the divergence trend (Inkeles, 1998) of cultural globalization. During data collection and analysis, I strived to decode the meaning of communication strategies and obstacles involved in intercultural jobseeking. I especially observed and analyzed the intercultural communication difference between the Chinese and American styles pertaining to job searches.

Third, the foreign-born immigrant population is on steady rise in the U.S. With the new elite migration and the U.S. being the world's leading recipient country, there is a tremendous necessity to study the job seeking behavior of foreign-born immigrants in the U.S. About 26% of the nation's total foreign-born population comes from Asia, and nearly 70% of the Chinese populations in the U.S. are foreign born (Census 2000 data, 2004f). Foreign-born Chinese immigrants are the target population of this research. I believe that this is a timely research on the job seeking behavior of foreign-born Chinese immigrants in the U.S.

Fourth, Naisbitt (1994) predicted that the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be the Pacific Century. The 21 Pacific Rim countries' annual conference Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is showing increasing interconnectivity of this region (<http://www.apec.org>).

This enhanced interconnectivity of Pacific Rim countries suggests a need for deeper understanding of intercultural communication mechanisms between the Chinese and American cultures. The rise of Greater China (which covers the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao) increases pressure on the rest of the world to develop both understanding of and respect for these cultures and peoples (Chuang & Hale, 2002).

Globalization, continuous inflow of foreign-born immigrants in the U.S., cultural integration, and the rise of Greater China all suggest urgency in studying the job-seeking communication strategies and obstacles of the foreign-born Chinese population in the U.S. My research aimed at following the four-fold mandate to study job-seeking behaviors of first generation immigration of a subculture in the U.S.

### Research Rationale

Imagine that you travel to France and visit a Chinese restaurant for dinner. You sit down with your friend and start to talk with the person at the next table about the Eiffel Tower, Danube River and the Louver Museum. You then talk about each other's origin and only to discover you are from the same town. What is more, you are surprised to find out that you both know a lot of the same people in that town. "Wow, what a small world!" You both exclaim in surprise.

A small world it is! Any random person is only six steps away from any other

person on this planet. This principle is named by social scientists as “six degrees of separation.” In 1967, Stanley Milgram initiated a “small world” approach to network communication study (Milgram, 1967). Milgram asked his randomly selected respondents in rural Nebraska to advance a packet to an assigned target person in suburban Boston. These random starters were instructed to send the letter to any personal acquaintance they thought as more likely than themselves to know that target person in Boston. The second person that received this packet would do the same by analyzing the people in his/her acquaintance pool and choosing one of them to pass on this packet. This person that he/she chose should be thought of as possessing the highest possibility of having any connection with the target person. Then the third and fourth persons were instructed to pass it on to the next destination. Milgram was interested in finding out how many steps were needed for this packet to arrive at the final target person. Amazingly, Milgram (1967) found that an average of about 5.5 intermediaries was needed to transmit a packet from a random starter in rural Nebraska to a target person in suburban Boston.

The technical aspects of Milgram’s claims on social connectivity was known to have been inspired by the work of Anator Rapaport, a Russian-born mathematician and concert pianist, who introduced the concept of random graphs on social networks (Rapaport, 1957; Solomonoff & Rapaport, 1951). Meanwhile, Pool and Kochen (1978) supported Milgram’s small world findings, and stated his claims were not so surprising

when one examines the probabilities involved. Pool discovered that the average individual had from 500 to 2,000 acquaintances (Pool & Kochen, 1978). This is the size of the individual's total personal communication network. If each individual knows approximately 1,000 persons, then one's acquaintances' acquaintances would number about 1,000,000 if there were not much overlap. There is overlap, of course, due to interlocking personal networks. A list of friends of friends of friends would number 1 billion, a staggering number. One can thus understand how a randomly selected starter in Nebraska, can reach a randomly assigned target person in Massachusetts in only 5.5 steps.

Albert and Barabasi (2002), Watts (1999), and Watts and Strogatz (1998) updated the Small-World study in testing social and virtual networks. Albert and Barabasi (2002) estimated that a random individual might be acquainted with from 200 to 5,000 people. However, Duncan Watts, a mathematician turned sociologist at Columbia University questioned this estimation based on the ambiguity of the term "acquaintance" (Barabasi, 2002). Therefore, Albert and Barabasi (2002) took the conservative view and still approximated one's network size as 1,000 people with whom a person knows on a first-name basis. With six billion people on earth, their formula yielded a separation degree of social networks is three. Similarly, they found that the separation degree of virtual networks of the Internet pages is 10, although they claim that each page is 19 clicks away from any other page on the World Wide Web. Therefore, on the conservative

side, Milgram's six degrees of separation still holds true. "The mathematical formula washes away all but the order-of-magnitude differences in the number of nodes, explaining why we get such a small separation in general" (Barabasi, 2002, p. 236).

Every two random persons on this planet were separated by only six other people, wrote John Guare (1990) in his Broadway play entitled "Six degrees of separation." Stanley Milgram awakened us to the fact that we not only are connected, but also live in a world where no one is more than a few *handshakes* from anyone else (Barabasi, 2002). In this dissertation, I propose that *invisible handshakes* that exist in one's personal network lead to occupational opportunities.

The small world research provides some theoretical foundations for the personal network approach to job seeking. First, personal networks can be a powerful source of information. Second, connection with people can provide business opportunities. Third, the power of word of mouth cannot be underestimated. Gladwell (2000) stresses that word of mouth is – even in this age of mass communication and multimillion-dollar advertising campaigns – still the most important form of human communication. Fourth, personal networks can be used as a tool for information control.

The small world theory laid a theoretical and empirical foundation for this dissertation. By using job-seeking behavior of foreign-born Chinese immigrants as a vehicle, I wish to expand the study of personal networks.

## The Invisible Handshake

The title of this dissertation – *invisible handshake*, was inspired by Adam Smith's (1904) notion of *invisible hand*. I define invisible handshake as the enactment of one's direct or indirect relationships embedded in personal networks for the purpose of gaining social capital. An "invisible handshake" can be used to create, strengthen and stimulate relationships among individuals, organizations and nations.

As Adam Smith (1904) notes, the remarkable thing about an economy based on private property and freedom of contract is that market prices bring actions of self-interested individuals into harmony while generating general prosperity for a community. The "invisible hand" – market pricing – brings order, harmony, and diversity. However, the economic reality shows that Smith's invisible hand argument is highly conditional. "Whenever information is imperfect and markets incomplete... especially in developing countries, the invisible hand works most imperfectly" (Stiglitz, 2002, p.73).

In imperfect markets, personal networks sometimes outweigh price in their power to influence economic actions. Hence, I claim that it is the joint work of the "invisible hand" and the "invisible handshake" that create economic prosperity in today's economy. I base my argument on the following claims.

Eisenberg and Goodall (1997) state that in today's world, those who have access to the best information are most likely to succeed. They stress "informal communication networks are the most dynamic source of power in contemporary organizations because



of their role in monitoring a turbulent business environment... Connections and interpersonal relationships have become more important” (pp. 13-14). It is once again not *what* you know but *whom* you know that matters. Personal networks have once again caught eyes of practitioners and scholars alike.

In this dissertation research, I study the functionality of personal networks in the job-seeking experience of the Chinese. I seek to discover the power of the invisible handshake in the global marketplace of white-collar labor at PTM occupational positions. I claim that by enacting one’s potential relationships embedded in personal networks, one can achieve considerable social capital.

Network communication scholars (Burt, 1992a, 2000; Coleman, 1988; Lipnack & Stamps, 1994; Monge & Contractor, 2003) stress that there are three different types of capital needed for success: financial, human, and social. An individual has *financial capital* that is composed of short-term and long-term financial assets: cash in hand, reserves in the bank, investments coming due, lines of credit, inventories, plants and equipment. Second, the individual has *human capital*: natural abilities – charm, health, intelligence, appearance and style. Third, individual’s relationships with other players are his/her *social capital*: through family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and general contacts, individuals receive opportunities to use his or her financial and human capital. These opportunities include job promotions, participation in significant projects, and influential access to important decisions (Lesser, 2000). Burt (1992b) argues that social

capital – an actor’s relationship with other players – is as, if not more, important than the financial and human capital the actor brings to the competitive arena (Nohria, 1992). I study, interpret and further define the invisible handshake concept in the coming chapters.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

From an interpretive standpoint, I adopted a multi-method approach to this research. The impact of culture, gender, age, and the Internet on foreign-born Chinese immigrants’ job-seeking behaviors were investigated with both quantitative and qualitative measures. A majority of the survey respondents were foreign-born Chinese immigrants full employed at professional, technical, managerial (PTM) positions.

Granovetter (1974, p.10-11) asserted that white PTM workers in Newton Massachusetts adopted three major communication strategies in job searches: (1) direct application, (2) formal means, and (3) personal contacts. “Direct application” meant that one directly visited or wrote to an organization. Included under “formal means” were advertisements, public and private employment agencies, and job fairs. The defining characteristic of formal means was an *impersonal* intermediary between was used between a jobseeker and a prospective employer. Finally, “personal contacts” implied strong and weak ties in jobseeker’s personal networks. Based on Granovetter’s and later scholars’ study, seven research questions and two hypotheses were raised for this study.

### *Communication strategies and obstacles*

Little attention has been paid to the question of how individuals exercise various communication strategies to search for information that leads to employment opportunities. Among the 1,535 academic journal articles published from 1985 to 2003 that cited Granovetter's (1973) Strength of Weak Ties piece available at the *Web of Science*<sup>9</sup>, few are from mainstream communication journals. Scholars in other fields have conducted various job mobility research, however, their findings produce mixed results.

Paster and Marcelli (2000) studied the Los Angeles Survey of Urban Inequality for causes of social inequality. They found that social network quality mattered most for Anglos and recent Asian immigrants. Paster and Marcelli supported Granovetter's claim on the strength of weak ties. Sanders et al. (2002) conducted ethnographic in-depth interviews with Asian immigrants in Los Angeles, and found they relied heavily on strong social ties within their own ethnic groups for job information and opportunities. The findings by Sanders et al. (2002) seemed not to support Granovetter's claim on the

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<sup>9</sup> The Web of Science: It is a comprehensive digital database for research in the social sciences. The *Web of Science* provides seamless access to current and retrospective multidisciplinary information from approximately 8,700 of the most prestigious, high impact research journals in the world. *Web of Science* also provides a unique search method, cited reference searching. With it, users can navigate forward, backward, and through the literature, searching all disciplines and time spans to uncover all the information relevant to their research. Users can also navigate to electronic full-text journal articles. Through the *Web of Science*, a researcher gains access to the Science Citation Index® (1945-present), Social Sciences Citation Index® (1956-present), Arts & Humanities Citation Index® (1975-present), Index Chemicus® (1993-present), and Current Chemical Reactions® (1986-present) (Thomson ISI, 2004).

strength of weak ties.

To update the study on jobseeking strategies of an Asian minority group in the U.S. and to fill the gap in communication study, I intend to seek answers to the following two research questions and hypothesis. The first two research questions serve as overarching inquiry for this research:

*RQ<sub>1</sub>: What jobseeking communication strategies do foreign-born Chinese use to find and secure career opportunities in the U.S.?*

*RQ<sub>2</sub>: What obstacles do foreign-born Chinese face during their job search in the U.S.?*

*H<sub>1</sub>: Of the foreign-born Chinese who find jobs via personal networks, a majority obtains jobs through weak ties.*

In this research, I further examined benefits of weak ties. From a theoretical approach, Burt (1992a, 1992b, 2000) summarized two benefits when structural holes between weak ties are filled: information and control benefit. First, the structural holes in both personal networks connected by weak ties enjoy new information brought over by weak ties. Second, the two connecting weak ties enjoy the power of controlling the information flow between two networks. Following the surveys, by conducting in-depth interviews with twenty participants, I strived to uncover how effective weak ties were and what benefits the weak ties create for job search. Therefore, here is RQ<sub>3</sub>:

*RQ3: What are the benefits of personal ties in job searches for foreign-born Chinese?*

Lin, Ensel, and Vaughn's (1981) research showed that weak ties were effective only if they connected individuals to diverse others who could provide nonredundant information. To expand Granovetter's (1974, 1995) theory on the strength of weak ties and to predict the identities of weak ties, I asked the following research question:

*RQ4: Who are the weak ties that led foreign-born Chinese to job information and opportunities?*

Brown and Konrad (2001b) drew on a longitudinal research design and monitored job-seeking strategies of a sample of recently unemployed individuals. They examined the influence of shifting labor demands in shrinking and growing industries to jobseekers' preference on personal contacts. The findings indicated the employment level decline or growth in jobseekers' pre-displaced industry subsequently affected the probability of using cross-industry contacts during a job search. Cross-industry personal contacts significantly increased the probability of making an industry change on one's career path. Contacts in jobseekers' personal networks that are from different professions lead the jobseekers to new professional fields. Cross industry contacts have the potential of connecting discharged individuals to new professions.

Findings on the job-seeking communication strategies will be reported in Chapter Five. Findings on job-seeking obstacles will be reported in Chapter Six. Findings on the strength of weak ties will be reported in Chapter Seven.

### *Culture*

A group's culture is shown in values, traditions, social and political relationships, history, language, and collection of symbols combined to interpret the meaning of nature, human life and the relationship between human beings and environment. Limited research has examined the impact of people's cultural background on their communicative choices during job search. Granovetter studied the job-seeking behavior of only *white* male PTM workers in the 1970s. Yet according to recent research, the numerical dominance in the United States work place of the white male – particularly of Anglo-Saxon or Northern European background – is gradually diminishing (Harrison, 1999). Scholars are calling for studies of people with diverse cultural backgrounds. The recent success of Japan, Korea and Singapore, among other rapidly industrializing Asian countries in world trade has forced the U. S. to look at alternative patterns of communication behavior in business organizations. "This awareness may encourage research in non-Western models of cognition, management behaviors, and communication processes" (Limaye & Victor, 1995, p.229).

This research investigated the influence of culture on communication patterns of foreign-born Chinese in the mainstream American culture. Hofstede (1991, 2001),

Hofstede and Bond (1988) have identified five cultural dimensions in their seminal cross-national studies: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and for Chinese cultures specifically, Confucian dynamism (long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation). People travel with their native cultures. The Chinese immigrants come from a high-context, high power distance, collectivist and Confucianism influenced culture. Do Chinese PTM workers demonstrate distinctively different communication strategies than those PTM workers in Granovetter's study? This leads to the following two research questions:

*RQ<sub>5</sub>: How does culture affect job search obstacles for foreign-born Chinese?*

Findings addressing this question will be presented in Chapter Six.

One particular cultural phenomenon specific to Chinese job-seeking strategy is *guanxi*. Guanxi is an indispensable tool (Wong & Leung, 2001) for business and communication in a Chinese/Confucian context, including China, overseas Chinese communities, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Guanxi can hardly be matched with a Western expression that reflects its dynamic meaning. Although it can be loosely translated as "connection," "social networking," or "special interpersonal relationship," the term guanxi also carries the meaning of power, social status and resource transfer (Hackley & Dong, 2001).

Guanxi implies a strong dyadic link and obligation to exchange favors between parties involved (Wellman, 1999). The term implies intentionality and reciprocity within

a whom-you-know rather than what-you-know frame. A number of scholars (Hackley & Dong, 2001; Ma, 1997; Tsang, 1998; Wellman et al., 2001b; Wong & Leung, 2001; Yeung & Tung, 1996) have researched guanxi. They have emphasized the importance of relationships or guanxi in Chinese society, but have not until recently tried to conceptualize a systematic analysis of it (Wong & Leung, 2001). In the second phase of this study, some in-depth interview questions targeted the meaning of Chinese guanxi in comparison with American networking. Hence, a new research question:

*RQ<sub>6</sub>: How do personal networks function in Chinese and American cultural contexts?*

Findings on personal network and its manifestations in Chinese and American cultural contexts will be presented in Chapter Eight.

### *Gender*

This research was approached with the premise that gender influences people's choices of job-seeking strategies. Female respondents were included in this study because more women were moving on to white-collar PTM positions. Unfortunately existing literature provides limited findings on this subject. Granovetter framed his attention to males only. He stated, "female career patterns are sufficiently different from those of males that a separate study would be necessary to do justice to them" (Granovetter, 1974, p.7).

Bagchi (2001) discovered that professional women relied more heavily on strong



rather than weak ties when compared with males in their respective professions, with the exception of nursing – a female dominated profession. Bagchi (2001) suggested further study on the migration experiences of female professionals. He recommended new studies on the development of gendered networks among immigrant professionals and the influence of personal networks on the intercultural adaptation process of new immigrants. My research partially served this purpose.

Tardy and Hale (1998) conducted a network analysis of the health information seeking pattern of “stay-at-home moms” and summarized that these women heavily depended on personal networks for information and support. Are personal networks critical for female Chinese jobseekers? Findings concerning the following hypothesis will be reported in Chapter Seven.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Compared to foreign-born Chinese men, Chinese women tend to rely more on personal contacts in their job search.*

### *The Internet*

“Communication technologies are central to the globalization process” (Tomlinson, 1999, p.20). There is a mandate for new research on the influence of communication technologies on organizational behavior (Stohl, 2001). The relationship between the Internet and people’s choice of job-seeking strategy was investigated in this research.

When Granovetter was studying people’s job-seeking behaviors in the early 1970s, there were no personal computers, let alone the Internet. Granovetter urged that it was

the limited availability of information that led to jobseekers' preference of personal contacts over other means. With the advancement of communication technologies, and especially the power of the Internet, is scarcity of information still an issue for job search?

In 1998, Wellman et al. (2001a) surveyed 39,211 visitors to the National Geographic Society website, and found that people's online interaction supplemented their face-to-face and telephone communication without increasing or decreasing it, but heavy Internet use was associated with increased participation in voluntary organizations and political activities. Wellman et al. (2001a) concluded that the Internet was becoming normalized as it was incorporated into routine practices of everyday life.

Recent research on the effectiveness of Internet as a job search strategy yields mixed results. Kuhn and Skuterud (2000) reported that in 1998, 15% of unemployed jobseekers used the Internet to seek jobs, as did half of all jobseekers with online access from home. Internet search rates exceeded such traditional methods as contacting employment agencies, utilizing personal networks, and browsing potential employers' name list. Feldman and Klaas (2002) contended that managers and professionals were more likely to adopt the Internet for job-hunting when the geographical scope was wide. The Internet was perceived as somewhat less effective than personal networking, but superior to searching for jobs through newspaper ads and "cold calling." Van Rooy et al. (2003) reported that the number of jobs found while the Internet was available was clearly

greater than otherwise.

Niles and Hanson (2003) argued that for those with online access, the Internet significantly reduced the cost and time of transferring information over distance. Their qualitative research result indicated that employers engaged the Internet in two ways. They enhanced the volume of applicants when the labor market was tight, and segmented applicants pool when the market loosened and the number of resumes overwhelmed. As a result, Niles and Hanson (2003) concluded that many grounded social relations that had been integral to the hiring process were resilient to the Internet; pre-Internet geographies shaped Internet geographies, and grounded social relations continue to define access to information about job opportunities even online. Therefore, their research indicated that Internet does not have a profound replacement over personal network for job search.

Neuville (2001) studied the impact of the Internet in France on people's job-seeking strategies. The author claimed that jobseekers and employers tended to fall back on more traditional channels, such as social networks and face-to-face contacts. Is this also true in the U.S., a nation with one of the highest Internet surfers in the world?

*RQ<sub>7</sub>: What is the impact of the Internet on the job market and foreign-born Chinese jobseekers?*

Findings concerning this research question will be presented in Chapter Nine.

## Conclusion

This multi-method interpretivist dissertation research studied the communication strategies that the Chinese adopt and the communication obstacles that the Chinese face when coming to the U.S. and searching for jobs. Updating and revising Mark Granovetter's 1974 study, I focused on the job search experience of the Chinese PTM workers in the United States. I believe that the findings contribute to the scholarly understanding of job-seeking mechanisms of new immigrants in Internet age. The impact of culture, gender, age, and the Internet on the job-seeking communication strategies and obstacles of foreign-born Chinese immigrants were investigated with both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Next chapter will present the research methods of this research.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Based on the research questions and hypotheses raised in Chapter Two, an interpretivist multi-method approach was developed for this research. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected during three research phases through systematic observation, questionnaire surveys, and in-depth interviews. During data collection and data analysis, both emic and etic perspectives were employed.

### Introduction

Since the late 1980s, intercultural communication has been a fertile ground for the growth of *interpretive* research rooted in the tradition of anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics, and philosophy (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002). While there is an abundance of data on globalization processes, far less is written about the meaning of the globalization experience, which, in turn, requires interpretive methods. The interpretive approach has become critical for understanding any communication practice where meaning is fluid and emergent (Anderson, Baxter & Cissna, 2004). Interpretive research is vital for meaning making. Therefore, for the purpose of this research on job mobility and intercultural communication, interpretivism is a proper paradigm.

Further, there is a pressing demand for multiple methods when studying phenomena as complex as culture (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Lindlof, 1995) because while “[t]here are all kinds of sources of our knowledge... none has authority” (Popper, 1963, p.24).

Organizational behavior, such as job-seeking behavior, is best captured and examined through “multiple hypotheses, multiple theoretical degrees of freedom, multiple indicators, and multiple methods” (Weick, 1979, p. 188-193). Similarly, when comparing cultures such as American and Chinese, scholars have argued for more than one methodological approach in order to increase the general validity of theories and models (Campbell, 1968).

Taylor and Trujillo (2001) supported the multiple methods approach and recommended triangulation because “different methods tap into different dimensions of organizational communication and that no one methods has more privileged access to organizational ‘reality’ than any other” (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001, p. 167). “Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation” so that “the combination of multiple methods... in a single study... adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Dervin and Clark (1999) name triangulation as the *sense-making methodology*.

In this research, I implemented a triangulated multi-method approach to study job search communication practices of first generation Chinese immigrants. From an *interpretivist* standpoint, I intended to capture the subtle *meaning* of intercultural job

searching experience through systematic observation, questionnaire surveys, and in-depth interviews.

### Research Characteristics

There are four distinct characteristics for this dissertation study. Through data collection and analysis, I researched job mobility and intercultural communication in naturalistic settings, utilized human and questionnaire as dual instruments, moved between emic and etic viewpoints, and presented findings with both idiographic interpretation and nomothetical generalization.

#### *Naturalistic settings*

Scholars engaged with interpretivist research tend to persist in *naturalistic inquiry*, a term often used interchangeably with *naturalism*. Naturalism takes cultural description as its primary objective. Naturalism proposes that indigenous behaviors and meanings of a people can be understood only through a close analysis of *natural* settings (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Denzin (1977, p. 31) stated, “Naturalism implies a profound respect for the character of the empirical world. It demands that the investigator take his [or her] theories and methods to that world.”

For intercultural research, contexts of time and place play a critical role in the interpretation of meaning. “In every interaction, individuals are phenomenologically located – they actively take up positions in space and time that make events meaningful”

(Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 34). In Russian dialogue scholar Bakhtin's (1986) thought, the time and place, from which we speak, play a vital role in determining what we say. Bakhtin coined the concept *chronotope*, meaning the totality of time-space (Bakhtin, 1981). Each individual has a unique "excess of seeing" which Bakhtin (1981) described: "When I contemplate a whole human being who is situated outside and over against me, our concrete, actually experienced horizons do not coincide" (p. 78).

From a system's perspective, I believe that realities are wholes that cannot be understood and conceptualized apart from their contexts. Nor can they be fragmented for the separate study of their parts, because the whole is more than the sum of its parts (Briggs & Peat, 1999; Capra, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, I elected to carry out my research in the natural setting of the participants and respondents. This means that I conducted *systematic observation* (Weick, 1985) as events occur naturally in my personal life as well as in my academic and professional experience. As a Chinese myself, I have a personal network of Chinese within the local Chinese American communities in the Greater Tampa Bay Area, including Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Orlando and vicinity areas. Through my personal informal conversations, activities and obligations with them, I obtained first hand information, insight and understanding into the lives of people in the Chinese American community.

First, I conducted systematic observation in natural settings. For example, during data collection, I was one of five teachers at a local Chinese language school with an



average enrollment of one hundred students. Students who are accompanied by their parents meet once a week on Sundays. Most of the students are between five to fifteen years old, and are second-generation Chinese immigrants from Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. After class, I tried to talk to the parents, who were mostly foreign-born Chinese immigrants working at PTM positions. In the context of this study, these informal conversations provided information about how they immigrated to the U.S. and how they found jobs. Through talking to these parents, I gained insight and information about their occupational, educational and experiential backgrounds. The systematic observation established a contextual framework for the questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews to be conducted later in the research.

When the initial systematic observation was completed, I conducted in-depth interviews in the participants' current job environment and/or homes. In this way I was able to feel and show the *natural settings* of the participants' job occupation that they successfully secured via the communication strategies that I hoped to uncover. Conducting in-depth interviews at the participants' organizations and homes gave me an opportunity to observe the participant's work/life setting as well as his/her interaction with his/her colleagues and employers.

Third, I administered the questionnaire surveys at the *natural* community gatherings of the local Chinese American community. At their community gatherings, I conducted on-site surveys, investigating their job-seeking strategies. Onsite surveys ensured the

highest response rate for this research. The surveys were prepared with two versions, one in Chinese and one in English, and were distributed with the language preference by the respondents.

#### *Human and questionnaire as dual instruments*

Stohl (2001) suggested that for new organizational communication research on globalization, researchers should employ “the triangulation of social-scientific and interpretive methods” (p. 360). In this research, I utilized surveys and in-depth interviews for data collection and used quantitative and qualitative methods for data analysis.

First, I updated and revised the survey questionnaire developed by Mark Granovetter (Granovetter, 1974). (Appendix A contains the updated questionnaire.) This bilingual questionnaire was created first in English. The English version was structured as the standard questionnaire. After the standard questionnaire was created, it was then translated into Chinese. Because I translated the Chinese version, no back translation from the Chinese to English is needed. Many nominal, ordinal and interval variables are contained in the questionnaire. Because the questionnaire reached as many as 400 Chinese respondents, the survey data present a general picture of the job search communication strategies and obstacles of the foreign-born Chinese in the U.S. The in-depth interviews were then conducted following the general themes that emerged from the survey data.

As a naturalistic researcher, I relied on myself as the primary data-gathering instrument and used the questionnaire as a supplemental data-gathering instrument. First, using myself as the human-instrument assures the research will have sufficient adaptability because of my Chinese female identity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stressed that all instruments interacted with respondents and research objects, but only the human instrument was capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of such interaction. Polanyi (1958) referred to knowledge as personal knowledge since a researcher can transcend his/her own subjectivity by striving passionately to fulfill his/her personal obligations to universal standard - the objectivity. For Polanyi, absolute objectivity attributed to sciences was a false ideal.

My identity and integrity as an American-educated Chinese female, my language proficiency in Chinese and English, and my ability to understand Chinese culture with empathy from an emic perspective helped give me the adaptability I needed as a naturalistic researcher. My credentials as a naturalist researcher reflect Lincoln and Guba's (1985) conclusion that "[h]umans can provide data very nearly as reliable as that produced by 'more objective' means" (p.192). By employing a triangulation of quantitative and interpretive methods, I believe my researched filled a gap in the communication research on global job mobility.

#### *Alternating viewpoints from etic to emic*

In interpreting cultural realities, scholars have long made distinctions that etic and

emic are two different viewpoints (Jackson, 1995; Pike, 1954). Pike (1954) stated that “[t]he etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an essential initial approach to an alien system. The emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system” (p. 152). Pike coined the words “etic” and “emic” from the terms “phonetic” and “phonemic,” following the conventional linguistic usage of these terms. The short words of etic and emic are used in an analogous manner, but for more general purposes. The etic approach treats all cultures at one time and it is comparative in the anthropological sense. Descriptions or analyses from the etic standpoint are “alien” in view, with criteria external to the system.

“The emic structure of a particular system must...be discovered” (Pike, 1954, p. 153). Emic descriptions provide an internal view, with criteria chosen from within the system. An etic system may be set up by criteria or “logical” plan whose relevance is external to the system being studied. The discovery or setting up of the emic system requires the inclusion of criteria relevant to the internal functioning of the system itself. The etic criteria may often be considered absolute, or measurable directly. Emic criteria are relative to the internal characteristics of the system, and can be usefully described or measured relative to each other.

The *emic* viewpoint is that from within the culture, assuming non-universality for this viewpoint, and the *etic* view is that from outside the culture looking in, often an approach looking at an “alien” culture, and attempting to apply certain supposed

universality to that culture. I take both viewpoints in observing and interpreting my research data. In her suggestions for future organizational communication research, Stole (2001) explicitly stated that we need to further “study non-U.S. and non-Western organizations from both etic and emic perspectives” (2001, p. 360).

During the in-depth interviews, I switched from emic to etic and back to emic viewpoint. First, I began research in American culture by designing an universal interview guide in English based on Granovetter’s 1974 interview guide and under the premise of Western communication theories (emic, culture A). Second, I interviewed the participants with this universal interview guide in English or Chinese with open-ended questions (imposed etic from culture A to culture B). Third, I discovered information about Chinese culture through the semi-structured and open-ended interview process by using the dialogic method, striving to understand the situation from the perspective of the Chinese (emic, culture B).

On the one hand, by imposing the *etic* view of the American culture to the Chinese participants, I can assure certain universality and consistency in my research with the Chinese in the greater context of American culture. This is a fundamental starting point to counter the fact that the major guiding theories of this dissertation are developed by Western scholars. “Etic analysis is useful at the early stage in order to relate the idea to theoretical interests” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 81). However, I was cautious of my cultural biases from my Chinese roots and American education, and tried to avoid

imposing these biases onto the cultures of the participants. Jackson (1995) states, “In order to understand other cultures, we must employ the standpoint of our own culture” (p. 4-5) because this is how we see the world.

On the other hand, by switching from *etic* to *emic* viewpoint, I would transfer from the imposed *etic* (standard American) to the foreign culture (Chinese) of the participants by employing empathy and establishing *rapport* (Jorgensen, 1992) with the participants. Pelto and Pelto (1978, p. 56) emphasized *emic* analysis because they thought, “the native’s categorization of behavior is the only correct one.” Therefore Lindlof and Taylor (2002) conclude that a researcher needs to “see social action from the actors’ point of view to understand what is happening” (p. 31). In this research, an *emic* viewpoint is critical in decoding cultural complexities of the immigrant subculture in the mainstream American society.

However, when taking the *emic* viewpoint, I was aware of tendencies of “going native” on the one hand and “exhibiting ethnocentrism” on the other hand (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the process of systematic observation, in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys, I maintained a necessary distance from my participants and respondents, while cultivating an attitude and relationship of *rapport*, compassion, respect and understanding. The distance was *real* because my participants saw that I was not one of them. Clearly my research participants and respondents realized that I was a Chinese and they were aware that I was an American-educated doctoral student working

on my dissertation (unlike the participants and respondents who have found a job and settled in America).

### *Idiographic interpretation and nomothetic generalization*

Different methods of interpretation are likely to be meaningful for different realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout this dissertation, I explored academic and narrative writing conventions, interpreting and constructing intercultural realities through different styles of writing, including *idiographic* (novelistic, narrative, ethnographic) and *nomothetic* (scientific, conceptual, generalized) writing styles. I believe that the two styles of writing complement each other because "...each practice makes the world visible in a different way" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 4).

My primary writing style is to interpret data and draw conclusions idiographically in terms of particulars of the case. Qualitative research appropriately addresses these questions of how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings. Following interpretive ethnographic practices, through everyday systematic observation and qualitative in-depth interviews, I sought to discover narrative stories and lived experiences (Bochner & Ellis, 1996) about job-seeking strategies of Chinese coming into U.S.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) contend that one of the most influential models for coding qualitative data is the *grounded theory* approach, pioneered by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (as quoted in Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This approach remains in wide use across

all disciplines of the social sciences, including communication. Grounded theory is “a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedure to develop an inductively derived theory about a phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 24). The purpose of grounded theory is to build a theory that is faithful to the evidence. It makes qualitative research flexible and lets data and theory interact (Charmaz, 1990, 2000; Neuman, 2003). I employed the grounded theory method in analyzing the data regarding job search communication strategies and obstacles, the quality of weak ties, the meaning of guanxi, and the impact of the Internet on job search effectiveness. Findings will be presented in chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine.

When reporting findings from the quantitative survey research, I write in a more nomothetic manner. Statistical methods were employed in analyzing the data collected from questionnaire surveys. Such methods as frequency counts, Chi-square, t-test, crosstabulation, varimax rotated principle component analysis (factor analysis), K-means cluster analysis, and multiple regression were employed for quantitative data analysis.

Throughout the dissertation, I used first person narrative as my primary writing *voice* (Goodall, 2000). Japanese American sociologist Dorinne Kondo (1990) explains that in qualitative fieldwork, especially with an intercultural setting, “experience and evocation can become theory, where the binary between ‘empirical’ and ‘theoretical’ is displaced and loses its force” (p. 8). Kondo (1990) emphasizes the importance of using first person narrative for qualitative research. I agree with Kondo(1990) that “any



account, mine included, is partial and located, screened through the narrator's eye/I" (p. 8). To use first person narrative is instrumental in *showing* rather than *telling* (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) the emergent nature of naturalistic ethnographic inquiry and the embeddedness of theory in that process (Kondo, 1990). By using first person narrative, I allow the readers to follow my I/Eyes, which have gained access, into the natural intercultural settings of my research.

I have discussed four distinct characteristics of this multi-method, dual perspective (emic and etic) interpretivist research or organizational communication conducted at intercultural natural settings.

### Research Process

The research was carried out in three phases. The first phase was systematic observation (hereafter referred as Phase I). In Phase I, I participated in focused conversations and practiced intensive eavesdropping in the Chinese community to shape and reshape such important research design questions as research topics, research questions, hypotheses, sampling population, sampling methods, and questionnaire language choice.

The second phase involved a quantitative questionnaire survey with about 400 Chinese respondents (here after referred as Phase II). The questionnaires were distributed at various natural social gatherings of the Chinese American communities.

Altogether 400 surveys were distributed onsite and 203 valid surveys were received either onsite or in mail-in envelopes. The individuals who participated in the survey are referred to as “respondents” in this dissertation.

The third phase involves qualitative in-depth interviews (hereafter referred to as Phase III). In Phase III, I conducted in-depth interviews with twenty Chinese Professional, Technical and Managerial workers (Chinese PTM workers). The interviewees are referred to as “participants” in this dissertation.

# A composite model of mixed method design

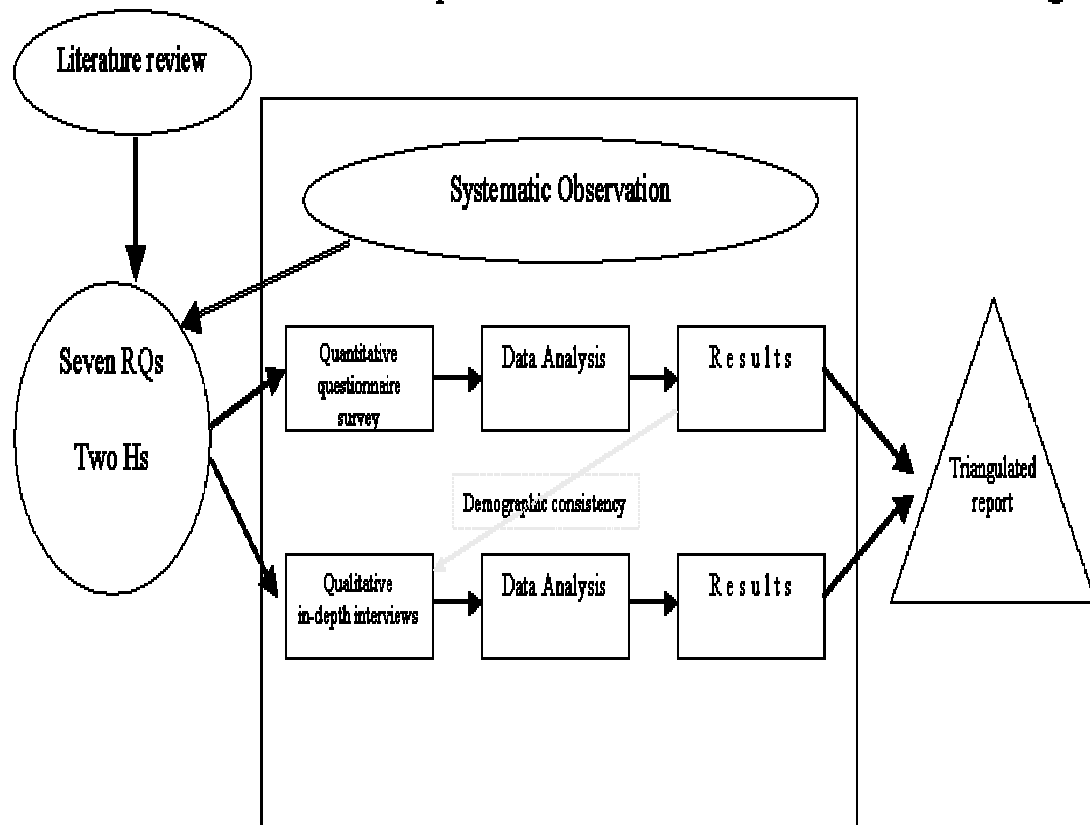


Figure 1: A composite model of mixed method design

### *Phase I: Systematic observation*

During the first phase of data collection, I employed Karl Weick's (1985) notion of a "soft technology of systematic observation" (p. 568). Soft technology refers to the total sensory and conceptual equipment used by a human investigator. By "soft," Weick (1985) means that observation is carried out through loosely structured, adaptable rules. By "systematic observation," Weick means "sustained, explicit, methodological observing and paraphrasing of social situations in relation to their naturally occurring contexts" (p. 569). Weick's systematic observation is an appropriate observation method for my research.

Weick's systematic observation is compatible with Candice Clark's (1991) methods of "focused conversation" and "intensive eavesdropping" for qualitative research on sympathy. By focused conversation, Clark (1991) means that when talking with others in social settings of all kinds, she often directs the conversation to the topic of sympathy. Through intensive eavesdropping, Clark explains that she "obtrusively paid attention when I overheard discussions of sympathy and overt acts of sympathizing, as well as gossip about people who deserved or did not deserve, claimed or did not claim, sympathy" (p. 270). I employed focused conversation and intensive eavesdropping methods in my systematic observation.

Through systematic observation, I encountered numerous informal conversations with Chinese American community members. I solicited questions in regard to job

searching and networking strategies and stories. These informal conversations and ongoing observations provided the background for my research. Such conversations and observations helped me generate ideas for designing the qualitative interview guide and the quantitative survey questionnaires. Further, these informal conversations helped to build a personal network for my research in securing research participants.

In the later chapters, I will present narrative accounts of job-seeking experiences of the participants. Stories are more open than analysis, allowing readers to emphasize and connect with the truths presented in the stories. Scholars such as Bochner (1994, 1997), Frank (1995), and Denzin (1997) suggest that readers of narratives have the opportunity to experience the ethical, moral, and personal implications in the stories for themselves. I have weaved job search short stories obtained from in-depth interviews with findings from questionnaire survey under different topics from Chapters Five to Nine.

#### *Phase II: Quantitative questionnaire survey*

“Each method provides a different glimpse of reality, and all have limitations when used alone” (Warwick & Leninger, 1975, pp. 5-6; cited in Neuman, 2003, p. 263).

Questionnaires added another dimension to my study. Through these surveys, I obtained job-seeking strategies and obstacles of the foreign-born Chinese in the U.S. I updated and revised Granovetter’s (1974) survey instrument and scaled and added sets of questions concerning such variables as culture, the Internet, gender and age. (See Appendix A for the questionnaire in the English version).

Before conducting the questionnaire surveys in the Chinese American community, I arranged a pilot study, testing the questionnaire with a small set of respondents similar to those in the official survey. By using the English version, I conducted the pilot research with fifteen foreign-born Chinese PTM workers, administrated by myself. After the pilot research was conducted, I solicited feedback about the questionnaire's clarity from these respondents (Neuman, 2003). Their comments contributed to the revised version of the questionnaire in the English version.

### *Phase III: Qualitative in-depth interviews*

I conducted twenty semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted based on the In-depth Interview Guide (see Appendix C). These *in-depth interviews* were designed to elicit narratives with respect to job-seeking strategies and obstacles in the participants' communication with mainstream American society. These interviews helped to uncover the meanings behind actions, to test emerging ideas, and to gather data essential to this study. Based on Granovetter's 1974 interview guide, I prepared an interview guide to frame in-depth interview questions (see Appendix C). Within the broad scope of the interview guide, I chose to conduct semi-structured dialogic interviews, from an "*I-Thou*" (Buber, 1958) standpoint, interacting with each participant with mutuality and confirmation. This was different from Granovetter's method of interviews. Granovetter (1974) conducted structured interviews and they were not in-depth interviews. I revised Granovetter's qualitative research design by

conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews. I sought to elicit the mindset, communication style, and obstacles and barriers of the intercultural job-seeking experiences of the foreign-born Chinese. Their global job seeking stories will be positioned as vehicles to interpret their job search communication strategies and obstacles.

I interviewed twenty foreign-born Chinese Americans presently holding PTM positions. To be included as a participant in this study, an individual had to be:

1. of Chinese descent in terms of ethnicity;
2. not born in the U.S. or on its territories;
3. employed as a full-time employee in an American organization/company;
4. holding a professional, managerial, or technical position;
5. not the owner of the organization he/she is working in;
6. working in Florida.

Immigration status of the participants was not a criterion for inclusion. This study did not screen participants based on whether they are on F<sub>1</sub>, J<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>1</sub> or H<sub>1</sub>B visa, whether they have green cards, or whether they have already become U.S. citizens. As long as an individual bears a legal immigration status in U.S., and he/she meets the above-mentioned criteria, he/she had an opportunity to be included in this study. Although a participant's particular immigration status is not a concern in this study, this variable was captured in the questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews.

Interviews were conducted at the participants' convenience in *natural settings* including participants' workplaces, homes, and Chinese American community gatherings. Most interviews were tape-recorded with the participants' written consent. Two of the interviews were not recorded because of the company policy restricting the participants. All taped narrative accounts were transcribed and translated into English as soon as the interview concluded. During interviews, in addition to recording the context of the interviews, I observed the participants' body language, facial expressions and vocal variations.

“Since we can only enter into another person's world through communication, we depend upon ethnographic dialogue to create a world of shared intersubjectivity and to reach an understanding of the differences between two worlds” (Tedlock, 1991, p. 70). In addition to being observed, participants engaged in personal interviews designed to solicit narratives with respect to job-seeking concerns and examples of information-seeking behaviors. Efforts were made to include a variety of participants in terms of age, gender, socio-economic status, educational field and other backgrounds. The interviews were interactive, dialogic and initiated with open-ended questions.

Observations and interviews were conducted in the Chinese communities at the Greater Tampa Bay area of Florida. Florida is a state counted as one of the top ten American states housing Asian population according to Census 2000. Hubs of these Chinese communities include the USF Chinese School, and the Chinese American



Association of Tampa Bay (CAAT). I communicated with leaders and members of these organizations and tried to gain access to their members as my participants and respondents. In addition to interviews, field notes were composed to record the context of and my reflections on the interviews in my personal research journals – the audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To reduce error, transcriptions and translations (if necessary) of interviews were made as soon as the interviews were completed.

In summary, this is an interpretive naturalistic study of the job-seeking communication strategies and obstacles. The research questions and hypotheses were investigated with both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the process of data collection, the researcher obtained quantitative and qualitative data through emic and etic perspectives. I believe that this multi-method approach helps to uncover deeper meanings of job-seeking strategies and obstacles of the foreign-born Chinese immigrants in the United States. In the next few chapters, I will weave findings from both the quantitative questionnaire surveys and the qualitative in-depth interviews. The sequence of the chapters is arranged based on the research questions and the hypothesis presented in Chapter Two. I will describe the methods of data analysis for and present the research findings of both quantitative questionnaire surveys and qualitative in-depth interviews in chapters Four through Nine.

## Conclusion

This dissertation took an interpretivist multi-method approach to uncover the job-seeking strategies and obstacles of foreign-born Chinese professional, technical and managerial workers in the U.S. I adopted three major research methods, including systematic observation, questionnaire surveys, and in-depth interviews. During the data collection process, I interchanged between emic and etic perspectives and collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Findings from quantitative and qualitative research will be presented in next few chapters.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING

For the purpose of this study, the Greater Tampa Bay area of Florida was chosen as the research area. This location provided appropriate research population to investigate the job-seeking strategies and obstacles of foreign-born Chinese professional, technical and managerial workers in the U.S. Though the survey and in-depth interview samples were not randomly selected, this chapter argues that representative samples were achieved for the surveys and in-depth interviews. The research followed a three-phase design presented in Chapter Three, consisting of systematic observation, questionnaire survey, and in-depth interviews. Onsite purposive sampling was performed for the questionnaire surveys, and quota sampling was designated for the in-depth interviews.

In Phase I, I observed the foreign-born Chinese population in Tampa Bay starting November 2003. During systematic observation, I observed the lives of Chinese families and conversed with leaders and members of local Chinese American communities. My identity as a foreign-born Chinese, my position as a part-time Chinese Sunday School teacher, and my personal connections in the Chinese communities afforded me first hand research information. From the systematic observation, I conceptualized several fundamental research frameworks. First, on site purposive sampling was the most

effective strategy in reaching the broader Chinese community. Second, most of the full-time employees among the foreign-born Chinese population were working at PTM positions. Third, Chinese PTM workers prefer Chinese rather than English as a language for surveys and in-depth interviews. Therefore, I needed to have two versions for the survey questionnaire, one in English, and one in Chinese. For in-depth interviews, I needed to ask the participants' preference for interview language. Fourth, Chinese PTM workers belonged to different social organizations based on their origins. Those from Mainland China usually belonged to Chinese American Association of Tampa Bay (CAAT), and those from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and Southeast Asia were members of Suncoast Association of Chinese Americans (SACA). CAAT and SACA were operating under different leadership bodies, but often coordinated with each other for cultural events and activities. When these basic frameworks were shaped, the research proceeded to Phase II – questionnaire surveys.

In Phase II, I employed on-site purposive sampling for the survey in anticipation of a higher response rate. From January 22 to April 10, 2004, the written questionnaire reached about 400 respondents (hereafter referred to as “respondents”) through various community events and activities. A total of 212 complete cases were received, with 203 valid cases. When the survey was completed, quantitative data were entered into an SPSS codebook and preliminary descriptive data were analyzed. The distribution of demographic features of respondents was computed, which framed the quota allocation

for in-depth interviews in Phase III.

In Phase III, the qualitative portion of this research, in-depth interviews were conducted with twenty participants (hereafter referred to as participants). Quota sampling was employed to identify participants. The quota of participants' distribution in gender, age, educational background, and industry distribution were matched with descriptive data generated from survey results, which were representative of Census 2000 data on foreign-born Chinese population in the U.S.

#### Research site

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 2000, there were 33 million foreign-born persons living in the U.S., slightly more than the entire population of Canada (US Info Website, 2003). Foreign-born immigrants made up 11.8% of the U.S. population, according to the "American Community Survey" (CNN, October 30, 2000). "The growth of the nation's foreign-born population reflects how attractive this country remains, both politically and economically, for people around the world," said Census Bureau Director Louis Kincannon (CNN, December 28, 2000). About 52% of the foreign-born population was from Latin America, 27% *from Asia* and 15% from Europe. Census 2000 showed that California led the 50 states in its percentage of foreign-born residents (26.9%), followed by New York (20.9%), New Jersey (18.9%), *Florida (17.9%)* and Hawaii (17.9 %). Florida was listed as a top-five state with a foreign-born population in

the United States (Grieco, 2004). Florida, a top-five state with a foreign-born immigrant population, was an ideal location to study new immigrants. In 2000, Florida hosted 8.9 % of the nation's total foreign-born immigrant population.

Florida was also an effective location to study the foreign-born Asian population. Census 1990 recorded that Florida housed 116,278 Asians and hence made it a top-ten state with Asian population as of 1990. Census 2000 informs us that about three-fourths of all the reported Asians resided in ten states: California, New York, Hawaii, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Washington, Florida, Virginia and Massachusetts. With the exception of Japanese Americans, the majority of Asian Americans were born overseas. In addition, Florida was an appropriate location for studying foreign-born Chinese, the target population of this dissertation research. Census 2000 listed Florida as a top-ten state in terms of its Chinese population concentration. In 2000, it was recorded that Florida had 17,732 Chinese immigrants. The Chinese, being a leading immigrant group among Asians, accounted for 23% of all Asians currently in the U.S. (*Cable TV Ad Bureau*, 2004). This means that one in every four Asians in the U.S. was of Chinese descent. Therefore, being a top-five state with foreign-born immigrant population and a top-ten state with an Asian and especially Chinese population, Florida offered a proper population pool for this study.

The Greater Tampa Bay area of Florida, where I chose to conduct this study, was a well-suited research site for investigating foreign-born Chinese population. Since the

1990s, Asian population was on the rise in the Greater Tampa Bay area. Asians made up 2.7 % of St. Petersburg's, and 2.2 % of Tampa's population. But their absolute population size grew by 67% in St. Petersburg in the past ten years, roughly the same growth rate as the city's Hispanic population (Associated Press, 2003). In Tampa, the city's Asian population grew at a 72% rate, much faster than the Hispanic population, which grew by 39 % in the same period. In Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas and Hillsborough combined, the Asian population more than doubled in the 1990s (LaPeter, 2001). As recorded in Census 2000, the total number of Chinese in these three cities is 1,526. The current number of Chinese immigrants in the Greater Tampa Bay area should be somewhat higher than the Census 2000 data since there is a steady stream of incoming Chinese.

In conclusion, Florida was an ideal state to study the foreign-born Chinese immigrant population and the Greater Tampa Bay area was well suited as the research cite. Data collected from the surveys and in-depth interviews conducted in the Greater Tampa Bay area were analyzed to unveil job-seeking strategies and obstacles of foreign-born Chinese population in the U.S. I claim that the research findings can be generalized to the general foreign-born Chinese population in the U.S. because I had a representative sample.

## Research population

In his classic 1974 research, Granovetter studied white male PTM workers in a suburban area Newton of Massachusetts. By PTM workers, Granovetter meant people who occupied white-collar jobs in professional, technical and managerial positions. This researcher chose a sample of PTM workers, who were not white, and who were not solely male. My participants included both Chinese men and women who were PTM workers. My sample comprised foreign-born Chinese immigrants who were PTM workers employed by American organizations.

Why should the sampling population be Chinese PTM workers? Sowell (1996) reported that late twentieth century legal migration to more developed countries, especially to the U.S., had tended to be *elite migration* as opposed to *mass migration* (Held et al, 1999). Constituents of elite migration are people with better education, higher skills, and richer job experience than the general populations of the countries from which they emigrated, regardless of country of origin. “More than one-fifth of the migrants from all four regions to the United States in fiscal year 1989 were in professional or technical occupations, with an additional ten percent or more being in executive, administrative, and managerial positions” (Sowell, 1996, p. 37). The new legal immigrants are predominantly working in PTM positions. This is especially true in the case of Chinese immigrants.

Chinese are a dominant group among the Asian population in the U.S., accounting



for 25% of the total Asian population. Eric Liu, the son of a Chinese immigrant family and a former Clinton speechwriter, stresses that in the American racial landscape, “Asian American is a Chinese and Japanese dominated show” (Liu, 1998, p.82). Statistics show that the majority of legal Chinese immigrants employed in American organizations ended up securing PTM positions. Harrison (1992) found that Chinese Americans have a higher tendency of securing white-collar PTM positions than other ethnicities in American society. As a result, “overseas Chinese as a group have usually averaged considerably higher incomes than the surrounding populations of the countries in which they lived” (Sowell, 1996, p. 179). Therefore, foreign-born Chinese PTM workers were a proper target population for the purpose of this study.

## Sampling

### *Sampling process of the questionnaire survey*

Purposive sampling was employed to reach respondents for the survey research. All sampling is done with a purpose. Within the conventional paradigm, that purpose almost always is to define a sample that is in some sense representative of a population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Purposive sampling is acceptable in special situations such as this research, whose target population is hard to reach and low in mail-in response rate

(Census 2000 data, 2004f).

The target population of my research – foreign-born Chinese PTM workers, is a difficult-to-reach specialized population. Chinese Americans are known for their low response rate in mail-in surveys, which was verified in Census 2000 research (*Census 2000 data*, 2004f). Therefore, on-site distribution of surveys was the most efficient method of reaching this group of population.

From January 22, 2004 to April 10, 2004, with the support of local Chinese community leaders, I attended and participated in various Chinese community gatherings in the Greater Tampa Bay area. I conducted on-site distribution of questionnaires. The respondents were encouraged to complete the surveys on site. When the respondents could not complete the surveys on site for various reasons (some of them did not bring their glasses, some were engaged in activities or were in a hurry to leave), the respondents were instructed to mail in the pre-stamped questionnaires after completion at home.

I distributed survey questionnaires at various events and community gatherings organized by CAAT and SACA in the Greater Tampa Bay area. These events included 2004 Chinese New Year Celebration of Tampa Bay, Meadow Pointe Chinese community social club New Year's party, USF Chinese School, Clearwater Chinese School, Tampa Chinese School, the Tampa Bay Chinese Christen Alliance Church, the China booth of the St. Petersburg International Folk Festivals (SPIFFS), two personal gatherings

organized by local leaders of the Chinese American community, Sunshine dance club, etc. (For a complete list of events, See Table 1.)

Table 1: Survey sampling and response rate breakdown							
	Event	Date	Location	Distributed onsite	Received onsite	Take home	Onsite response rate
1	Meadow Pointe Chinese Community Gathering	1/22/2004	Tampa	30	22	8	73%
2	2004 Chinese New Year Celebration of Tampa Bay*	1/25/2004	Tampa	92	37	55	40%
3	USF Chinese School	2/04/04-3/31/04	Tampa	69	49	20	71%
4	CAAT Chairman Cai's New Year Party	2/10/2004	Tampa	40	21	19	53%
5	Clearwater Chinese School	3/20/2004	Clearwater	20	0	20	0%
6	Tampa Chinese School	3/25/2004	Tampa	20	0	20	0%
7	SPIFF (St. Petersburg International Folk Festival)	3/20/2004-3/21/2004	St. Petersburg	30	10	20	33%
8	Tampa Bay Chinese Alliance Church*	2/24/2004	Tampa	52	22	30	42%
9	SACA Gathering on Stock Market Investment*	4/10/2004	Clearwater	8	6	2	75%
10	Other occasions	3/01/04-03/31/04	Tampa	43	3	40	7%
	Total distributed	1/22/2004-4/10/2004	Tampa Bay	404	170	234	42%
* For these events, participants came from Tampa, Clearwater, and St. Petersburg.							

Out of the 400 surveys distributed on site at various events and gatherings, 212 completed surveys were received, and of which 203 with valid information. Nine of the 212 completed surveys could not be used for this dissertation because they were not filled by foreign-born Chinese. A few Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, Indian, Filipinos and U.S. born Chinese completed these surveys. The questionnaires were scattered to a few respondents other than foreign-born Chinese because the questionnaire was designed for all Asians. Therefore it was entitled “For Asians with Full time Jobs Only.” For the purpose of this study, only questionnaires completed by foreign-born immigrants of Chinese ethnicity in the greater Tampa Bay area with full time jobs were considered as valid for data analysis.

The questionnaires were distributed in two versions, with the majority in Chinese and a minority in English. I distributed a total of 404 surveys, of which 283 surveys in Chinese (70%), and 121 surveys (30%) in English. As a result, among the 203 valid cases, 158 (78%) were in Chinese and 45 (22%) in English, a remarkably similar percentage of the surveys distributed in terms of Chinese/English version ratio, based on the preference of the respondents inquired by my multi-lingual questionnaire distribution team. After the surveys were distributed, a follow up reminder email was posted on the three Chinese immigrant list-serves under names of the Presidents of CAAT, SACA and FACSS. FACSS stands for the Friendship Association of the Chinese Student and

Scholars. CAAT stands for Chinese American Association of Tampa Bay and SACA stands for the Suncoast Association of Chinese Americans.

Table 2 shows that a total of 203 valid surveys were received, with 176 from full time employees, 26 from self-employed respondents, while one contains missing data on employment status. The 176 respondents who are employed by other organizations/companies are the critical cases for this research, because these respondents have gone through job search processes for their current jobs. By analyzing their job search data, I would be able to generate findings targeting the seven research questions and two hypotheses of this dissertation raised in Chapter Two. Those 26 respondents who were self-employed did not need to go through job search processes, and they skipped the job search sections in the questionnaires when completing the survey. Therefore, these self-employed respondents were not the focus of this study.

Table 2: Questionnaire Surveys received

	Employment status			
	Valid cases	Full time employee	Self-employed	Missing
N =	203	176	26	1

Total surveys distributed:  $170 + 234 = 404$

Total cases received:  $203 + 9 = 212$

Overall response rate:  $212 / 404 = 52\%$

On-site response rate: 42%

Take home and mail in response rate:  $(212-170) / (404-170) = 42/234 = 18\%$

### *Questionnaire survey instrument*

For the purpose of this study, Granovetter's 1974 questionnaire were revised and updated (See Appendix A for the survey). Many of Granovetter's original questions were kept with slight modification. Some new scales were added to the survey. For example, items 11 to 22 are a well-established job search intensity scale<sup>10</sup> (Blau, 1994; Wanberg et al., 1999). The job search intensity scale addresses *RQ<sub>1</sub>: What jobseeking communication strategies do foreign-born Chinese use to find and secure career opportunities in the U.S.?* A new scale was create scale for the purpose of this research targeting *RQ<sub>2</sub>: What obstacles do foreign-born Chinese face during their job search in the U.S.?*

The questionnaire instrument was created in English based on Granovetter's 1974 instrument to ensure the comparability of the measure. I then translated the survey into Chinese, as many Asians prefer to respond to documents in their native language (Gudykunst, 2001). U.S. Census 1992 data show that 83% of Chinese prefer to use Chinese at home (Source: U.S. Department of Commerce/Bureau of the Census, 1992,

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<sup>10</sup> Job search intensity scale: The job search intensity scale was originally published by Blau (1994) in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. Wanberg et al. (1999) slightly modified the scale in their paper of "Unemployed individuals: Motives, job-search competencies, and job-search constraints as predictors of job seeking and reemployment" published in *Journal of Applied Psychology*. I used the modified version from Wanberg et al. (1999) for this research.

INS 1990-96). Further, by consulting with the local Chinese community leaders, I came to the conclusion that I should distribute a majority of the surveys in Chinese.

Stohl (2001) summarized two major methods for the translation of research instruments: back translation and multilingual research team. Back translation is a two-step process. First, one translator translate the survey (from English) into a second language (Chinese). Then a second translator will translate the survey (from Chinese) back into the original language (English). In this manner, blatant mistranslations as well as nuanced distortions can be identified. However, there are serious shortcomings with the back translation approach. Wright, Lane and Beamish (1988) identified several potential problems, such as some translators might not be familiar with the technical vocabulary or might not be sensitive to political nuances and political constraints. I did not adopt the back translation method precisely because of its shortcomings.

Another approach summarized by Stohl (2001) is to build a multilingual research team. Being able to move back and forth among relevant language groups enables scholars with multilingual skills to develop unique perspectives and insights at both the theoretical and praxis levels. During the survey instrument translation, I held meetings with multilingual opinion leaders from the local Chinese community in Florida. I myself translated the survey from English into Chinese. Then at these meetings, the multilingual opinion leaders and I checked the Chinese translation together for its precision in capturing the meaning expressed in the original English survey. We also checked and



improved the cultural and political sensitivity of the survey's Chinese version.

I claim that the translation of the survey instrument is in compliance with the multilingual research team method Stohl (2001) suggested. By building an alliance between multilingual local Chinese community leaders and myself, I ensured the accuracy of the translated Chinese version of the survey.

#### *In-depth interview design*

In-depth interviews using the semi-structured interview guide were employed in Phase III. The interviews were guided with an updated and revised interview guide based on Granovetter's 1974 version (see Appendix C for the interview guide). The sampling of the twenty ethnographic in-depth interviews followed a structured research design. For in-depth interviews, I employed quota-sampling procedures.

By complying with the descriptive data from the questionnaire survey data, I applied the principle of *quota sampling* to increase internal validity. Historically, in quota sampling, a researcher first identifies relevant categories of people, and then decides how many cases he needs in each category. Thus, the number of people in various categories of the sample is fixed (Neuman, 2003). During the sampling process, I strived to achieve a preset number of cases in each of several predetermined categories that reflected the diversity of the population.

The twenty participants were selected to be demographically consistent with questionnaire survey frequencies regarding age, gender, types of organization, education,

country of origin, and immigration status (see Appendix F for an overview of in-depth interview participant diversity).

The interviews were conducted with foreign-born Chinese immigrants from Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong in a period of six weeks from April 24, 2004 to June 11, 2004. Each interview lasted from thirty minutes to two hours. Ninety percent of the interviews were tape-recorded. Due to organizational policy restrictions, two of the interviews were not tape-recorded, and handwritten notes were taken instead. After the interviews were conducted, I first translated the ten interviews conducted in Chinese into English, and then transcribed all twenty interviews. I then coded the interview data by analyzing the relevance to the research questions that I developed in Chapter Two.

Because my interviewing procedures encouraged probing and long discussions between interviewers and respondents, the resulting interview text provides detailed accounts of the social world of respondents concerning job-seeking experiences. During the interviews, retrospective career histories were recorded with a focus on employment.

Before the in-depth interviews, each participant was asked to sign a consent form. Afterwards, he or she was given the choice of being interviewed in English or Chinese. Half of the participants chose to be interviewed in English, while the other half chose to be interviewed in Chinese, with the linguistic preference of the participants.

As a naturalistic researcher, I conducted most of the interviews and recorded observations in settings familiar to the participants, including the workplaces, homes,

and Chinese community gatherings. Of the twenty participants, sixteen of them were from Mainland China, three were from Taiwan, and one was from Hong Kong. All participants possess legal immigration status and work permission in the U.S.

### A Representative Sample

From January 22 to April 10, 2004, I surveyed the foreign-born Chinese population in the Greater Tampa Bay area of Florida, which encompassed Tampa, Clearwater, St. Petersburg and surrounding areas. Demographic features of the research sample were representative of the general population of foreign-born Chinese in U.S. In the following text, I will argue how the research sample was consistent with Census 2000 data on the Chinese population in the U.S.

First, the gender distribution of the sample was balanced which reflected Census 2000 population data for the region. About 55% of respondents were male, while 45% of respondents were female. The gender distribution was very close to a 50/50 split. The sample was not gender biased.

Second, country of origin demographics of the research sample was consistent with Census 2000 data. U.S. Census Bureau reported that there were 988,857 immigrants from Mainland China living in the U.S. in 2000. Besides, there were 203,580 foreign-born from Hong Kong, a special administrative unit of China, and 326,215 from Taiwan. The total population recorded to be was 1,518,670. Therefore, Census 2000

indicated that 65% of the Chinese population was from the People's Republic of China, while 35% from elsewhere. Nationwide, the majority of the new Chinese immigrants entering the U.S. have been from the People's Republic of China (Mainland China) since 1980s. In the survey sample, 69% of respondents were born in the People's Republic of China, while 31% were born in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and Southeast Asia. This was another indication that my data were representative of my target population – the foreign-born Chinese with full-time jobs in the U.S.

Finally, another indicator of the representativeness consistency of my sample was the percentage of people who were self-employed. About 12.8% out of the 203 valid cases were self-employed. They own Chinese restaurants (mall restaurants, Chinese buffets), Chinese grocery stores, foreign trade companies, or they are independent contractors or realtors. This figure was slightly higher than the 8.7% national average of the Chinese people who owned a business in 1992.

In conclusion, the survey and in-depth interview samples were representative of the Chinese American population as reported by Census 2000 data. Demonstrated by the even distribution of gender, country of origin, and percentage of self-employing employment status, I claim that I had a representative, though not a random sample. The next few chapters will present quantitative and qualitative research findings.

## CHAPTER FIVE: JOB-SEEKING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

### Introduction

Chapter Four presented the target population and sampling processes of data collection. Beginning with this chapter, quantitative and qualitative findings will be reported addressing the research questions and hypotheses raised in Chapter Two. This chapter addresses RQ<sub>1</sub>.

*RQ<sub>1</sub>: What jobseeking communication strategies do foreign-born Chinese use to find and secure career opportunities in the U.S.?*

### Descriptive Data of Respondents

A total of 203 valid cases were received for the questionnaire surveys. Altogether 176 respondents (84.9%) were full time PTM workers, 26 respondents (14%) were self-employed, and one respondent did not report on her employment status. Respondents were between 24 and 75 years of age, with most in 30s or 40s.

All respondents were foreign-born Chinese immigrants. The majority of them came to the U.S. after 1980. This might be directly related to the fact that Mainland China adopted economic reform and the Open Door policy in 1978. The opening up of

the country provided permission and convenience for the foreign travel of its citizens.

Immigration from China to the U.S. increased sharply again after 1989, following the fall of Berlin Wall<sup>11</sup> and the Tiananmen Square Incident<sup>12</sup> in Beijing, China.

Most of the participants took their first jobs between 1987 and 2003. Thirty-eight percent listed current jobs as their first jobs. For 35% of them, their current jobs were their second or third jobs in the U.S.

The majority of respondents moved into Florida after 1989. When asked whether they came to Florida because they were offered a job here, about 49% of them said “yes” while 51% of them said “no.” Given Florida’s tropical and subtropical location, tourism attractions, relatively low living cost, and recent high-tech and bio-tech boom, it made sense that half of respondents came to Florida for the life style first and then decided to look for a job. Most of respondents had lived in Florida for fewer than 15 years. A majority moved to Florida within the past ten years. Many respondents started their current job after 1995 during the Internet boom of the mid-90s since they work in IT industries.

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<sup>11</sup> The fall of Berlin Wall: The fall of Berlin Wall: Built in 1961, the Berlin Wall is the single most important symbol of Germany's former division. Torn down, demolished, donated to museums and universities around the world, and sold as souvenirs - the wall almost disappeared from the city's landscape. The fall of Berlin Wall is one of the most important symbols of the end of the Cold War between the Capitalist West and the Communist Camp (<http://www.die-berliner-mauer.de/en/>).

<sup>12</sup> Tiananmen Square Incident: The incident was a massive nationwide demonstration that broke out in mid-April of 1989 and lasted until June 4th, 1989, when it was put down violently by government troops. This was perhaps the most important pro-democracy movement in the history of the People's Republic of China, which was founded by Chairman Mao Zedong in 1949. (CNN, June 5, 1989).

## Employment History and Status

### *Employment history*

By the time of the survey, most of the respondents had lived in Florida for fifteen years or less. Most of them came to Florida after 1989. A majority of respondents moved to Florida within the past ten years, with five-year stay being the peak. A significant number of respondents came to Florida after 1999.

There were two distinct phases for the incoming immigration waves. A majority of the Chinese respondents came to the U.S. after 1980. The growth of the first wave was probably attributable to the initiation of China's economic reform and Open Door policy in 1978. The second wave of the Chinese immigration to the U.S started in the year 1990. The rise of the second wave was likely a result of the ending of the Cold War, which led to an easing of global migration and travel between the East and the West. In China, the Tiananmen Square Incident shook the political atmosphere of China in 1989. A year later, the U.S. federal government granted many Chinese immigrants with Permanent Residence status due to political asylum concerns. Therefore, these two incoming immigration waves were a direct consequence of globalization covered in Chapter One.

Most respondents obtained their first jobs between 1987 and 2003. For 37.5% of respondents, current jobs were their first jobs. For 34% of them, current jobs were their second or third jobs in the U.S. About 71% of the respondents had held 0-2 jobs before the current one.

### *Current jobs*

Based on the questionnaire survey data, the duration of respondents' job search for their current jobs were examined. Forty-eight percent of respondents found their jobs within one month. Forty-one percent of them found and secured their jobs within one to five months. Eleven percent of them fulfilled the job search tasks in six months or longer.

Chinese PTM workers' industry distribution was examined (See Figure 2 for respondents' industry distribution). The Chinese PTM workers occupations extend throughout industrial spectrum. A total of 20.7% of respondents worked in information technology (IT) industries, 17.4% of them in financial service sector, and 12.3% in educational organizations (including universities). Beside these three leading occupations, 10.3% of them worked in pharmaceutical industries, 7% of them worked for manufacturing companies, 6.5% of them worked for research institutions as researchers, and another 6.5% of them worked in health care institutions as doctors and nurses. About 4.5% of them worked for marketing firms. Half of the respondents who checked "other" (14.2%) worked for Florida's government agencies and were most possibly working as software programmers or network engineers.



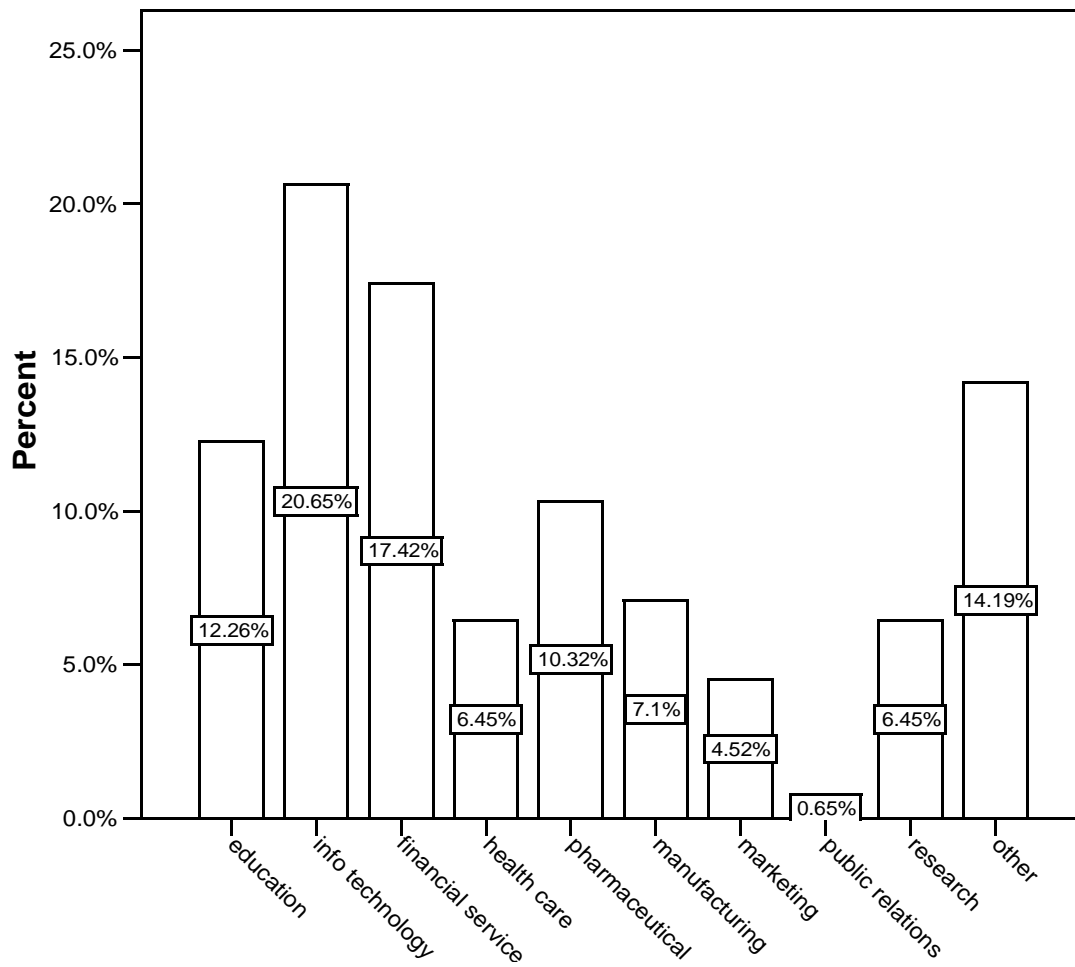


Figure 2: Industrial distribution of the respondents

Regarding occupational features for the Chinese PTM workers, the commonality of the position recede in the order of technical, professional, and managerial. Phase II survey and Phase III in-depth interview data indicated that a leading occupation of the Chinese PTM workers was technical positions in computer science. Chinese technical workers were often employed as software programmers or network engineers in IT industries, financial service firms, government agencies, and other occupations. In-depth interview data revealed that many of Chinese technical workers possess Ph.D. or master's degrees other than computer science, but continued their education for a MS in computer science for occupational opportunities in this area, especially in 1990s.

The second most popular positions were professional occupations. Pharmaceutical companies, health care organizations, educational institutions, and research firms are among the employers who hire foreign-born Chinese professionals. Technical and professional positions were within expedient reach for the foreign-born Chinese jobseekers, who had inadequate personal connections, limited intercultural communication skills in English, but relatively high educational level. The survey data showed that 66.5% of the respondents held Bachelor's or higher terminal degrees. Over 77% of the respondents held graduate degrees, with 45% of them being master's degrees and 32% being doctoral degrees. For such a highly educational group, technical and professional positions were logical occupational outlets.

Only a fraction of Chinese PTM workers maintained status at managerial positions. The reason why managerial positions were the least common among Chinese PTM workers will be further analyzed in Chapter Six. There was still a glass ceiling effect bottlenecking the Chinese jobseekers for managerial positions. Such a glass ceiling effect could have been formed based on subtle racial discrimination, cultural barrier and linguistic barrier, and intercultural communication gap. These and other job search obstacles will be discussed in Chapter Six.

### Critical Job Leading Channels

The purpose of this research was to investigate the communication strategies that the foreign-born Chinese PTM workers adopt and the communication obstacles that they face when search for jobs. The crucial information this research must first reveal is the critical channels that lead the jobseekers to occupational success. Despite the fact that jobseekers might have tried different strategies in the process of job search, the ultimate channel that reward them with job opportunities might differ from the most often tried strategies during the job search process. Table 3 shows the critical job leading channels that ultimately rewarded the job seekers with employment positions.

Table 3: Critical job leading channels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Relative	6	3.4	3.8	3.8
	Friend/Acquaintance	52	29.4	<b>32.5</b>	36.3
	Employer contact	26	14.7	16.3	<b>52.5</b>
	The Internet	19	10.7	<b>11.9</b>	64.4
	Printed publication	17	9.6	<b>10.6</b>	75.2
	Asked organization	15	8.5	<b>9.4</b>	84.3
	Employment agency	13	7.3	<b>8.1</b>	92.5
	Job fair	5	2.8	<b>3.1</b>	95.6
	Other	7	4.0	4.4	100
	Total	160	90.4	100	
Missing System		17	9.6		
Total		177	100		

Table 3 shows that 52.5% of respondents found these current jobs through personal networks, including relatives (3.8%), friends/acquaintance (32.5%), and direct employer contacts (16.3%). Ten point six percent found jobs via print publications, and 11.9% of respondents found their jobs via Internet. Eight percent of respondents found jobs via employment agency. Nine percent of respondents asked the employing organizations directly. Three percent found jobs from job fairs.

These descriptive data yield the following results. First, the personal network was proved to be the most effective among all job-leading channels. In the personal network, one's friends and acquaintances (32.5%) are the most likely to provide critical job leading information. When we add the percentage of job leading relatives (3.8%), friends/acquaintances (32.5%), and direct contact by the employers (16.2%), the survey result then indicated that 52.5% of respondents found the current job through personal networks. This finding is consistent with Granovetter's findings in the 1970s. In the early 1970s, by studying the white male PTM workers in the Newton, MA area, Granovetter found that 56% of those he talked to found their jobs through a personal connection.

Moreover, the findings indicated that Internet was a second most effective job search tool. About 12% of the respondents found jobs through the Internet. Internet as a job-leading channel cannot be neglected. The relationship between the Internet and job search strategy and job market will be further analyzed in Chapter Nine.

In addition, traditional channels were still valid. Survey data show that 10.6% of the respondents found jobs through printed publications while 9.4% of them through direct application. The total of 20% job leading rate when printed publication and direct application were combined shows that printed publication and directly inquiring potential employers are still effective methods for jobseekers. Compared to Granovetter's (1974) time when 20% applied directly, today less jobseekers obtained job information directly from potential employers.

A notable portion of jobseekers utilized institutional assistance, such as employment agencies and job fairs, aside from the virtual support they could obtain from the Internet. About 8% of the jobseekers found jobs through employment agencies, and 3.1% found jobs through attending job fairs. This is a total of 11.2%. If we combine this percentage with those who found jobs through the Internet (11.9%), then the institutionally assisted job search success rate accumulates to 23.1%. Institutional bounded assistant provided powerful support for jobseekers. There were more jobseekers found jobs with the aid of institutions than through the traditional impersonal approach by reading ads on printed publications or direct publication.

In summary, among the critical job leading channels, personal connections were the most popular, followed by institutional assisted channels, and traditional channels. Different from the final job leading channels were job seekers intentional job seeking strategies. In the next section, various approaches, including traditional, institutional, and

personal will be presented.

### Traditional, Institutional, and Personal Approaches

In the above section, I presented findings on critical job-leading channels that respondents ultimately located their jobs. However, their ultimate job leading channels might differ from the strategies they tried during the job search process.

For a hypothetical example, imagine a Mr. Wang who holds an M.S. degree in computer science from an accredited university in Florida. He has tried two major job search strategies, such as surfing the Internet and reading a local newspaper's job ads. He posts his resumes online at the websites of employment agencies such as [recruiters.com](http://recruiters.com) or [monster.com](http://monster.com). Through reading the local newspaper, he discovers some positions available at AT&T and Verizon's regional branches, and mails his job application packets to the human resource departments of these targeted potential employers. Although he goes to a couple of interviews as a result of these efforts, he still cannot land a satisfactory job. Either the pay is too low, or a job is only a part-time position. Six months has passed. Mr. Wang becomes frustrated.

One day he is invited to a birthday party organized for the sister of his best friend from college. At that birthday party, he sees another college friend Mr. Liu with whom he used to play soccer. This friend now works as a project manager at IBM. Mr. Wang tells Mr. Liu about the frustrating job search experience that is going through. Mr. Liu

tells Mr. Wang things will work out, and Mr. Liu suddenly remembers what the IBM boss said last week at the division meeting: IBM will hire new computer programmers to work remotely at home. Mr. Liu encourages Mr. Wang to apply. The next day, Mr. Wang applies and is given an interview. A week later, Mr. Wang is offered a job, working remotely from home for IBM.

This hypothetical story narrated above shows that Mr. Wang's major job search strategy includes using the Internet, reading newspaper ads, and direct application. However, Mr. Wang's ultimate way of finding this job is through his personal network with Mr. Liu. It is very common that the critical job-leading channel differs from the job seeking strategies that one has tried. In the next section, I will show the job search strategies that may or may not have led to Chinese PTM workers' current jobs.

In this research, job search communication strategies were investigated with both quantitative and qualitative measures. During Phase II, on the questionnaire, I included a well-established job search strategy scale (Blau, 1994; Wanberg, Kanfer & Rotundo, 1999). Twelve job search strategies were listed in this scale, including building the resume, directing mailing application packet, using an employment agency (headhunter), attending job fairs, browsing the Internet, reading printed publications, and using one's personal network (relative, friends/acquaintances, previous employer/co-worker). On the survey questionnaire, the frequency to which respondents undertook these strategies was measured on a scale from 0 to 4, with 0 being "*never*" and 4 being "*very often*" (See



Appendix A for the questionnaire).

A varimax rotated principle components analysis (PCA) was conducted on the items from the job search strategies. The goal of a PCA is to reduce the measured variables to a smaller set of composite components that capture as much information as possible in the measured variables with as few components as possible (Park et al., 2002). Three factors emerged from the PCA analysis. The three factors were labeled “traditional approach,” “institutional approach,” and “personal approach”, each encompassing four distinct job search strategies.

The *traditional approach* includes strategies of resume building, learning about the employer, sending an application packet to the employer by mail, and reading print publications. The *institutional approach* contains strategies such as browsing the Internet, attending job fairs, using employment agencies, and contacting possible employers by phone or visit. The *personal approach* includes such strategies as contacting relatives, friends and acquaintances, previous employers or co-workers, and networking with a job-knowing third party. Three new composite variables, named “traditional approach, institutional approach, and personal approach” were computed for further analysis.

PCA analysis of the *Traditional Approach* scale yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.725 for these four items that show job search intensity in “Reading print publications (INTENS11)”, “Working on resume (INTENS16)”, “Direct application (INTENS18)”, and “Learning more about the employer (INTENS21)”. All of these strategies that job

seekers tried to various extend demonstrate that job seekers work in isolation to obtain job information and improve their application packet. Such strategies are more traditional in their nature, and thus this factor is named as the *Traditional Approach*.

Meanwhile, PCA analysis of the *Institutional Approach* scale yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.619 for a factor with these four items that show job search intensity in “Surfing the Internet (INTENS12),” “Consulting employment agencies (INTENS17),” “Gong to job fairs (INTENS19),” and “Visiting possible employers (INTENS20).”

While a Cronbach alpha below .70 is considered less than optimal for a scale, it is important to understand that this reliability is affected by the number of items in the scale (Nunnally, 1976). Because there were only four items in each of the job search scales, reduced Cronbach alpha scores should be expected and do not negate the scales’ validity. Since all of these strategies that job seekers tried to various extend involve an institution/ organization that assist with the job search process, such as the Internet, employment agencies, or job fairs, this factor is named as the *Institutional Approach*.

Finally, PCA analysis of the *Personal Approach* scale yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.742 for these four items that show the jobseekers’ job search intensity in “Talking to relatives (INTENS13),” “Talking to friends/acquaintances (INTENS14),” “Talking to previous employers and co-workers ( INTENS15),” and “Talking to other job-leading third parties (INTENS22).” Since all of these strategies involve talking to members in the jobseekers’ personal networks, this factor is named as the *Personal Approach*.

In summary, Cronbach alphas of 0.725, 0.619, and 0.742, respectively for the factors of *traditional*, *institutional*, and *personal* approaches, evidenced adequate internal reliabilities of these factors given the low number of items in each scale. The inter-factor bivariate correlations were around 0.50, suggesting moderately strong and positive correlation between each group of job-seeking strategies. Therefore, the Chinese jobseekers adopted three approaches (each with four strategies) while searching for jobs in the U.S.

#### Descriptive data on individual strategies

In the above text, findings on critical job-leading channels were reported. In addition, the predictive relationship between jobseekers' job search intensity and their ultimate job-locating channels were presented. In this section, I will present descriptive data on the job search intensity of jobseekers using all 12 channels under the traditional, institutional, and personal approaches.

Respondents most frequently exercised four strategies in the traditional approach: resume building, direct application by mail, reading print publications, and learning about a potential employer. The mean scores for all four strategies were higher than "2." In other words, on average, respondents' intensity of using these job search strategies falls between "sometimes (*scoring 2*)," or "often (*scoring 3*)."

In general, the personal approach was the second most popular job-searching

channel. The findings show that about 60% of respondents “sometimes, often, or very often” tried personal networks in searching for current jobs. The mean score for this approach was 2.99, falling between sometimes and often.

Job search channels in the institutional approach were least popular among the respondents. Most respondents rarely or sometimes tried such strategies as surfing the Internet, attending job fairs, contacting employment agencies or other intermediate parties. The mean score for Internet usage was 1.99. This suggests that on average, respondents “sometimes” used the Internet as a job search strategy. The least-used job search strategy by the foreign-born Chinese immigrants was attending job fairs. This might be due to the fact that most of the jobs available at job fairs were not PTM positions. The exact cause why job fair was not popular among foreign-born Chinese jobseekers needs further investigation. Consequently, only 3.1% of the respondent ultimately found positions through job fairs.

Phase III qualitative interviews yielded further findings on the strength of personal approach and the Internet strategy. Findings on the personal approach (personal network strategies) and the Internet job search strategy will be presented in later chapters of this dissertation. In the next section, I will present qualitative findings on strength and weakness of print publication and employment agency as job search channels.

#### *Print publication*

Reading print publications was the third most popular strategy among the

foreign-born Chinese immigrants. About 72% of respondents “sometimes, often, or very often” viewed print publications during their job search process. These print publications include but are not limited to professional journals, newspapers, newsletters, conference publications, etc. Consequently, 10.6% of the respondents ultimately found jobs through this channel. During the in-depth interviews, I learned that printed and digital versions of professional journals, newsletters and newspapers were useful job search channels.

Professional journals are informative for professional job positions in areas such as pharmaceutical, medical research, health care, education, and engineering. If one is to become a researcher in mathematics, chemistry, physics, and statistics, it is helpful to read professional journals in these areas. Most of the professional journals have classified sections covering latest job postings. Dr. W, a 46-year-old mathematics professor at a major Florida university, found his job from the Journal of Notices of the American Mathematical Society while he was working in Germany.

Dr. Q, a 44-year-old female dermatopathologist told me that she spotted her job from *The American Journal of Surgical Pathology*. She said that when she was a student in Chicago, and a medical resident in Ohio, she often read this journal. When there was an opening at a university hospital in Florida, she applied, went for the interview and was offered the job. She said that it was very common in the health care area to find jobs through such professional journals. In medical research field, Dr. L, a 45-year-old male found his job from a prestigious journal named *Science*. He said being an Assistant

Professor in medical research was perceived as a positive progress and he anticipated staying at this position for a long time.

Newspapers unfold as another window to occupational destinations. Dr. S was a 46-year-old female who held a PhD in physics obtained China and an MS in computer science degree obtained Texas. She told me she was confident with reading the newspapers for job search. She found all of her three IT jobs in Florida from *The Tampa Tribune*<sup>13</sup>. In the mid-90s, after she followed her husband and moved to Florida from Michigan, she searched for jobs near central Florida. She browsed *The Tampa Tribune* and found many IT job openings. She then applied to some positions and was granted a few interviews. Since then, she had been working as a software programmer for a communications firm, a fashion design company, and an electronic company, all found through newspapers.

Since the 1990s, more and more print publications have gone online. Many of the professional journals, newsletters and newspapers also present digital versions of their publications. The digitization of this and other traditional job search channels will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.

### *Employment agencies*

Using employment agencies (headhunters or staffing companies) was another strategy among foreign-born Chinese jobseekers, although it was not as popular as other

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<sup>13</sup> The Tampa Tribune: It is the primary newspaper in Tampa Bay and West Central Florida area, covering news, sports, business, entertainment, events and job postings (The Tampa Tribune, 2004).

channels. The mean score of jobseekers' intensity of using this strategy was 1.30, which indicates that on average, respondents contacted employment agencies at a frequency between "rarely (scoring 1)" and "sometimes (scoring 2)." About 40% of respondents "sometimes, often, or very often" explored the capacity of employment agencies.

The in-depth interview data revealed that professional workers in pharmaceutical research and health care, and technical workers in computer science were particularly successful in locating jobs through employment agencies. Jobseekers with expertise in these areas stressed the effectiveness of employment agencies. The people who work for employment agencies are named as "headhunters."

Headhunters usually prefer to help PTM workers with experience and reputation. Headhunters make profit by shifting experienced professional and technical workers from one company/organization to another. It was headhunters' business to track PTM labor market and hunt for PTM workers with experience, reputation, and potentials. In other words, headhunters search for PTM workers with high human resource equity. In return, headhunters are usually at the cutting edge of job information for specific professions. Headhunters usually charge employers, not jobseekers for their service.

Dr. D was a 47-year-old organic chemistry pharmaceutical researcher. Originally from China, Dr. D obtained his Ph.D. in Canada. In 1996, he and his family moved to Florida from Toronto because he was contacted by a headhunter and eventually offered a job in Tampa. In 2003, he moved from central Florida to another pharmaceutical

company in Fort Lauderdale to conduct new research on hypertension medicines. This was because another employment agency contacted him and offered him a job with a much higher salary package. I asked Dr. D if the second headhunter was related to the first one, he shook his head and explained: “No. But I think they are connected. Why? If I sell you to a company as a headhunter, I would have to make a promise that I will not sell you to another company. The first headhunter might have contacted his/her business partner, telling them that four or five years have passed, go and ask Dr. D and see if he wants to move to a new job.”

When questioned whether it was to the job applicant’s benefit to apply for jobs by contacting the profit-driven headhunters, Dr. D replied: “It is beneficial to me. If I don’t want to move, I can choose not to relocate. In reality, for every five years, I feel like to broaden my professional horizon. If you had worked at a place for five years, you probably experience a lack of challenge. If the headhunters happen to call at this time, I would be interested in their positions. Or I might call them, asking them to keep an eye for me. Every five years is when I would consider changing a job<sup>14</sup>.”

When asked about his future job search strategy, Dr. D, told me that he would definitely contact a headhunter. He said: “I would call a headhunting company and tell them I am considering moving. [I expect] in a few days, they would contact me. I might

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<sup>14</sup> Every five years for a job change: Descriptive data of this research indicate that on average most people change jobs once every five years. The interview participants reveal that a fifth year is a landmark for promotion and organizational change. If an employee fails to encounter new challenges at work or to be satisfied with professional pursuit, he/she tends to move on to another position at the fifth year of accepting a job.



be able to get a few choices. For example, I might want to go to California to be near China, or to go to metropolitan cities for the convenience of Chinese grocery and authentic Chinese food in Chinatowns. I would then inform the headhunter of my preference. Headhunters usually favor professionals with experience. Therefore when you become older, you obtained more experience and therefore become more competitive in the job market. Of course the drawback would be that the young people are younger and more energetic than you are. God is fair after all. I want to say that it is very tough to find the first job through a headhunter. It is very important that we don't lose confidence in finding the first job. After the first job, it becomes much easier.”

#### *Professional conferences*

Besides the twelve job-seeking strategies listed in the job search intensity scale, there are other practical job-searching channels. One of the channels that emerge from in-depth interviews is professional conference. At professional conferences, participants present papers, network with colleagues, and attend job fairs.

Thirty-eight-year-old Dr. T said that her husband graduated from Hong Kong University in 1999. As a graduate student, he often attended conferences held by the American Association of Cancer Research. At the conference, there were always job postings and interviews. He talked to some of the hiring institutions and found that several of them were interested in him.

There have been job fairs at National Communication Association's (NCA)<sup>15</sup> annual conferences in recent years, presenting academic positions to recent communication doctoral graduates in colleges and universities nationwide, and sometimes worldwide.

Other academic research fields, such as marketing, anthropology, business, physics, and chemistry also launch job fairs at their annual conferences. Many professional jobseekers found positions this way to work in institutions of higher learning or pure research organizations.

### Conclusion

Foreign-born Chinese PTM workers adopted three main approaches in searching for jobs: traditional, institutional and personal. These three approaches encompass job search strategies ranging from impersonal to personal regarding the relationship between jobseekers and potential employers. As the index of personal components in the communication strategy increases, there is a higher success rate for jobseekers to secure

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<sup>15</sup> National Communication Association (NCA): NCA is a non-profit organization of approximately 7,100 educators, practitioners, and students who work and reside in every state and more than 20 foreign countries. NCA organize annual conferences mostly in the United States. Its purpose is to promote study, criticism, research, teaching, and application of the artistic, humanistic, and scientific principles of communication. NCA is the oldest and largest national organization to promote communication scholarship and education. Founded in 1914 as the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking, the society incorporated in 1950 as the Speech Association of America. The organization changed its name to Speech Communication Association, in 1970. It adopted its present name in 1997. In recent years, NCA has been setting up job fairs at its annual conferences for graduating doctoral students in communication (NCA website, 2005).

occupational opportunities. Interpersonal component was vital in the job search process.

The next chapter will present job search obstacles experienced by foreign-born Chinese jobseekers.

## CHAPTER SIX: JOB-SEEKING OBSTACLES

### Introduction

Chapter Five presented findings on job search communication strategies that foreign-born Chinese PTM workers utilized when looking for jobs in the U.S. This chapter will present job search obstacles that these Chinese jobseekers faced. This chapter addresses the following research questions raised in Chapter Two:

*RQ<sub>2</sub>: What obstacles do foreign-born Chinese face during their job search in the U.S.?*

*RQ<sub>5</sub>: How does culture affect job search obstacles for foreign-born Chinese?*

I will begin this chapter by presenting quantitative findings covering the general frame of job search communication obstacles. Then I will weave quantitative and qualitative findings together and analyze the nature, extent and meaning of job search barriers and obstacles.

Data on job search barriers and obstacles were collected in Phase II and Phase III through surveys and in-depth interviews. Based on the literature review and systematic observation in Phase I, six job search obstacles were listed in the questionnaire survey:

racial discrimination, cultural obstacle, linguistic obstacle, immigration background, insufficient network, and low qualifications.

After collecting the survey data in Phase II, I conducted in-depth interviews in Phase III, in which questions on personal narratives of participants' experience with job search barriers and obstacles were raised. Such narratives provided deeper meaning on job search barriers and obstacles. Some narratives concerning job search obstacles are included in this chapter.

When all three phases of data collection were completed, during data analysis, grounded theory conceptualization of the qualitative data yielded interesting findings on job search barriers and obstacles. Although most interview participants acknowledge that they encountered the above-listed six job search obstacles, many mentioned a new obstacle that was included in the survey questionnaire. This obstacle was the intercultural communication gap between foreign-born Chinese PTM workers and their American employers due to different communication styles. Four dimensions of this intercultural communication gap for job search were discovered: *directness-subtleness*, *aggressiveness-modesty*, *courtesy-command*, and *American-Chinese experiential difference*.

### Clusters of Job Search Barriers

In the questionnaire survey from Questions #23 to #28, respondents were asked to

circle a degree of intensity as an indication for their encounter with six job search obstacles: racial discrimination, cultural obstacle, linguistic obstacle, immigration background, insufficient network, and low qualifications. On the survey questionnaire, these six obstacles were measured on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being “*strongly disagree*” and 6 being “*strongly agree*.”

Descriptive data on these six obstacles indicated that “insufficient network” was considered the most profound obstacle ( $M = 3.21$ ). Not knowing enough people here in the U.S. was a major obstacle for the foreign-born Chinese PTM workers during their job search. This finding incurs strong face validity for two reasons. First, the respondents were foreign-born; therefore they possessed relatively lean personal networks in the U.S. Second, the respondents were of Chinese cultural origin, which stressed the importance of personal connections in job searches. In Chinese culture, a strategic personal connection is known as *guanxi* (Wellman, 2001a, 2001b; Wong & Leung, 2001). More findings on *guanxi* will be presented in Chapter Eight.

Aside from concerns for insufficient personal networks, respondents considered “immigration background” as the next most noteworthy obstacle to one’s job search success ( $M = 3.14$ ). This finding makes sense because all respondents were foreign born and to strive for a legal working status in the U.S. was a painstaking endeavor for many of them. Such a legal working status might include U.S. citizenship, permanent residence status, H1B visa status, etc. For foreign-born jobseekers, even if American

employers officially hire them, their H1B<sup>16</sup> working visas from the U.S. immigration office are not guaranteed. Without a H1B visa permitted by the U.S. government, those jobseekers who are the final choice of American employers cannot accept the jobs.

Phase III in-depth interviews indicated that certain jobs in the army, intelligence and government organizations advertised were reserved only for U.S. citizens.

The remaining four obstacles -- linguistic obstacle, racial discrimination, cultural obstacle, and low qualifications were given somewhat lower scores by respondents ( $M < 3.00$ ). Findings from Phase III in-depth interviews on the strength and meaning of all six obstacles are presented later in this chapter.

To summarize job-seeking obstacles systematically, a varimax rotated principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the survey data. Two factors emerged. Cronbach's alpha of 0.882 was recorded for the first factor that contains two items: racial discrimination, and cultural obstacle. Cronbach's alpha of 0.675 was recorded for the second factor that contains four items: linguistic barrier, insufficient network, legal status, and qualifications. Such Cronbach's alpha results evidenced adequate, given the small number of items in each scale (2 and 4 respectively) internal reliability for these two factors concerning job search obstacles. The inter-factor bivariate correlations typically

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<sup>16</sup> H1B: A legal status that allows an alien coming to the United States to work for a temporary period of time. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and the Immigration Act of 1990, as well as other legislation, revised existing classes and created new classes of nonimmigrant admission. Nonimmigrant temporary worker classes of admission are as follows: 1). H-1A - registered nurses (valid from 10/1/1990 through 9/30/1995); 2).H-1B - workers with "specialty occupations" admitted on the basis of professional education, skills, and/or equivalent experience. Currently there is a quota limitation for non-educational occupations (USCIS Website, 2004).

were around 0.46, suggesting moderately strong and positive correlations between job-seeking obstacles under the two factors.

The first factor was labeled “*ethnic barrier cluster*,” and the second factor was labeled “*structural barrier cluster*.” These two terminologies were created based on Min’s (1999) typologies concerning major obstacles pertaining to Asian American experience in the U.S. The “ethnic barrier cluster” includes two obstacles: “racial discrimination” and “cultural obstacle”. The “structural barrier cluster” involves four obstacles: “linguistic obstacle”, “immigration background”, “insufficient network”, and “low qualifications”. The two emerging factors demonstrate strong face validity because “ethnic barrier” relates to the in-born characteristics of respondents, while “structural barrier” is concerned with learned or gained qualifications of respondents after birth. The new factors that emerged were used to create two new composite scores for multiple regression analyses later conducted. The two new variables were “ethnic barrier composite” and “structural barrier composite.”

To observe how demographic features and other qualities of respondents were associated with each of the barrier cluster; each of the two new composite scores was used as a dependent variable in multiple regression analysis. In the two multiple regression tests, predictor variables comprise eight demographic variables: age, gender, education, English proficiency (a composite measure based on the self-reported score on English reading, writing, and speaking skills), marital status, country of origin (sorted by



degree of Westernization), legal status, and income.

In the two multiple regression tests conducted for job search obstacles, predictor variables comprise eight demographic and characteristic variables: age, gender, education, English proficiency (a composite measure based on the self-reported score on English reading, writing, and speaking skills), marital status, country of origin (sorted by degree of Westernization), legal status (sorted by the closeness to obtaining citizenship), and income.

Among the eight predictor variables, “AGE” and “INCOME” are interval/ratio variables; “EDUCATION,” “ENGLISH PROFICIENCY,” “COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (sorted by degree of Westernization),” and “LEGAL STATUS (sorted by the closeness to obtaining citizenship)” are ordinal variables; while “GENDER” and “MARITAL STATUS” are nominal (categorical) variables.

Multiple regression is most appropriate for variables measured on interval or ratio scales, not for nominal and ordinal variables. However, in quantitative data analysis, researchers are able to treat nominal variables as dummy variables, and sort ordinal variables by certain standards and therefore make them appropriate to a regression analysis. A dummy variable is a placeholder or indicator variable. Because categorical variables do not contain numeric information, they should not be used in the regression model. However, each value of a categorical variable can be represented in the regression model by an indicator or dummy variable that contains only the values 0 and

1 (Babbie, Halley & Zaino, 2003).

For example, in regard to the dichotomous variable of “GENDER,” the logic used here transforms gender into a measure of “male-ness,” with male respondents being 100% male and female respondents 0 percent male. Meanwhile, we must set the decimal places for MALE as 0 in the recoded data set. Similarly, “MARITAL STATUS” is dichotomous, one is either married, or not married. Therefore, “married” was set as “0” while “not married” was set as “1.”

For ordinal variables, we will use the same basic procedure to recode the four ordinal predictor variables of “EDUCATION (sorted by the level of terminal degree),” “ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (sorted by degree of fluency),” “COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (sorted by degree of Westernization),” “LEGAL STATUS (sorted by the closeness to obtaining citizenship)”. The first choices of these variables were set as the “suppressed reference,” and therefore set as “0” in the recoded data set. All other choices, by the level of degree in its particular category, were given values of 1, 2, 3, etc. The decimal number was set at “0. (See Table 5 for the multiple regression results concerning the two clusters of ethnic barrier and structural barrier).

Table 4: Multiple regression and descriptive results for job search barriers							
Dep Var	Mean	S.D.	B	S. E.	S. B	t	Sig.
Ethnic Barrier Composite	(Constant)		4.915	0.506		9.710	0.000
	English proficiency	2.585	<b>-0.764</b>	0.185	-0.335	-4.124	<b>0.000</b>
	Gender	0.442	<b>-0.444</b>	0.186	-0.193	-2.384	<b>0.019</b>
	R Sq.	0.130	ANOVA results:		F	10.128	
	Adj. R Sq	0.118			Sig.	0.000	
	(Constant)		4.741	0.460		10.307	0.000
	English proficiency	2.588	<b>-0.637</b>	0.173	-0.295	-3.674	<b>0.000</b>
	Country of origin	1.521	<b>-0.139</b>	0.066	-0.168	-2.098	<b>0.038</b>
	R Sq.	0.123	ANOVA results:		F	9.643	
	Adj. R Sq	0.111			Sig.	0.000	
Structural Barrier Composite							

Direction and strength of Beta values shown in Table 5 indicate the following findings. First, respondents' English proficiency level was associated negatively with the perceived strength of both ethnic barrier and structural barrier (Beta = -0.764,  $p = 0.000$ ; Beta = -0.637,  $p = 0.000$ ; respectively). Increased English proficiency significantly reduced job-seeking obstacles in both clusters. The higher a foreign-born jobseeker's English reading, writing, and speaking levels were, the weaker obstacles this jobseeker encountered.

Second, gender was associated with ethnic barrier (Beta = -0.444,  $p = 0.019$ ). In the data coding process, male was coded as "1," and female as "2." The negative Beta value indicates that being female was associated negatively with the strength of job-seeking obstacles under ethnic barrier cluster. This relation suggests that compared with foreign-born Chinese male PTM workers, their female counterparts encountered lower ethnic barriers during job search. Female Chinese jobseekers experienced lower job-search obstacles concerning racial discrimination and cultural obstacle. This finding suggests that American employers preferred Chinese female PTM workers to Chinese male PTM workers.

In a related study, Hossfeld (1999) learned that White employers preferred to hire Asian women for the high tech assembly lines jobs with low pay in the Silicon Valley. "Asian immigrant women are clearly management's preferred production workers. Eighty-five percent of the employers and 90% of the managers interviewed stated that

they believe Asian women make the best assembly-line workers in high-tech manufacturing” (p. 171). The major motive behind such a gender preference might be rooted in the fact that immigrant women are considered reliable and can afford to work for less (Hossfeld, 1991). However, a majority of the respondents in this study were in relatively high pay PTM positions. The reason why foreign-born Chinese female PTM workers faced lower ethnic barrier bears further investigation.

Third, degree of Westernization of jobseekers’ country of origin was associated negatively with obstacles under structural barrier cluster ( $\text{Beta} = -0.139, p = 0.038$ ). The structural barrier cluster was comprised of four job-seeking obstacles: linguistic obstacle, immigration background, insufficient network, and low qualification, all of which have to do with one’s learned or gained credentials after birth. In the survey questionnaire, respondents were queried about their countries (regions) of origin. They were given a choice of four answers: People’s Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. The sequence of this choice was sorted by degree of Westernization, with People’s Republic of China (PRC) being least, and Macao being most Westernized. The PRC opened herself up to the outside world in 1978 following the open-door policy of Deng Xiaoping<sup>17</sup>, while Taiwan became a colony of Japan in 1895, Hong Kong became a colony of Britain in 1840, and Macao became a colony of Portugal in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The negative Beta value indicates that the more one’s country (region) of origin is

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<sup>17</sup> Deng Xiaoping: (1896-1997): The paramount leader of China’s economic reform. Deng initiated and implemented the Economic Reform and Open Door Policy in 1978 and transformed the Chinese economy from a central planning to a free-market system (Asiaweek, 2004).

Westernized, the less likely one is to encounter job search structural barriers in the U.S.

### Job Search Obstacles

After the predictor variables for ethnic barrier and structural barriers were analyzed, six separate multiple regressions were conducted to uncover how demographic features and other qualities of respondents were associated with each obstacle under ethnic and structural barriers. The six Job Search Obstacles were used as dependent variables in these analyses. In all six multiple regression tests the same demographic characteristics were used as predictor variables. These include respondents' age, gender, education, English proficiency, marital status, country of origin, legal status, and income. The six multiple regression results are presented in Table 6.

Table 5: Multiple regression and descriptive results for six job search obstacles

Dep Var		Mean	S.D.	B	S. E.	S. B	t	Sig.	
Ethnic Barrier	Racial discrimination	(Constant)		3.725	0.576		6.465	0.000	
		English proficiency	2.556	0.54	<b>-0.823</b>	0.209	-0.337	-3.937	<b>0.000</b>
		Education level	2.982	0.947	<b>0.357</b>	0.129	0.238	2.779	<b>0.006</b>
		R Sq.	<b>0.122</b>	ANOVA results: F			9.145		
		Adj. R Sq.	0.108	Sig.			0.000		
	Cultural obstacle	(Constant)		5.033	0.514		9.784	0.000	
		English proficiency *	*	<b>-0.807</b>	0.188	-0.347	-4.282	<b>0.000</b>	
		Gender	NA	NA	<b>-0.450</b>	0.19	-0.192	-2.365	<b>0.019</b>
		R Sq.	<b>0.138</b>	ANOVA results: F			10.699		
		Adj. R Sq.	0.125	Sig.			0.000		
Structural Barrier	Linguistic obstacle	(Constant)		6.052	0.6		10.09	0.000	
		English proficiency *	*	<b>-1.104</b>	0.22	-0.398	-5.019	<b>0.000</b>	
		Gender	NA	NA	<b>-0.562</b>	0.221	-0.202	-2.543	<b>0.012</b>
		R Sq.	<b>0.178</b>	ANOVA results: F			14.388		
		Adj. R Sq.	0.166	Sig.			0.000		
	Immigration background	(Constant)		7.100	0.812		8.743	0.000	
		Legal status	NA	NA	<b>-0.735</b>	0.157	-0.369	-4.673	<b>0.000</b>
		English proficiency *	*	<b>-0.704</b>	0.269	-0.208	-2.616	<b>0.010</b>	
		Gender	NA	NA	<b>-0.618</b>	0.273	-0.181	-2.265	<b>0.025</b>
		R Sq.	<b>0.213</b>	ANOVA results: F			11.452		
		Adj. R Sq.	0.194	Sig.			0.000		
	Insufficient network	(Constant)		5.276	0.658		8.015	0.000	
		English proficiency *	*	<b>-0.647</b>	0.25	-0.216	-2.593	<b>0.011</b>	
		Country of origin	NA	NA	<b>-0.212</b>	0.095	-0.187	-2.237	<b>0.027</b>
		R Sq.	<b>0.088</b>	ANOVA results: F			6.380		
	Low qualification	Adj. R Sq.	0.074	Sig.			0.002		
		(Constant)		3.142	0.379		8.284	0.000	
		Education level	*	*	<b>-0.390</b>	0.119	-0.273	-3.274	<b>0.001</b>
		R Sq.	<b>0.075</b>	ANOVA results: F			10.720		
		Adj. R Sq.	0.068	Sig.			0.001		
* See the first model for mean and SD of English proficiency and education level.									

\* See the first model for mean and SD of English proficiency and education level.

## Ethnic Barriers

### *Racial discrimination*

The survey question “I felt discriminated against because of my race” measured the intensity with which jobseekers perceived “racial discrimination” as a job search obstacle. A multiple regression was conducted using “racial discrimination” as a dependent variable, and eight demographic feature variables (age, gender, education, English proficiency, marital status, country of origin, legal status, and income) as predictor variables. Multiple regression data show that jobseekers’ *English proficiency* and *education level* were significant predictors of the degree to which they felt they would confront racial discrimination as a job-seeking obstacle (Beta = -0.823,  $p = 0.000$ ; Beta = 0.357,  $p = 0.006$  respectively). These two variables taken together explained 12% of the variance in the dependent variable.

More specifically, respondents’ English proficiency is associated negatively with respondents’ experience with racial discrimination (Beta = -0.823,  $p = 0.000$ ). Increased English proficiency significantly discounts a jobseeker’s view that that he/she has been discriminated against because of race. The higher one’s skill in English reading, writing, and speaking, the less one feels there is racial discrimination against him/her.

In addition, respondents’ educational level was associated positively with the racial discrimination obstacle (Beta = 0.357,  $p = 0.006$ ). This suggests that the higher one’s terminal degree, the more one was aware of the existence of racial discrimination. The



higher a jobseeker's educational level was, the more serious he/she perceived racial discrimination as a job search barrier. Phase III in-depth interview provided partial explanation for this phenomenon. As was reported in Chapter five on the descriptive data of survey respondents' industry distribution, most of them occupied technical and professional positions. Only a small fraction of them were in managerial positions. The subtle glass ceiling effect might have been one cause for the positive association between a foreign-born Chinese PTM worker's education level and strength of racial discrimination that he/she perceived/experienced.

Descriptive data suggest that 70% of respondents disagreed that the Asian racial identity presented an obstacle for their job search in the United States. Nine percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that being Asian invited racial discrimination in job search. It is encouraging to observe that 70% of the foreign-born Chinese immigrants disagreed that there was any racial discrimination during their job search and only 9% of them acknowledged racial discrimination as a serious job search obstacle.

In Phase III of the research, most participants testified that they had never experienced open racial discrimination in the U.S. Mr. N, a 36-year-old male who works for a small telecommunications company said: "I would say no [for racial discrimination]. But there is a visa problem for foreigners who try to work here. They wouldn't say other things in the open. I have never heard anybody telling me that because you are Chinese, you cannot get it. Never." Hossfeld (1999) contended "most of

the Asian immigrants were not very knowledgeable about U.S. racism when they immigrated, or at least did not realize it extends to Asians” (p. 173). Since all respondents were foreign-born, it was possible that they were not able to identify phenomena pertaining to racial discrimination that was extended to Asians.

Many interview participants stated that there was a geographical stratification of racism in the U.S. depending on the openness of a location. The more metropolitan and international a place was, the less racial discrimination was shown to a minority jobseeker. Dr. A, a 56-year-old male who had been working as a software engineer in the U.S. for 36 years, verified this phenomenon: “I wouldn’t say there isn’t any [racial discrimination] at all. But in big cities, you have less of the discrimination than small cities. I have been working in Los Angeles, New York, and there are more multicultural people in these cities. In small cities, I am told that there is discrimination.”

Dr. H, a 47-year-old male computer programmer at a financial service firm echoed with Dr. A: “In provincial places like Arkansas, they are more race-oriented. It is much better here in Florida. My boss is from Singapore. Spanish is spoken at workplace and is accepted as normal working language. People are much more conservative at places like Arkansas or Missouri. Locals see fewer foreigners there.”

Although most participants did not recall any open racial discrimination in Florida, a state with a multiethnic workforce, a small percentage of participants were concerned with subtle racial discrimination. Dr. H was concerned about his image as an Asian male.

He said that no matter how he packaged himself he still looked foreign. Asians are regarded as the *eternal foreigners* in this immigrant country (Liu, 1998). Dr. H said: “We Asians always appear to be foreigners to them. Under the same condition, I think they would rather employ someone who is less foreign-looking.”

Following social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which challenged U.S. constructions of race and racial superiority, it is no longer acceptable to openly express racist views. Racism has become more covert; operating through more subtle mechanisms such as unjustified affirmative action and biased media representations (Fujino, 2000). Many of the participants mentioned that if there was racism in the hiring process, it must be very subtle. Dr. H continued by saying: “As for racial discrimination, that’s very subtle... I feel that it is a very slow and difficult process for me to be promoted.”

Aside from subtle racial discrimination, a few participants revealed that there was an “artificial ethnicity quota system” being practiced by their organizations. That is, the human resource departments strived to maintain an ethnic balance in their organizations. Therefore, if an organization already has a certain number of Chinese employees, it is difficult for a Chinese jobseeker to find a new position. Dr. K, a female statistician, told me that Asians were over-represented in certain industries of corporate America. Some employers went extra miles to promote underrepresented ethnic groups despite the high qualification of Chinese candidates. She said that she felt, as a Chinese, she was not

considered a minority in certain quantitative fields such as computer science, statistics, and engineering. Ms. R, a female university accountant, shared her experience on this invisible racial quota system:

Mr. R: I do not have much experience in finding a job in the U.S. But I feel that there are obstacles. I find that they use a principle of balance in hiring a new person. They might say “Oh, we don’t have males in our office, we need to hire a male employee.” Or they might say, “We already have two Asians, we don’t need to hire more Asians. They want a balance of gender, ethnicity, etc, not intentionally to discriminate against someone.

In conclusion, research data seem to point to a geographic stratification of racism in the U.S. Most foreign-born Chinese did not encounter any overt racial discrimination, especially not in metropolitan areas. At the same time, some suspected the existence of subtle racism. As there is a suspected invisible racial quota system in some American organizations, the foreign-born Chinese jobseekers might face obstacles because they already are over-represented in certain fields.

#### *Cultural obstacle*

In the survey, the question “I felt it was difficult to find a job because of my cultural background” was designed to measure the degree to which respondents considered “cultural obstacle” an obstacle during job search. Multiple regression was conducted using “cultural obstacle” as the dependent variable, and eight demographic features (age,

gender, education, English proficiency, marital status, country of origin, legal status, and income) as predictor variables. Multiple regression data show that jobseekers' *English proficiency* and *gender* were significant predictors of the degree to which jobseekers confronted cultural obstacle. These two predictor variables together explained about 14% of the variance in the dependent variable – cultural obstacle.

Respondents' English proficiency was associated negatively with respondents' experience with cultural obstacle (Beta = -0.807,  $p = 0.000$ ). The greater their skill in English reading, writing, and speaking, the weaker the respondents' conviction was on the influence of culture as a job search obstacle.

Respondents' gender was associated with cultural obstacle (Beta = -0.450,  $p = 0.019$ ). The negative score shows that femaleness was associated negatively with job-seeking obstacles. This means that compared with male jobseekers, female jobseekers faced lower cultural obstacle during the job search.

Among the respondents, 28% agreed to a certain extent (from slightly agree to strongly agree) that their Chinese cultural background created a problem for job search success. Of those who recognized cultural obstacle as significant, 28.6% of them agreed or strongly agreed their Chinese cultural background created an obstacle for job search.

Phase III interviews disclosed meanings of this obstacle. Dr. W, a 46-year-old mathematics professor from China, said that obstacles concerning cultural difference were prevalent. He complained that many Americans that he met on a daily basis had

very limited knowledge of China and Chinese culture. For instance, he said that very few people here knew that the capital city of China was Beijing, but most Chinese knew the capital city of the U.S. was Washington D.C.

Dr. A, a 56-year-old male from Taiwan, believed that cultural differences made it difficult for the Chinese to mingle with Americans in a casual manner. Mr. G, a 30-year-old male from China, considered cultural difference an essential obstacle in searching for jobs: “There are obstacles in immigration background, but not serious. I don’t think race is an issue. I think I don’t have enough knowledge on American culture. When clients understand you, they will like you and believe you, therefore trust you and make business easier for you. Since my cultural background is different, the client might think: “oh, he can speak English, but if he doesn’t have the same hobby and doesn’t understand the same topic, it’s kind of tough, sometimes [to communicate].”

In summary, ethnic barriers (including racial discrimination and cultural obstacle) composed the first cluster of job-seeking obstacles. A majority of respondents disagreed that their Chinese cultural background posed an obstacle for job search success. However, some of them did mention that their cultural background influenced their communication style, which in turn, became the most important job search obstacle not listed in the survey. This intercultural communication gap will be discussed later in this chapter.

## Structural Barriers

Findings presented earlier in this chapter indicated that the structural barrier cluster encompassed four job-seeking obstacles: linguistic obstacle, insufficient network, immigration background, and low qualifications. These obstacles were all related to a jobseeker's qualifications learned or gained after birth. Survey data suggested that increased English proficiency could overcome all four obstacles in this cluster.

Meanwhile, one's country of origin was associated negatively with structural barrier depending on degree of Westernization. The more Westernized a jobseekers' home country/region is, the less structural barriers he/she will encounter in the American society (See Table 4). With the following text, I will present the findings from multiple regressions with the four obstacles listed as dependent variables (See Table 5).

### *Insufficient network*

The question "I didn't know enough people to help me find a job" was designed to measure the degree to which respondents considered "insufficient network" an obstacle in job search. Multiple regression was conducted using "insufficient network" as the dependent variable and eight demographic features (age, gender, education, English proficiency, marital status, country of origin, legal status, and income) as predictor variables. Multiple regression analysis revealed that jobseekers' *English proficiency* and *country of origin* were significant predictors of the degree to which they confronted insufficient personal network as a job-seeking obstacle. These two variables together

explained about 8.8% of the variance in the dependent variable.

First, respondents' English proficiency was negatively associated with respondents' experience with an insufficient personal network ( $\text{Beta} = -0.647, p = 0.011$ ). Increased English proficiency significantly augmented the deficiency of foreign-born Chinese immigrants' lack of personal networks in the U.S. The respondents' skills in English reading, writing and speaking significantly complemented their lacking of a sufficient personal network.

Second, respondents' country of origin (sorted by degree of Westernization) was associated negatively with the insufficient-network obstacle ( $\text{Beta} = -0.212, p = 0.027$ ). This suggests that jobseekers from Mainland China complained more about the lack of personal networks than those from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and Southeast Asia.

Descriptive data show that 44% of the respondents agreed that not knowing enough people to help them find a job posed a problem for job search success. Further, 26% of the foreign-born Chinese agreed or strongly agreed that an insufficient personal network created disadvantage for job search. Compared to the fact that 30% agreed racial discrimination and 28% agreed cultural obstacle as an obstacle, 44% of the respondents recognized insufficient network as an obstacle. This is a much higher percentage.

Since all of the questionnaire survey respondents and in-depth interview participants were foreign-born, they could not benefit from well-established personal networks in the



U.S. Consistent with survey findings, about half of the in-depth interview participants complained that they did not know enough people to help them locate a job, especially upon arrival in the U.S. The lack of sufficient personal networks in the new society posed a challenge for their job search. As these Chinese immigrants established themselves in the new society years later, they developed their own personal networks.

Dr. H, a 47-year-old male who worked as a software programmer at a financial service firm, confessed the frustration of not knowing enough people for his job search. Dr. H had a hard time looking for his first job as an Assistant Professor position at a small community college in Arkansas, teaching physics, mathematics, and other science classes.

Dr. H: Sometimes we feel lonely and have nobody to rely on. We have to rely on ourselves to look for job opportunities over and over again. In the beginning, you feel like you don't have much choice. Of course later on when the economy becomes better, things are different. You can pick and choose. I had much difficulty in locating my first job with limited experience and an limited personal network.

Dr. A, a 56-year-old male computer programmer was working at the same financial service firm. He had been working in the computer science industry for over 30 years. He came to the U.S. from Taiwan in 1969 alone as a student. He complained about how difficult the task was for a foreigner to build a network in the U.S. from scratch:

“Compared with Americans who were born here, we have to build a network from zero. We are not born here, and therefore don’t know how to mingle with them [the Americans].”

Dr. K was a 39-year-old statistician in the same financial service firm as Dr. H and Dr. A. She told me that limited personal connections created a professional imbalance in human resource management for certain industries. She pointed out that personal networks of the Chinese tend to bring in more candidates from the Chinese friendship circle for certain heavily Chinese dominated industries: “That’s why in certain careers you see tons of Chinese, and in others you don’t see any.” Consequently, for those industries with scarce or none Chinese employees, foreign-born Chinese jobseekers might face difficulty of little or no connections.

In conclusion, about half of the foreign-born Chinese jobseekers considered the lack of a well-established personal network a major job search obstacle. If jobseekers’ English proficiency levels were high, they encountered less difficulty, despite the fact that they did not have enough friends/acquaintances assisting with the job search. In addition, compared with jobseekers from China, jobseekers from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and Southeast Asia seemed to know more people who could help them find jobs in the U.S. The function and benefits of personal networks will be further analyzed in Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight.

### *Immigration background*

The survey question “I didn’t have the right immigration background for some jobs” was included to measure the degree to which respondents consider “immigration background” an obstacle during job search. *Immigration background* refers to the legal status of respondents, including U.S. citizenship, permanent residence (possessing the green card), H<sub>1</sub>B (legal working permit for foreigners), J<sub>1</sub> (visiting scholar visa), B<sub>1</sub> (business visit visa) or F<sub>1</sub> (student visa) status, etc. The legal status category was sorted on the survey in descending order of naturalization, with U.S. citizenship being the most, and a F<sub>1</sub> status being the least.

A multiple regression was conducted using “immigration background” as the dependent variable, and using eight demographic features (age, gender, education, English proficiency, marital status, country of origin, legal status, and income) as predictor variables. Multiple regression analysis revealed that jobseekers’ *legal status*, *English proficiency*, and *gender* were significant predictors of the degree to which jobseekers would confront with immigration background as an obstacle. These three variables taken together explained about 21% of variance in the dependent variable.

First, respondents’ legal status was associated negatively with the immigration background obstacle (Beta = -0.735,  $p = 0.000$ ). Decreased degree of American naturalization increased the degree to which jobseekers encountered the immigration background obstacle. A naturalized U.S. citizen faced much lower obstacles than an F1

visa holder in securing a position available only to U.S. citizen.

Second, respondents' English proficiency was associated negatively with the immigration background obstacle ( $\text{Beta} = -0.704, p = 0.010$ ). Increased English proficiency significantly offset disadvantages generated by jobseekers' legal status. If jobseekers could read, write, and speak English well, then their immigration would become less of a barrier in job search. The American employers might work harder bring this well-spoken candidates on board. They might offer to assist with jobseekers' legal working status because these jobseekers read, write, and speak English so well. For instance, employers will offer to assist with H1B sponsorship for a foreign-born fluent English speaker. After all English communication skill is researched as critical in the interview process (Peterson, 1997).

Third, respondents' gender was associated with the immigration background obstacle ( $\text{Beta} = -0.618, p = 0.025$ ). Degree of femaleness was associated negatively with this obstacle. This indicated that compared with male jobseekers, female jobseekers faced a lower immigration background obstacle. With similar legal status as Chinese men, Chinese women enjoyed a greater flexibility in being offered a job despite their immigration background.

Descriptive data showed that 45% agreed to a certain extent (from slightly agree to strongly agree) that immigration background created a problem in their job search. Furthermore, 27% of the foreign-born Chinese agreed or strongly agreed that their

immigration status presented an obstacle. Some of the Chinese jobseekers might have received interview invitations for certain jobs, only later to find out their legal status would not allow them to take these positions. Figure 3 shows the respondents' immigration status.

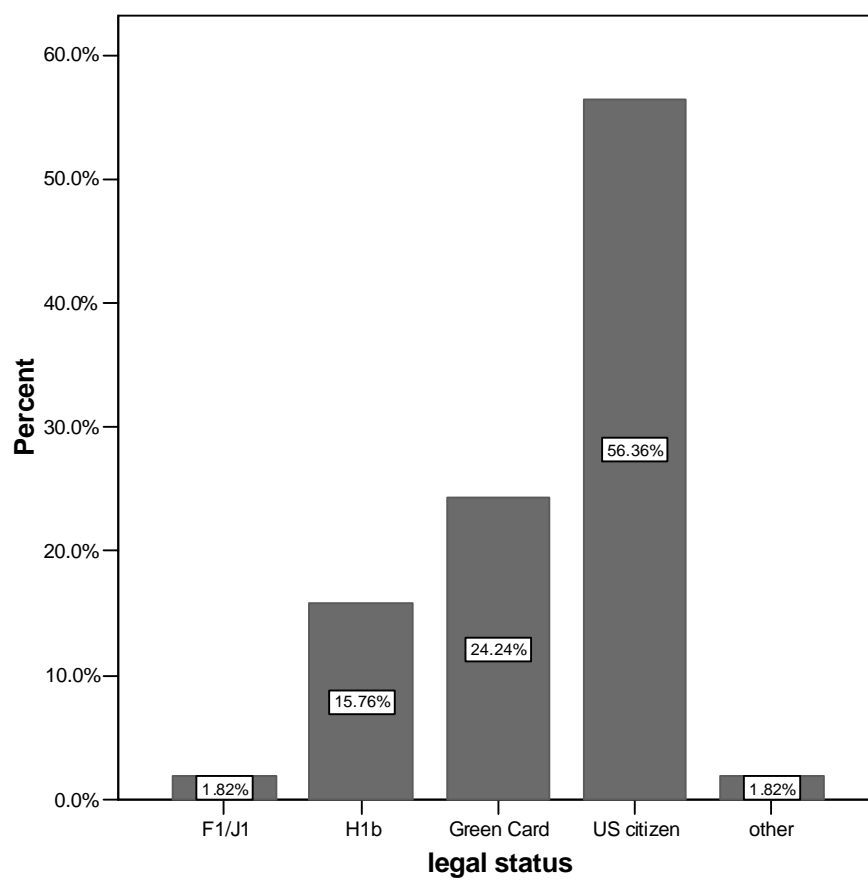


Figure 3: Respondents' legal status at the time of research

Figure 3 illustrates that 56% of respondents had become U.S. citizens. This percentage was consistent with the 55% that denied immigration status as a job search obstacle. Figure 3 also shows that 24% of respondents had obtained permanent residence status with green cards<sup>18</sup>. 16% of respondents had been given H1B visas. Through comparing the percentage on this chart with legal status frequencies, it is obvious that those who had become naturalized U.S. citizens did not consider immigration background an obstacle during the job search. However, 44% of respondents carry citizenship of other countries and regions, such as People's Republic of China, Chinese Taiwan, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Macao Special Administrative Region of China, Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Half of the non-U.S. citizens had obtained permanent residence status (24% of total respondents). Half the non-U.S. citizens held different statuses, with most holding H1B working visa status. The interviews revealed that some job postings are for U.S. citizens only; thus, 44% of the non-U.S. citizens might encounter a job obstacle that is almost impossible to overcome.

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<sup>18</sup> Green Card: A green card is offered to a permanent resident alien. Any person not a citizen of the United States who is residing in the U.S. under legally recognized and lawfully recorded permanent residence as an immigrant. Also known as "Permanent Resident Alien", "Lawful Permanent Resident," and "Resident Alien Permit Holder," Green Card Holders are also commonly referred to as immigrants; however, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) broadly defines an immigrant as any alien in the United States, except one legally admitted under specific nonimmigrant categories (INA section 101(a.15.)). Lawful permanent residents are legally accorded the privilege of residing permanently in the United States. They may be issued immigrant visas by the Department of State overseas or adjusted to permanent resident status by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in the United States (USCIS Website, 2004).

Mr. Z, a 35-year-old computer programmer who worked for a county government, told me that he had endured hardship in his job search due to the fact that he was not a U.S. citizen. For about a year he had no job after graduating from a Florida university with his second master's degree. When asked about the most critical obstacle in his job search, he answered with assurance that it was immigration status. He said that many jobs looked very nice, but they were reserved only for U.S. citizens. Some jobs were even classified as confidential: "Many positions advertised on newspapers or online are with military industries or other classified organizations. My organization does not require confidential information. When they decided to hire me, they asked if I need some paperwork. I said I needed to apply for H<sub>1</sub>B. They didn't say no."

Mr. G, a 30-year-old civil engineer, stressed that being a foreigner situated him at a definite disadvantage for job seeking in the U.S. Mr. G came from China to the U.S. in 2000. With the university admission letter and an I-20 form<sup>19</sup>, he obtained his F<sub>1</sub> student visa from the Consulate of the U.S. of America in Shanghai. In order to work legally in the U.S. after graduation, he had to be sponsored by his employer to change his F<sub>1</sub> visa to H<sub>1</sub>B. Mr. G explained that this kind of request put him at a disadvantage in comparison with other job applicants because his applicant meant more paperwork and a

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<sup>19</sup> I-20 Form: A form issued by an accredited American university to foreign students for the application of F<sub>1</sub> student visa status. "Student" is a nonimmigrant class of admission. A student is an alien coming temporarily to the United States to pursue a full course of study in an approved program in either an academic (college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school, other institution, or language training program) or a vocational or other recognized nonacademic institution (USCIS Website, 2004).



higher cost for the potential employers: “In my case, I had some advantages in qualification, but at the same time, I had lots of disadvantages.... They ask you about your immigration status. I said no. I need you to sponsor H<sub>1</sub>B. If they have some American candidates, they may not choose you because it easier for them.”

Traditionally, the U.S. has been a nation of immigrants. The fact that 80% of respondents had gained U.S. citizenship and permanent resident status shows that the country is still welcoming certain foreign immigrants, especially those who are well educated and well qualified from elite migration. The immigration background hurdle can be overcome if one improves one’s English proficiency and later on finds a job with an employer willing to sponsor him/her with a working status.

#### *Linguistic obstacle*

The question “I felt it was difficult to get a job because my English is not that good” was included to measure the degree to which respondents considered “linguistic obstacle” or “English proficiency” an obstacle during job search. Multiple regressions was conducted using “linguistic obstacle” as the dependent variable, and using eight demographic features (age, gender, education, English proficiency, marital status, country of origin, legal status, and income) as predictor variables. Multiple regression data showed that jobseekers’ *English proficiency* and *gender* were significant predictors of the degree to which racial discrimination becomes a job-seeking obstacle. These two variables combined explained about 18% of variance in the dependent variable.

First, respondents' English proficiency was associated negatively with respondents' experience with linguistic obstacle ( $\text{Beta} = -1.104, p = 0.000$ ). There was no doubt that increased English proficiency significantly diminished linguistic difficulties during the job search.

Second, respondents' gender was associated with linguistic obstacle ( $\text{Beta} = -0.562, p = 0.012$ ). Again, femaleness was associated negatively with the obstacle of linguistic obstacle. In other words, compared with male jobseekers, female jobseekers faced less difficulty overcoming communication barriers in their use of English as a foreign language.

Descriptive data revealed that 31% agreed to a certain extent (from slightly agree to strongly agree) that not being able to read, write, and speak like a native posed a problem for the success of their job search. Further, 14% of foreign-born Chinese agreed or strongly agreed lack of English proficiency was an important obstacle during their job search.

In the demographics section of the survey, respondents were asked to identify level of English proficiency in their reading, writing, and speaking skills. They were instructed to choose a level closest to their English language skill among "none," "minimal," "intermediate," and "professional." I created an English proficiency composite index variable by combining the data of respondents' self-reported proficiency in English reading, writing, and speaking. This index shows that about 29%

of respondents considered themselves with very low English proficiency; 13% minimal; 15% intermediate, and about 43% professionally English proficiency. In other words, about 57% of respondents did not possess overall English proficiency while only 43% assessed their English reading, writing, and speaking as being fluent.

The survey shows that less than half the respondents considered themselves to read, write, and speak English well. This finding is consistent with the fact that 50% of respondents accepted being interviewed in English, whereas the other 50% in Chinese. This finding is consistent with the Census 2000 data.

Asian immigrants to the U.S. are fluent in their native Asian languages when they arrive here, however, Asian immigrants generally are not competent speakers of English when they arrive. Whether or not Asian immigrants become competent in English depends in large part on their profession, location, and motivation. Immigrants who live and work in ethnic enclaves may not have to learn English to survive. Others are forced to learn English (Gudykunst, 2001). Most respondents and participants in this dissertation research have to obtain a certain degree of English fluency because they work in English speaking American organizations.

Mr. G, a 30-year-old civil engineer, was the youngest interview participant and also among the youngest of my survey respondents. Mr. G came from China in 2000. Growing up in Shanghai, he started to learn English when he was a fourth grader in the elementary school. As English had been one of the six required courses by the Chinese

government for all junior high and senior high students all over China since the early 1980s, Mr. G was not alone among the younger generation to speak, read, and write English with considerable fluency. However, Mr. G was worried about his foreign accent and his lack of knowledge about contemporary American slang and colloquiums. He told me: “In my case, I had some advantages, but at the same time, I had lots of disadvantages, like the language, if they talk too informal. Obviously you are from another country.”

In conclusion, the linguistic obstacle could not be overlooked during the job search process of these Chinese immigrants. About 57% did not consider themselves to have obtained complete proficiency in English reading, writing, or speaking. Many were especially concerned about their English speaking skill. Many jobseekers were concerned about their foreign accents and insufficient knowledge of informal American English.

#### *Low qualifications*

The statement “My qualifications were not good enough” measured the degree to which respondents considered “low qualification” an obstacle during their job search. A total of 91% of respondents disagreed that their qualifications presented an obstacle for the job search. Only 9% agreed to a certain extent (from slightly agree to strongly agree) that their educational and experiential qualifications created a barrier to the success of their job search. Furthermore, only 4% of the foreign-born Chinese agreed or strongly

agreed that a lack of professional qualifications was an important deficiency during their job search. It is understandable why 91% of the respondents considered themselves qualified for the job search in the U.S. if we look at their educational background in Figure 4.

Very few respondents specified that they had low qualifications. This makes sense when we look at the education level of the respondents. Figure 3 shows that the respondents were a highly educated group. The frequency data indicates that 77% held graduate degrees, with 45% being master's degrees and 32% being doctoral degrees. The questionnaire survey also suggests that 60% of respondents obtained their terminal degrees in the U.S., while 40% obtained theirs in other countries, including China, Japan, England, and Canada. The high average education level explains why the majority of respondents and participants were in PTM (professional, technical, and managerial) positions. The education data also partly explains why most respondents believed that they did not have a qualification problem for the job search. In fact, if the foreign-born Chinese immigrants did have a qualification problem and could not find a job here in the U.S., they would not be able to stay in the U.S., because they would not be able to extend their visas and apply for H<sub>1</sub>B, Green Cards, and U.S. citizenship. This is an implication for Darwinian "the survival of the fittest" principle.

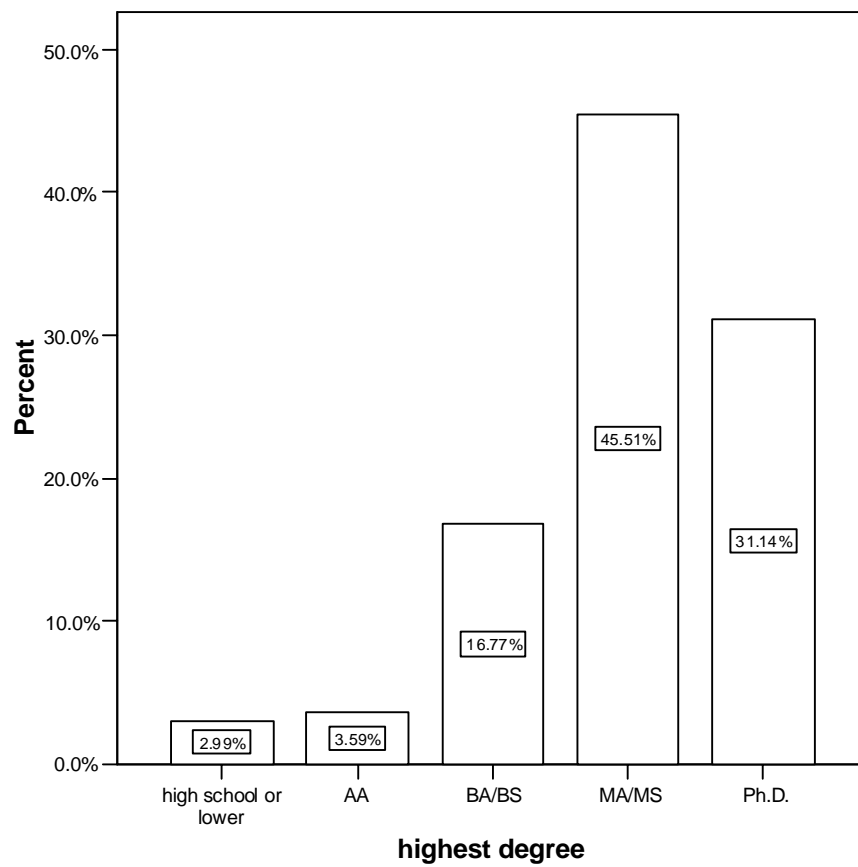


Figure 4: Respondents' educational level

A multiple regression was conducted using “low qualifications” as the dependent variable, and using eight demographic features (age, gender, education, English proficiency, marital status, country of origin, legal status, and income) as predictors. The multiple regression data suggest that jobseekers’ *education level* significantly predicted the degree to which they confronted the low-qualification job-seeking obstacle (Beta = -0.390,  $p = 0.001$ ). Education level explained 7.5% of the variance in the dependent variable. Respondents’ education level is associated negatively with the low-qualification obstacle. This suggests that the higher the jobseekers’ terminal degrees, the more they felt they were qualified for targeted jobs.

Dr. P, a 48-year-old contractor with Canadian citizenship working in a media research company, said that he did not encounter any obstacles during his job search. He felt he did not get certain jobs because he was considered overqualified. However, he did mention that there were job search situations in which he felt he was not qualified: “I had applied to the Federal Economic Department [in Canada], I was in the final round of interview, but not admitted. I guess it was because of my technology skill was not an exact match with what they need. They were looking for someone to create economic model for them. I had done it in China, but not in North America. I thought this might be a weak point. Of course, language was also a concern. They speak French there.”

Mr. M, a 39-year-old male financial analyst from Hong Kong, informed me that he did not encounter any obstacles in job search. He said that before jobseekers hunted for

jobs, they had to evaluate themselves and discover what they can offer the employer. If a person's English is not good, then he/she should not try to get a telemarketing kind of job. He said he always enjoyed sales; therefore marketing was a good job for him.

A substantial portion of foreign-born Chinese in the U.S. is well educated. Census 2000 reported that Chinese Americans were among the most educated ethnic groups in the U.S. My research sample resembles the high educational level feature of the general Chinese American population. Therefore, it is not surprising that few respondents felt that they were unqualified for advertised job positions. However, these highly educated Chinese might not be paid on the same parity with White American colleagues because of the logic of dual labor market theory<sup>20</sup>.

I have summarized findings on the six job search obstacles: racial discrimination, cultural obstacle, insufficient network, immigration background, linguistic obstacle, and low qualification. Additionally, the in-depth interview data suggest a surprising result: This unforeseen obstacle is the intercultural communication gap between foreign-born Chinese and White Americans. In the next section, differences between American and Chinese communication styles will be analyzed. The four dimensions of

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<sup>20</sup> Dual labor market theory was created as an alternative to the human capital investment model for earning explanation. Dual labor market theorists distinguish between primary and secondary labor markets. The primary labor market is characterized by high wages, fringe benefits, job security, unionization, and opportunity for promotion; the secondary labor market has the opposite characteristics. The theory's central argument is that the kind of market a worker is located in is a more accurate predictor of his/her earnings than the worker's human capital investments. Under dual labor market theory, several sociologists argue that a large proportion of minority members and new immigrants, regardless of their education, are trapped in the secondary labor market... partly because of racial discrimination (Min, 1999, p. 196).



American-Chinese intercultural communication gap are: directness-subtleness, aggressiveness-modesty, courtesy-command, and American-Chinese experiences.

### Intercultural Communication Gap

Phase III in-depth interviews revealed a new job search obstacle – an intercultural communication gap between the foreign-born Chinese jobseekers and their American employers. This job search obstacle was not anticipated and therefore not excluded in the survey.

“You can take a Chinese out of China, but you can’t take the China out of a Chinese” (Liu, 1998, p.10). Eric Liu, a second-generation Chinese immigrant and a former Clinton speechwriter, wrote in his book *An accidental Asian* that “[t]hings that came as second nature to many white kids were utterly exotic to me: American-style manners, for instance” (Liu, 1998, p.44). Cultural impact on communication skill is omnipresent in a jobseeker’s everyday communication with the outside world. In certain situations, the Chinese communication style of a jobseeker becomes an obstacle.

When asked about the value of communication skills during job search, Dr. L, a 45-year-old medical research professor, said that it differed based on profession. He said, in his field, he had to publish. Only publications in peer-reviewed journals count for promotion. The ability to make sound presentations was also considered a necessity.

Dr. J, a 45-year-old computer programmer at IBM, mentioned that to communicate

well with White Americans was a challenge for foreign-born Chinese immigrants: “I do think it is a challenge that how you show your value in everyday life as a Chinese here. It is actually the most serious challenge. It includes communication with your colleagues, co-workers, and customers. Language, leadership are both very important issues. Presentation skill is also critical.”

Dr. K, a 39-year-old female statistician at a financial service firm, perceived communication skill rather than English proficiency as the most crucial skill for job search success, especially at the early stage of one’s career. Dr. K said that for her first job, she was given numerous interviews, but landed only two positions. She said from her experience, it was communication skill, not just English fluency that mattered. She said a jobseeker’s communication skill became obvious during job interviews: “I feel that they [American bosses] communicate better. They are effective salespersons. The most important thing is communication at the workplace. They know how to sell themselves in a lot of ways. Suppose my job achievement is eight, but I can only score myself at five for communication. My American bosses, however, they do quantitative work at five, but they communicate at eight.”

Dr. K spoke English quite fluently. She had a White American husband and just gave birth to a baby girl. When asked whether she tried to learn American communication style with her American husband, she laughed. She said: “It’s not that easy...They [the Americans] grew up here, they know better.”

Communication and culture are highly intertwined and they impact each other simultaneously. In fact, Hall (cited in Gudykunst, 2001, p. 169) claimed that “culture is communication and communication is culture.” Chinese immigrants’ communication style is influenced by the cultures in which they were raised and the subcultures in which they live. Szalay et al. (1994) points to the fact that different belief systems of Chinese and Americans impact the ways they behave.

American employers might require a jobseeker to take a personality test to ensure that this person is “a good fit” for the organization in terms of communication skills. Ms. B was a 47-year-old saleswoman for an insurance company. In 1986, Ms. B came to the U.S. to marry her American husband whom she acquainted a few years earlier in Taiwan. In 1998, after giving birth to her daughter, she applied for her first job with a BA degree in business administration. She found this position by driving through the company location, which was only five miles away from her home. She walked in and delivered her application. In a week, she was given an interview. First she was asked to complete a typing test and an English grammar and spelling test. Then she was asked to take a personality test. She said: “This is a customer service kind of job, they wanted to know that my personality fit into that kind of position. They tested my thinking pattern, common sense, my habits of phone conversations, etc. Anyway, I thought they wanted to know if I was Americanized enough in my communication skills to satisfy customers. I am glad I passed the tests. After they hired me, they trained me for five months to make

sure that I could communicate with the customers effectively.”

In the next section, I will juxtapose how Chinese jobseekers and American employers communicate differently and how such differences can become job search obstacles in the American cultural context. I will present the four dimensions of intercultural communication gap between foreign-born Chinese jobseekers and American employers: “directness vs. subtleness”, “aggressiveness vs. modesty”, “courtesy vs. command”, and “Intercultural experiential difference.”

#### *Directness vs. Subtleness*

Intercultural communication scholar Gudykunst (2001) stated “having Asian languages as first languages tends to be associated with communicating in a more indirect fashion when speaking English than having English as a first language” (p.10). Americans are more direct in their intention and convey obvious meaning when communicating with others whereas the Chinese tend to be more indirect and to convey more subtle meanings (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). As a result, subtle meanings that the Chinese try to convey might be ignored or misunderstood by American conversation partners; and the direct meaning of the Americans may become excessively complicated in the minds of the Chinese. If such misunderstandings occur in the job search process between American employers and Chinese jobseekers, then the subtleness of the Chinese communication style becomes a job search obstacle.

Chinese are more subtle and ambiguous in their expression partly because people in

Chinese culture rely heavily on the context to communicate. Hall (1981) regards Chinese culture as a high-context culture, and the White American culture a low-context culture. Hall (1981) explains that a high-context communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicitly transmitted part of the message. A low-context communication is just the opposite; i.e. the mass of information is vested in the explicit code. Although no culture exists exclusively at one end of the scale, some are high while others are low. Americans in general are more direct in their communication and rely less on the context, and the Chinese are more indirect and rely more on the context.

In Chinese culture, what is most important is sometimes not said. In such a high-context culture, external environment, situation, and nonverbal messages are crucial for understanding communication. By contrast, in low-context cultures such as American culture, a much greater portion of meaning in a given communication comes from the spoken word. In Chinese culture, subtlety is valued. Much of the meaning of a message is derived from paralanguage, facial expressions, setting, and timing. Alternatively, in low-context American culture, the literal words chosen convey a great part of the meaning.

Dr. T, a 38-year-old cancer researcher had worked in the U.S. as a full time employee for four years. During those four years, most of her colleagues were Americans, although there were plenty of Chinese researchers as well. Dr. T articulated

the difference that she felt between Chinese and American communication style: “I think that Americans are open, but we Chinese are less open. We are more conservative. I feel that it is easy to communicate with Americans because they are open and direct. They will tell you either they agree with you or disagree with you frankly, which makes it very easy to communicate. I like the directness of the American communication style.”

Ms. C was a 42-year-old artist from China who worked for an advertising company. She agreed with Dr. T’s view: “I think Americans are very honest. They keep their promises. But we Chinese are more polite, in the sense of being humble. Some Chinese are good at talking etiquette, but they don’t follow up in action. For instance, if an American invites you for lunch or dinner someday, they will for sure prepare for food that day. But the Chinese might just talk about it. They don’t really mean it. I think we need to be more honest. If you said it, you’d better do it. Also, Americans are more open. They would tell you. Chinese people’s thinking pattern is more complicated. They [The Chinese] think too much.”

The Chinese are more complex in their thinking pattern and interpretation of meanings. The Chinese might conclude a multi-layers explanation for a simple interaction that is clearly not necessary in the mind of an American. With these relatively indirect thinking and speech patterns, the Chinese might face challenges during job interviews. They may not recognize that it is not always necessary to have a complicated interpretation for a simple request made by an American employer. If an American

employer requires more background material to be submitted in the application packet, a Chinese jobseeker might think that this employer is denying his/her application, or this employer is implying that he/she needs some Chinese gifts. In order for a Chinese jobseeker to successfully secure a job in the interview, they need to be aware of the open, direct and linear pattern of thinking and communication of American employers.

#### *Aggressiveness vs. Modesty*

Children learn to be members of their cultures from their parents, teachers, religious institutions, peers, and media. Once children are old enough to interact with others, peers reinforce the norms and rules they learned from their parents. This process is termed *enculturation* (Kim & Gudykunst, 2002). According to Hofstede (1990), one dimension on which Asian cultures are different from mainstream American culture is individualism-collectivism. Mainstream U.S. culture is individualistic whereas Asian cultures are collectivistic. In individualistic cultures, individuals take precedence over groups. In collectivistic cultures, groups take precedence over individuals (Gudykunst, 2001).

The Chinese immigrants I studied were raised in collectivist cultures and were basically collectivists in their cognitive and behavioral patterns. One of the consequences of this difference is that while Americans communicate assertively, the Chinese tend to be modest in talking about themselves. In a collectivist culture, one is encouraged to talk about the group, the family, the organizations, rather than to talk

about him/herself.

Compared with the more assertive communication style influenced by individualism, Chinese jobseekers might appear to be humble or shy. Some Chinese job applicants felt inhibited in talking about themselves and therefore created an obstacle in job search interaction. At job interviews, jobseekers' strength is partly dependent on their marketing skill. If this skill is underdeveloped for cultural reasons, jobseekers might fail despite their superior qualifications noted on resumes.

From their childhood, Chinese students are often taught not to "show off" and "stand out" from the group. A talkative person with no true knowledge is sometimes characterized as a "noisy half-filled vinegar bottle" that enjoys showing off. Such popular sayings as "Eloquence may be silver, but silence is gold" and "Silence is a true friend who never betrays" (Confucius, sixth century B.C.) leave a strong mark in the Chinese mindset. Such a stance of valuing silence creates a job search obstacle in American society, where both spoken and written communication skills are highly valued.

In collectivistic societies such as China, people are hierarchically related and social interaction is strongly defined by age, gender, and social status (Triandis, 1988). Children raised in collectivistic communities form a sense of self from recognizing their place in the community hierarchy and from affiliation with the group. This mentality permeates every fabric of Chinese society. Job seeking is not an exception. Just listening



to employers respectfully at workplace without expressing their own opinions is considered the norm by many Chinese jobseekers. Dr. S, a 46-year-old female computer programmer who worked at home said that the Chinese disliked promoting themselves. This tendency sometimes blocked the supervisors' vision in recognizing the Chinese jobseekers' accomplishments. She suggested that the Chinese try to talk about themselves more slowly and to think before they speak: "You just have to talk to them (employers) about your concern, your work. Because we are Chinese, sometimes, we cannot catch things easily. Sometimes if you want to say something, you better say it right; say it slow because we think faster than we speak."

Dr. H felt uncomfortable in talking about himself. Dr. H, a 47-year-old male computer programmer who worked for a financial service firm, stated that communication skills created a major challenge for the Chinese immigrant to become successful in the U.S. When asked in what aspects the Chinese needed to pay special attention for success, Dr. H stressed one word – *communication*: "They [Americans] are more talkative in social settings. You can see them conversing a lot at workplace. I feel that half of the time, they talk about unimportant issues, but other times, they concentrate on job related issues. Foreign-born immigrants need to be trained in intercultural communication. It is the most difficult area for us."

In conclusion, the Chinese culture suggests modesty in communication, while the American culture encourages assertiveness in marketing one's abilities. During job

interviews, the Chinese might appear too modest and too weak in marketing themselves for employment. They might therefore lose the opportunity to secure a position because for the American employers, only an aggressive job seeker makes a good employee (Mariani, 2003). In order to sharpen their communicative skills, Chinese jobseekers should aggressively participate in marketing their abilities and potentials.

#### *Courtesy vs. Command*

Power distance is another typology in Hofstede's (1991, 1994, 2001) and Hofstede & Bond's (1988) five dimensions of cultural difference. Power distance measures the extent to which inequalities among people are seen as normal, running from equal relations being highly valued (low power distance) to inequalities being accepted as normal (high power distance). The Chinese culture scores high on the power distance index while the American culture scores low on the power distance index.

Confucianism has profoundly shaped Chinese culture. No matter whether a foreign-born Chinese is from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, or Southeast Asia, he/she is from a Confucianism-influenced culture. The Confucian value of hierarchical relations has been described as one of the main tenets of the philosophy underlying the Chinese cultural system (Eberhard, 1971, Hofstede, 1995; quoted in Lachman et al., 1995).

The hierarchical Confucian tendency influences the Chinese to expect a command-obey format of communication. Since different people occupy positions with

unequal distribution of power, the Chinese communication style is more hierarchical.

This tendency emerges as especially obvious when the Chinese are speaking in a foreign language, such as English.

In a low power distance culture like the U.S., people strive to treat each other without envisioning them in a hierarchical structure. Individuals typically attempt to address others as equals in the U.S. (although some people might in fact be more equal than others.) When Americans give suggestions, they strive to sound democratically minded by using expressions such as “If I were you, I would...” While Americans seem to be populists, Chinese appear to be more insensitive in communication. When they give suggestions, they tend to use such expression such as “I think you should...” During their job search and job interviews, the Chinese might offend their potential employers and co-workers if they use too much of the command kind of vocabulary and expressions.

Dr. D, a 47-year-old pharmaceutical researcher from China, preferred the American way of communication, which he labeled as being more considerate: “I think Westerners are more polite in their interaction with others. Chinese are sometimes blunt to each other in response. They wouldn’t say, “You should do this... You should do that...” The Chinese will speak in this way in English. But the Americans would say, “If I were you, I would do this...” This is more courteous. When working with them, I feel that Americans are very polite. This might be superficial, but they do it all the time.

Therefore it is a demonstration of a culture. I think this method of interaction creates harmony. Courtesy makes people feel better.”

In summary, the Confucianism-influenced Chinese culture is a high power distance culture. The Chinese are used to choosing terms that demonstrate power imbalance rather than equality in social status. Such language choice might seem blunt and impolite to American employers and coworkers. A continuous choice of such terms will become a job search obstacle for Chinese jobseekers in the U.S.

#### *American vs. Chinese experiences*

Since foreign-born Chinese, the research population, were not born and most did not grow up in the U.S., they were short of first hand American experience. Such a deficiency in experiencing American culture posed a challenge for the Chinese jobseekers in their daily interactions with Americans. When this challenge was demonstrated in the job search process, the lack of American experience created a job search obstacle.

Dr. P, a 48-year-old Canadian contractor working in Florida, was born in China. Dr. P did not feel uncomfortable in interaction with Americans, but experienced a lack of interest in going extra miles to make friends with them. In contrast, as members of the younger generation of Chinese immigrants, Mr. G and Mr. Z wanted to accumulate a first-hand “American experience.” Thirty-year-old Mr. G suggested that Chinese immigrants needed to learn more about American culture in order not to offend people in

daily conversations. Among interview participants, 36-year-old Mr. Z was the only Chinese who worked for a county government. He suggested: “I think you need to pay attention to American culture, the news, sports, and entertainment. I enjoy learning about these topics anyway. From these, you will find lots of common topics with Americans. I think it is easy to overcome such cultural obstacles, because Americans seldom talk about such topics as history. They care more about contemporary happenings. So you can catch up on these topics from popular news outlets.”

Ms. U was a 52-year-old woman from Taiwan, who worked at the customer service center of a major wireless telephone company. She had one son, and one daughter, and her husband worked for a chain Chinese restaurant as a chef. She and her husband came to the U.S. in 1972 with only \$1,000 dollars in their pocket. They came to the U.S. while she was pregnant with her son. Their experience in America was a version of the American dream of “from rags to riches.” They had opened Chinese restaurants, worked as fashion contractors, and now owned two beautiful homes at the beach. She took home full medical benefits for her whole family from this wireless phone company. Ms. U only had a high school diploma, the lowest degree among all respondents and participants.

Ms. U said that at the workplace she always felt the cultural difference from her colleagues, who were mostly young or middle-aged American single mothers. She told me that about 75% of her colleagues were African American and white females: “Many

of my colleagues are not married. In America, they don't care. Some of them have four or five children, but they don't have husbands. It is strange that children all stay with their mothers. If they talk with each other about these topics, I just listen, seldom would I participate. Many of them have several children, not married, and each child is from a different father. It is quite different from our culture; especially we are the older generation. Maybe nowadays in Taiwan, we might also have this kind of phenomenon. For my generation, it is really rare."

Ms. R reminded me that such intercultural differences in life experience created a job search obstacle. Ms. R was a 44-year-old accountant who grew up in Beijing and had worked in Hong Kong. She came to the U.S. with her two sons in 1987; her husband lived a bi-national life, traveling between Hong Kong and the U.S for his family business in Hong Kong. Ms. R believed that the intercultural communication obstacle concerning life experience was difficult to overcome even if one tried very hard.

Ms. R: I think there is a communication problem. On my business trips with my colleagues, other than business affairs, we talk about other things. I just feel like I have very limited common topics with them, such as everyday casual things that you share. I think I lack much in that area. When we are on business trips, they talk about the movies that they watched before, the novels they read, or the authors of these novels. I was just completely unfamiliar of what they were talking about... I actually want to catch up with them. I would ask them to

recommend some novels to me, and I tell them that I read a lot of novels in Chinese. I enjoy reading novels. I often read biographies. I try. I like literature.

But it is impossible to be in the same position and on the same level with them.

Mr. N, a 33-year-old information industry worker was particularly articulate. He identified a major disadvantage for Asians communicating at the workplace: “If you know what they are talking about, the novels and topics, these would definitely ease the working relationship and increase communication effectiveness when you have communication ease between people. But in the end, I doubt American colleagues have a deeper relationship than just that. You know, they are working pals and that’s it. I hardly ever see American people become very good friends from their working space. I think to perceive them as close is probably wrong. They just have more to talk about. That’s it.”

In summary, discrepancy in life experience is another dimension in the intercultural communication gap between Chinese jobseekers and American employers. Such a gap is difficult to bridge, even if one strives to read books and catch up with American culture. After all, such experiences construct our identities and shape us who we are.

## Conclusion

Survey data indicate the significant predicting power of respondents’ English proficiency, gender, and country of origin on the job-seeking obstacles they experienced in the U.S. Respondents’ English proficiency was associated negatively with both

cultural and structural job-seeking barriers. Increased English proficiency significantly reduced all job-seeking obstacles. When immigrants desire to improve their job search success rate, improving their English language skills is a wise choice.

Respondents' gender was associated with cultural job-seeking barriers. Compared with male jobseekers, female jobseekers faced lower ethnic barrier during job search. Chinese women were better received in American society than Chinese men in job search. This might be due to the fact that female Chinese immigrants were more adaptable and better accepted in mainstream American society. Women's higher ability in language acquisition and cultural sensitivity might have contributed to this issue. The exact cause of this phenomenon needs to be investigated further.

The degree of Westernization of the jobseekers' country of origin was associated negatively with structural job-seeking barriers. A native of Mainland China would face greater structural barriers than a native from Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macao. In-depth interview data showed that immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao were more entrepreneurial than immigrants from Mainland China although this trend is gradually changing.

Phase III in-depth interview data revealed that an invisible communication gap existed between the Chinese immigrants and white Americans. The four dimensions of American-Chinese communication style difference include: directness-subtleness, aggressiveness-modesty, courtesy-command, and American-Chinese experience. This



intercultural communication gap was shaped by cultural differences in thinking patterns, linguistic habits, experiences, and the influence of different life philosophies. To adapt themselves more successfully into the host society, immigrants need to improve their language skills as well as gain knowledge about the spoken and unspoken cultural norms of the new environment.

In summary, job-seeking barriers exist for foreign-born immigrants, but there are techniques for overcoming them. To improve one's overall English reading, writing, and speaking skills is vital for job-seeking success. Despite obstacles the immigrants face, the U.S. remains the world's number one immigration recipient country. Nearly 60% of respondents had become U.S. citizen in less than 15 years of average stay in the U.S.

The next chapter reports findings on the mechanisms and benefits of personal approach for jobseekers. Granovetter's (1974) strength of weak ties argument will be confirmed and expanded in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: TESTIMONY ON THE STRENGTH OF WEAK TIES

### Introduction

Chapter Five presented job search strategies of foreign-born Chinese immigrants. The survey data showed that jobseekers employed three distinct approaches: traditional, institutional, and personal. The traditional approach encompasses such methods as building resumes, learning about employers, mailing application packets to employers, and reading print publications. The institutional approach encompasses strategies such as the Internet, job fair, employment agency, and contacting potential employers by phone or in person. The personal approach encompasses such strategies as contacting relatives, friends/acquaintances, previous employer/co-worker, and other members in one's personal network. As job-seeking strategies changes from traditional to institutional to personal, the relationship quality between the jobseeker and his/her potential employer shifts from impersonal to interpersonal.

Chapter Five suggested that jobseekers taking the personal approach contacted members in their personal networks – their relatives, friends, acquaintances, previous employers and co-workers. This chapter will focus on the personal approach. First, I will

test if Granovetter's (1974) argument on the strength of weak ties still holds true in the Internet age. Then, I will identify who those critical job-leading weak ties are. Third, I will investigate whether female Chinese jobseekers differ with their male counterparts in their intensity of job search through personal approach. Finally, derived from in-depth interview data, I will conceptualize the four benefits of personal networks for job search: information, trust building, position creation, and job market expansion benefits.

In this chapter, based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected, I will test and address the following hypotheses and research questions proposed in Chapter Two concerning personal networks:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Of the foreign-born Chinese who find jobs via personal networks, a majority obtains jobs through weak ties.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Compared to foreign-born Chinese men, Chinese women tend to rely more on personal contacts in their job search.*

*RQ<sub>3</sub>: What are the benefits of personal ties in job searches for foreign-born Chinese?*

*RQ<sub>4</sub>: Who are the weak ties that led foreign-born Chinese to job information and opportunities?*

I will present the data analysis results showing that H<sub>1</sub> is supported while H<sub>2</sub> is rejected. That is, of those foreign-born Chinese jobseekers who found jobs via personal networks, a majority of them obtained job information through weak ties with infrequent

contacts. There is no difference between Chinese men and Chinese women in their intensity of using personal network as a job search strategy.

Addressing RQ<sub>3</sub>, I will present research findings on the four benefits of personal ties for job search: information-giving, trust-building, position-creation, and job market expansion. Addressing RQ<sub>4</sub>, I will list acquaintances from professional and social circles of targeted occupation as being the critical job-leading weak ties.

### The Strength of Weak Ties

Granovetter (1974) analyzed the relationship between jobseekers and job informants. He discovered that of those job-leading personal connections, a majority (83.6%) were jobseekers' weak ties. In other words, an overwhelming majority of jobseekers found jobs through weak ties, ties that jobseekers rarely contacted. Later job mobility scholars have presented evidence of the vitality of weak ties for obtaining desirable jobs (Bagchi, 2001; Brown & Konrad, 2001a, 2001b; Lin, 1998; Lin & Dumin, 1986; Lin, Ensel & Vaughn, 1981; Wellman, 1999).

Granovetter's (1973) "weak tie" and Burt's (1992a, 1992b, 2000) "structural hole" are complementary terms concerning opportunities embedded in a personal network. A person with whom a jobseeker does not contact on a frequent basis is a weak tie. The information carried by these weak ties is less likely to be redundant and more likely to be unique than those persons the jobseekers frequently contact, thereby making weak

ties “information rich”. In Burt’s (1992a) term, there exist an exploitable structural hole between the weak tie person and a jobseeker. Once such a structural hole is filled, that is, once a job seeker is connected with a weak tie rich in job information, a job opportunity is possibly to be discovered (See Figure 5 for a model illustration).

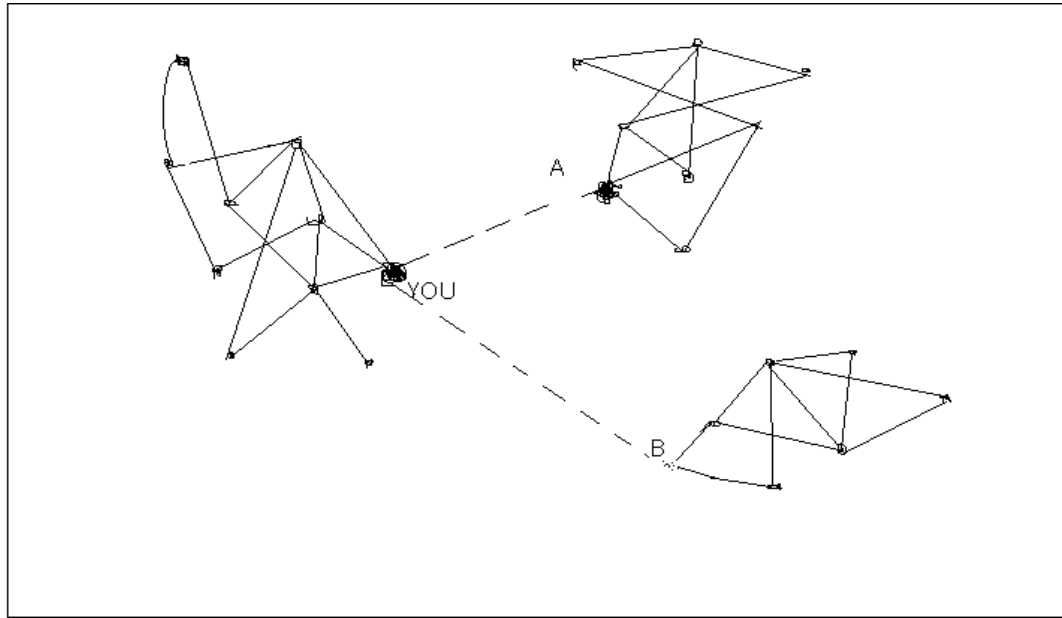


Figure 5: Model of structural holes and weak ties

Figure 4 shows a “structural holes and weak ties model” that illustrates the meaning of network terms. In Figure 4, there are three separate personal networks. In these three networks, there are three key individuals that will potential connect the networks together. I name these three key individuals as: Node YOU (hereafter referred to as YOU), Node A (hereafter referred to as A), and Node B (hereafter referred to as B).

The gaps between YOU-A and between YOU-B are “structural holes.” The straight lines connect frequently contacted individuals inside a network. Members of such a network might include one’s family members, relatives, and close friends with whom one often communicate. Such communication could be through such mediums as face-to-face meetings, telephone conversations, text messages, emails, etc. The straight lines inside a network represent the connection of “strong ties” or “redundant ties.” The strong ties with whom one often contacts possess same or similar information; therefore they are termed as “redundant ties”.

In contrast, the relationship between “YOU and A” and “YOU and B” are “weak ties” or “non-redundant ties.” Dashed lines represent a potential weak tie to be created. By filling the structural hole between YOU and A with dashed lines, we create a weak tie between YOU and A that is beyond the strong tie networks of both YOU and A. By creating a weak tie between YOU and A, we are actually connecting the network of YOU (a cluster of ten people) with the network of A (a cluster of eight people). Similarly,

by creating a weak tie between YOU and B, we are connecting the network of YOU (a cluster of ten people) with the network of B (a cluster of seven people).

Consequently, by creating the two new weak ties of YOU-A and YOU-B, we have created multiple structural holes between these three formerly unrelated networks. Any person in the YOU network can now be potentially connected with any person in the A network through the “YOU-A weak tie”. Any person in the YOU network can now be potentially connected with any person in the B network through the “YOU-B weak tie”. YOU are now positioned at the center of all three networks and have the power of controlling information flow and exchange. YOU become therefore the “hub” (Barabasi, 2002) of the three connecting networks.

By filling the structural holes between potentially beneficial ties, individuals will be able to gain new information and create new opportunities for themselves in and between networks. Burt claimed (1992a) that connecting nodes such as YOU, A and B enjoy information benefit and control benefit. Burt (1992b) named them as “Tertius Gauden.” Tertius Gauden is a term Ronald Burt coined from Greek mythology. It means the third party who benefits. "When you take the opportunity to be the Tertius, you are an entrepreneur...who generates profit from being between others" (Burt 1992a, p. 34). Such profit includes job information and job opportunities.

Survey data presented in Chapter Five showed that 52.5% of the respondents found jobs via personal networks, including relatives (3.8%), friends/acquaintance (32.5%),



and previous employers/co-workers (16.3%). This finding is consistent with Granovetter's (1974) findings on the jobseeking pattern of white male PTM workers. Granovetter (1974) found that 56% of jobseekers found jobs through personal connections.

To further analyze whether the majority of the 52.5% personal connections made use of weak tie, I employed "contact frequency" as a categorizing standard. Burt (1992b, 2000) introduced two dimensions of standard in categorizing the strength of a tie: *contact frequency* and *emotional closeness*. Granovetter (1974, 1982, 1992) utilized contact frequency in differentiating strong ties from weak ties, probably due to avoiding the relative intangibility of measuring emotional closeness. To be consistent with Granovetter, I employed "contact frequency" to distinguish "strong ties" from "weak ties."

A K-means cluster analysis on the survey data identified two groups of personal network users with significantly different contact frequencies. The two groups were labeled as "strong ties" and "weak ties" based on their contact frequencies with job informants. The strong ties maintained contact frequencies of *at least once a week*. The weak ties maintained contact frequencies of *less than once every two weeks*.

Based on the survey data, two new variables were created to decode the identity of weak ties. The first variable contained three personal network channels: relatives, friends/acquaintances, and employers. This variable demonstrates the nature of

connection between the respondents and job informants. The second variable contained two degrees of contact frequency: strong tie frequency and weak tie frequency. This variable divides respondents by the strength of their contact with job informants.

These two variables were then used in a crosstabulation analysis to determine whether the nature of jobseekers' connection with job informants significantly differs between weak ties and strong ties. Pearson's Chi-square value of 9.162 ( $p = 0.027$ ) indicates the existence of a significant pattern between the two variables. In other words, the nature of connection with job-informants is associated with the strength of ties. A majority of job informants were weak ties in the jobseekers' personal networks.

Table 6: Crosstabulation of tie strength and jobseeker-informant connection			
	Cluster membership		Total
	weak tie	strong tie	
Relatives	2	6	8
All other connection	24	9	33
college friends	9	2	11
previous co-workers	17	5	22
Total	52	22	74
Pearson's Chi-square	9.162		
$p$ value	0.027		

Further, the box plot (Figure 6) shows that of those jobseekers found jobs through personal networks, 69% of them obtained job information from weak ties (N=52), while 31% of them obtained job information from strong ties (N=23). The two groups were significantly different ( $F = 205$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) in terms of how frequently they contacted their job informants. Thus, among those who found their jobs through a personal approach, a significant majority (69%, nearly 70%) obtained jobs through weak ties with a contact frequency of less than once every two weeks. Therefore  $H_1$  is supported. Of the foreign-born Chinese jobseekers who found jobs through personal networks, a majority of them obtained jobs through weak ties. This finding is consistent with Granovetter's (1974) discovery that 83.6% of jobseekers found jobs through weak ties. Granovetter's (1974) strength of weak ties argument still holds true in this Internet Age for minority jobseekers.

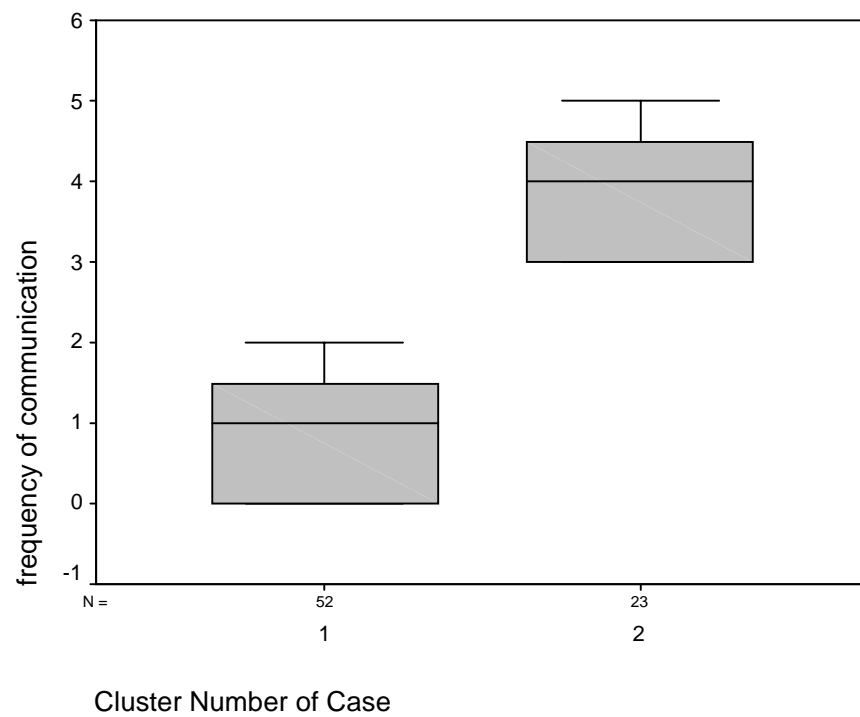


Figure 6: Box plot demonstrating the strength of weak ties

### Who Are the Weak Ties?

Findings presented above indicated that in today's world, weak ties are still very powerful for jobseekers, even foreign-born minorities. If jobseekers can identify who are weak ties around them, the job search process of using the personal approach becomes goal-oriented. In this section, I will present who are the critical job-leading weak ties in jobseekers personal networks.

First, descriptive data revealed how job-leading parties in jobseekers' personal networks (hereafter referred to as "job informants") discovered such job leads. It was discovered that 62.2% of the job informants found the employment information because they worked at the organization where the jobs opened up. Meanwhile, 12.2% of the job informants were employers, 10.8% of the job informants were the employers' social friends, and 4.1% were the employers' business friends.

These data indicated that a majority of the job informants worked at places where jobs open up, and that was how they gained job information. In other words, most job informants were potential future colleagues in hiring organizations. If jobseekers wish to obtain jobs in certain organizations, the employees of those organizations will potentially act as weak ties for job information. When a position opens up in an organization, the employees in the organization are usually the first to know such information. Such an employee with job information can be categorized as "information rich". They then will

purposefully or randomly inform their relatives, friends, acquaintances, previous co-workers and other members in their personal networks of such opportunities. If a jobseeker happens to be or become a member in the personal network world of this information-rich job informant, the jobseeker will benefit. In the next section, I will analyze and summarize the functions of personal networks for job search.

Beyond the employees who worked at places where jobs opened up, employers themselves, employers' social and business friends made up 27.1% of the job-informants. It will be a strategic move for a jobseeker to move closer to potential employers and their social and business friends because these people also potentially possess important job information.

In addition to the identity of job informants, survey data revealed types of relationship between jobseekers and job informants. Figure 6 shows that 28.9% of the job informants were previous employers/co-workers, 14.5% were college friends, and 11.8% were immediate or extended family members. It is significant that 39.4% of the jobseekers met their job informants through other occasions, such as conferences, social gatherings, and sports clubs.

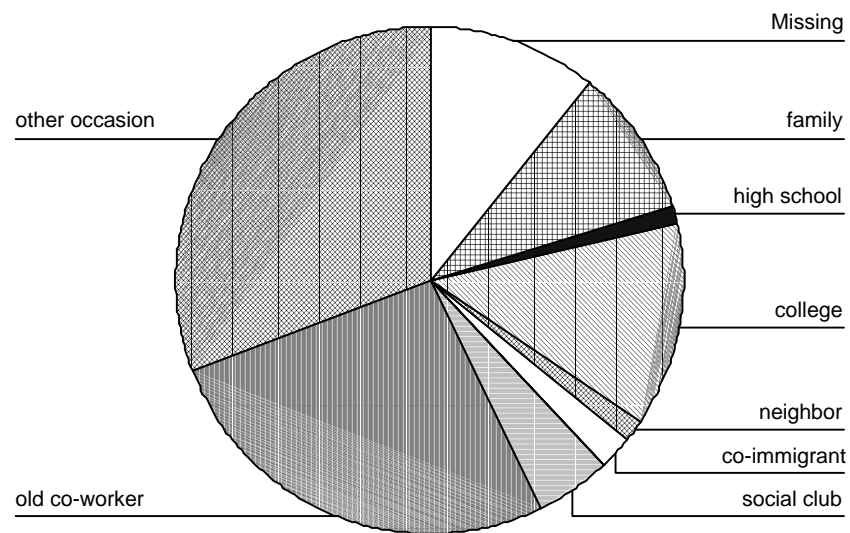


Figure 7: Job seeker-job informant relationship at the time of job search

Moreover, each survey respondent was asked to describe the job informant's race, ethnicity, gender, native language, and job-leading actions. Regarding job-leading actions of the job informants, whether the job informants knew jobseekers were looking for jobs yielded interesting finding. About 63% of the job informants knew that respondents were looking for a job, while 37% of them did not know. A majority of the job informants were aware of the fact that the respondents were looking for jobs. Another 37% of the job informants did not know respondents were looking for jobs, but revealed job information in random conversations. Consequently, it can be anticipated that if jobseekers are alert in notifying people around them about the fact that they are looking for jobs, they might be able to activate more job informants.



Table 7: Features of job leading informants				
Survey questions on job informant		Yes	No	I don't know.
1	When this person told you about the job, <i>did he/she know</i> that you were looking for a job?	63.38%	36.62%	NA
2	Did this person put in a “ <i>good word</i> ” for you?	55.41%	16.22%	28.38%
3	Was this person of the same <i>race</i> as you (e.g. Asians)?	55.41%	41.89%	2.70%
4	Was this person of the same <i>ethnicity</i> as you (e.g. Chinese)?	52.70%	45.95%	1.35%
5	Did this person speak your <i>native language</i> (Chinese)?	50.70%	47.89%	1.41%
6	What was this person's <i>gender</i> ?	61.11%	37.50%	1.39%
		male	female	

Table 7 data illustrated that the cultural background of the job informants was evenly diversified. Both the Chinese and non-Chinese informed the foreign-born Chinese immigrants about possible job leads. Fifty-six percent of the job informants were Asian, 53% of them were Chinese, and 51% of them spoke Chinese. In general, the data indicated that half of the job informants' race, ethnicity and gender were similar to those of jobseekers. In other words, the other half of the job informants were not of the same race, ethnicity, and gender with the jobseekers. This finding is significant because it encourages jobseekers to develop personal networks beyond their own race, ethnicity, and gender. Only by this way, can weak ties be more strategically created.

Scholars have found that while interpersonal ties can be helpful in finding employment with co-ethnic bosses, these ties also have the potential to lead to jobs in the broader labor market characterized by mixed ethnic composition (Lin, 1998; Lin & Dumin, 1986; Sanders, Nee & Sernau, 2002; Waldinger, 1986, 1994, 1996). Table 7 data shows that both co-ethnic and mixed ethnic relationships were present during the respondent's job-seeking process in a ratio of nearly 1:1. Thus, growing one's personal network beyond one's own culture, ethnicity and religion is expected to result in increased employment opportunities.

In Chapter Two, I quoted Migram's (1967) study on the small world problem, in which it was stated that every one person was potentially connected with any other person on earth through five to six steps. However, the methodology used by Milgram to

reach the six-degrees conclusion has been questioned recently by Kleinfeld (2002a), who inspected Milgram's papers and notes as well as the collection of letters that made their way to their final destination, kept in the Yale Archives. Kleinfeld (2002a, 2002b) stated that recent studies suggested that our world was deeply divided by cultural differences, especially class and race, which made navigation across such social barriers very difficult. My research findings support Kleinfeld's (2002a, 2002b) claims. That is, if a jobseeker stays within his/her own cultural network, borders of class, race, ethnicity and gender will limit his/her opportunities.

In summary, findings suggest that relationships with relatives and close friends are less frequently related to how successfully jobseekers use weak ties to land jobs. Instead, relationships developed in other contexts, such as previous workplaces, professional conferences, sports events, social clubs and other professional and social gatherings more frequently serve as weak ties leading to job opportunities.

Findings show that jobseekers should keep in touch with their friends/acquaintances from college, previous workplace, and other professional and social occasions. One's job opportunities might be easily discovered by the friend/acquaintance who was his/her previous co-workers or college friends. This finding is consistent with a recent survey commissioned by Robert Half Finance & Accounting. In this recent survey, it was found that 80% of executives polled said that networking with others in their field or industry has been important in furthering their careers (Kopiske, 2003). More importantly, the

employers and employees who work in a target organization and their social and business friends should be the target ties to be connected for desired job positions. One should not limit one's personal networks only to his/her own race, ethnicity and culture. Mixed-ethnicity networks will generate more mixed-ethnic weak ties and therefore create job opportunities beyond one's current professional horizon and ethnic circles.

#### No Gender Difference

The second hypothesis raised in Chapter Two concerns the relationship between gender and personal network. An independent sample t-test was conducted pertaining to the intensity of utilizing personal approach by the two genders. The result suggests an absence of any significant difference between the two genders in terms of their tendency of adopting the personal approach ( $t = 0.258, p = 0.796$ ). The mean value for both genders was about 1.60 with a standard deviation of about 1.0. Thus,  $H_2$  is rejected. Chinese women do not have a higher tendency than Chinese men to rely on their personal networks as a job search strategy. For Chinese jobseekers, gender is not be a differentiating factor when predicting one's tendency in adopting personal network as the job search strategy.

In a related study, Johnston (2003) analyzed the personal networks of 149 Chinese urbanites in Mainland China. Johnston's findings suggest that women with larger personal networks have more bonding social capital, while men with larger personal

networks have more bridging social capital.

The rationale concerning why Chinese women do not differ from Chinese men in their appreciation of personal networks deserves further investigation. One explanation might be that the Chinese culture, with its profound emphasis on personal connections, imposes equal impact on job applicants regardless of gender (For further clarification on the Chinese concept of personal connections, see Chapter Eight).

### Functions of Personal Network

Chapter Five showed 52.5% of respondents found jobs via personal networks, including relatives, friends/acquaintances, and previous employers/co-workers. Chapter Five further showed that those who intensively tried personal approaches were very likely to find jobs via personal networks. This chapter presented that nearly 70% of the job informants were weak ties who intentionally or randomly contacted the job informants for less than once every two weeks during the time of job search.

More than half of respondents found their jobs via personal networks, and of which, a predominant majority found jobs through weak ties. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the functions of personal networks for job search. In this section, I will analyze the benefits of personal networks for jobseekers from in-depth interview data. Qualitative data revealed four benefits of personal job search approach: information-generating, trust-building, position-creation, and job market expansion.

### *Information benefit*

Eisenberg et al. (1985) developed a two-dimensional typology of interorganizational linkages based on linkage content and linkage level. The linkage content can be material or informational. The linkage level encompasses three dimensions in material and informational exchange: institutional, representative, and personal. “A *personal* linkage occurs when an individual from one organization exchanges information or material with an individual in another organization, but in a nonrepresentative or private capacity (i.e., via friendship or “old school” ties)”. (Eisenberg et. al., 1985, p. 237, emphasis in the original). Personal ties in job search function as the personal linkage described by Eisenberg et al. (1985) in that such ties carry critical job-leading information.

One’s personal networks function as an information-processing machine. This machine provides information on possible job leads, job vacancies, employment benefits, and potential employers. Individuals are limited in their capacity and ability to process and store information. One can recall and use a limited number of books, articles, memos, and news services. Given the limited volume of information an individual can process, the personal approach generates information beyond one’s individual capacity. Personal networks are like “an army of people processing information...on developing opportunities, warning you of impending disasters” (Burt, 1992b, p. 62). Even when job information obtained from the personal network is inaccurate, it nonetheless serves as a useful guideline for further information analysis. To activate potential job-leading

members in one's personal network is similar to Weick's (1969) idea of environmental enactment. Once a jobseeker tells people around him/her about the job search task, there might be a whole army of people around this jobseeker starting to process employment information. Consequently, the information volume on potential job leads is immediately diversified and multiplied.

Mr. Z, a 35-year-old computer programmer at a Florida county government exemplified the information benefit of personal networks. Mr. Z especially envied the fact that Americans had relatives who could assist with job search: "We, as foreign-born Chinese, don't have American relatives. If an American has ten relatives, it is like ten people looking for jobs for him at the same time. That way, they [Americans] enjoy a greater pool of information."

Dr. P, a 48-year-old media researcher, said he had provided job information in his company to his friends and acquaintances. Fifty-two-year-old Ms. U worked for the customer service division at a wireless telephone company. Ms. U found the job information from her librarian friend. The librarian discovered the hiring information on a routine flier that was circulating in the library. Ms. U then applied and was hired by this wireless telephone company. After she was hired, she then provided job information to her daughter-in-law. Here is her story.

Ms. U: My daughter-in-law also works here. After I was hired, one day I asked the security guard in our lobby: "How can my daughter-in-law apply for a job

here?” He said: “You fill the application form, and send it in. That’s it. Just send your resume, it will work.” One day, I came downstairs after work, and he called me, saying: “Hey, on September 11<sup>th</sup> we will have a job interview, I think you are interested.” “Thank you, thank you.” I said. I then informed my daughter-in-law about this opportunity. It was September 11 of 2001! Yes, it was that day my daughter-in-law came for the interview. She got the job, despite the tragedy that happened to our country. She now works on a different shift here.

Aside from general information on the job leads, an internal contact can provide detailed information on position requirements, characters of the potential employers and colleagues, and organizational cultures. Dr. A, a 56-year-old software programmer at a financial service company said that especially in America, one’s personal network served as an efficient tool for information acquisition: “During job search, I talked to my friends, and my friends refer me to the jobs. No bribe, nothing, just information.”

Information is one of the most important benefits that personal networks provide to jobseekers. On the one hand, jobseekers obtain information about the job position, position requirement, potential employer and colleagues from personal networks. On the other hand, the network that filters information also directs, concentrates, and confirms information (Burt, 1992a) on job postings. Consequently, information about jobseekers will be transferred through such personal networks to the potential employer, and personal networks serve as a trust-building platform between the jobseeker and potential



employers.

### *Trust building benefit*

Trust building is a vital benefit provided by personal networks for jobseekers. Trust building is perhaps the most unique benefit generated by a personal network because of the network's human factor. Trust underlies successful relationships, transactions, and employment. Within personal networks, relationships depend much more on cooperation than on control, and cooperation is built on trust (Stewart, 2001). Leadership scholar Warren Bennis argued, "gathering information, and above all developing trust, has become the key source of sustaining competitive advantage" (Bennis, Spreitzer & Cummings, 2001, p. 69). Gaining the trust of a potential employer is critical in many hiring cases. The Phase III interview data demonstrated that a well-connected internal referral was well situated to assist a job applicant in gaining such trust.

"People generate trust through their interpersonal networks of relationship" (Lipnack & Stamps, 1994, p. 188). A jobseeker's personal networks lay the foundation of trust between him/her and the new employer. Many participants testified to the trust building benefit. Dr. H, a 47-year-old male, who works at a financial service company, mentioned that when the economy is not that great, one's personal network becomes ever more essential: "If you have personal connections, you have easier access to job openings. For example, I was sitting together with two other Chinese for lunch today; the first Chinese hired the second one. Now it doesn't mean that a Chinese boss would

only hire a Chinese employee. This happens to be the case for them. But suppose that you have seven or eight candidates at the same level for the same position, who do you hire? Of course you will hire the one that you are acquainted with, because you know this person's background, therefore trust him/her."

Dr. M, a 45-year-old female media researcher strongly recommended internal referrals for job search because of the trust benefit: "If you have internal reference, people trust your internal reference. If your internal references were strong, they would think this candidate is good. If you go out and look for jobs just based on your self-recommendation, you might be able to persuade people, but it is difficult. Interview sessions last only a few hours. It is difficult to create a thorough understanding of someone in just a few hours."

Mr. G, a 30-year-old civil engineer regarded internal referral as critical for the success of job search. He found his job through the recommendation of a college friend with whom he played basketball. He said that in the past two years (since he was hired in April 2002), he had introduced job information to several college friends: "Last year I found a position, and I told my college friend about it. But that was not just job information. The boss asked me if I really knew that person. I said I knew him; actually he was a very nice guy, very diligent, very easy to get along with. That kind of good word is always helpful. Of course your boss will believe you, because I don't want to lie since I am working in this company, I don't want to jeopardize my own career."

Dr. K, a 39-year-old statistician at a major financial service firm, shared her experience of job-hunting with me. She said at the beginning of her career, she had a hard time landing jobs because she did not have enough connections in the professional world. Later on, when more connections were built, she started to enjoy the benefit of trust resulting from her personal networks: “The boss just decided to hire me because my Indian girlfriend said a lot of good things about me. I actually was late for the interview because I went to the wrong building. But I still got the job.”

Dr. M advocates internal referral because she had been a beneficiary of personal approach. She had been working at a media research company since February of 2003. She was notified of this position by an employment agency. When she turned in her application packet, the agency asked her if she had an internal reference. She thought of a white male friend who was a previous co-worker when she once worked for Citi Bank. That friend had become a senior manager at this media research company. One night, she called this co-worker and asked him to be her internal reference. He agreed. Dr. M said that this internal reference was critical to her employment: “Altogether they interviewed three applicants. One of them actually had worked in the company before, but they finally hired me, not him. They interviewed me and gave me an offer the same day. I even negotiated the salary... I think the internal reference is very important. They got to know my personality, interpersonal skill, working ability, and attitude. The internal reference said good words about me.”

When asked about how she could keep in touch with previous co-workers for future needs, Dr. M offered her own theory of altruism: “I think you don’t make friends for jobs. You should treat friends with sincerity. I enjoyed working with this friend at CITI group. We worked together and laughed a lot. Americans are willing to make friends with you if they enjoy being together with you. He was not happy when he left CITI Group. Not that many people showed up at his farewell dinner, but I went. He was emotionally moved. I think to treat people with sincerity is the correct way of friendship.”

In conclusion, trust exists in *interpersonal* relationships such as network connections, not in *impersonal* strategies such as Internet or direct application. When a jobseeker adopts the personal approach as a communication strategy for occupational attainment, the trust that is embedded in the relationship between jobseekers and job informants benefits jobseekers. Such trust is potentially transferable to the relationship between jobseekers and employers. When trust from a potential employer is present in the hiring process, the jobseeker gains an advantage over the competitors for a targeted position.

#### *Position creation benefit*

In-depth interview data reveal that jobseekers’ personal networks provide information-generating benefit and trust building benefit for jobseekers should they adopt personal approach. Strong internal referrals make it possible for new positions to be created for jobseekers.

For the 39-year-old statistician, Dr. K, a position at a financial service firm was

created because her Indian girlfriend who worked there said very good things about her at the firm. The boss thus created a position for her. Dr. S, a 46-year-old female software engineer, had the same opinion about the position-creation benefit of personal networks. She said: “If you have a good friend and people know you, it is possible that a department will design a position for you.”

Waldinger's (1996) account of why African Americans were underrepresented in certain industries in New York City illustrated the importance of personal networks behind job creation. Particular social networks govern the access to training and employment in these trades. Job-related information is passed along chains of ties within personal networks. The disadvantage of African Americans in some industries was that they had few interpersonal ties that could bridge structural holes between themselves and the social network.

Similarly, Dr. K illustrated that in certain Chinese dominated quantitative fields, more and more Chinese get employed over time. It is possible that more positions are created for recommended Chinese candidates based on familiarity and trust. Dr. K said: “That’s why you see lots of Chinese in certain industries, and in others you don’t see any.”

In summary, if a jobseeker’s internal referral spreads good words about him/her in the target organization; a new position can be created just for this individual. Such openings might not enter the advertised job market. This gives a jobseeker a competitive

edge in the job application process. In the next section, I will further elaborate on the hidden job market.

#### *Job market expansion benefit*

Beyond making sure that a jobseeker is informed, personal contacts can make this jobseeker one of the few who are informed early on. Personal contacts have the potential of transferring significant information to a jobseeker before his/her competitor receives it (Burt, 1992a). The early information warning utility from personal networks assists a jobseeker in identifying the hidden job market.

Mariani (2003) proposes that aside from the advertised job market available in print publications, the Internet, and other publicized resources, there is another job market that is not publicized. Many employers fill the job openings without advertising them. These unadvertised openings constitute "the hidden job market." Jobseekers invest significant time and energy seeking leads in this hidden market because of the incredible opportunities this market can offer. Pursuing unadvertised job vacancies entails less competition, and it gives jobseekers a chance to demonstrate initiative.

Hunting for jobs in the hidden market requires outstanding initiative, communication skills, resourcefulness, time management, perseverance, and research skills. It thus requires many of the qualities that employers look for in new employees. Employers know that good jobseekers make good employees (Mariani, 2003). To a certain extent, the search for job vacancies in this hidden job market can be realized only

through personal networks.

There are reasons for the existence of a hidden job market. Employers save money, time and effort by avoiding advertisement and subsequent interviews. Fernandez, Castilla, and Moore (2000) contend that employers gain significant economic benefits by being receptive to referrals provided by their current employees. The 30-year-old civil engineer Mr. G found his job through the recommendation of his old-time college friend. He illustrated the benefit of personal network for the employers in the hidden job market: “When I was applying for jobs at certain companies, I found that my friends have already been working there for a few years. One of them knew that the company has openings and called me. I sent my resume to him and he passed my resume onto his boss. Actually I got two offers when I graduated. Another friend of mine provided me with an opportunity elsewhere in Florida. That’s why I say friends are important here, especially in their desired professions of my job search.”

In summary, one’s personal network is critical for the jobseeker to unveil opportunities in the hidden job market. In order to gain access to information on hidden job vacancies, jobseekers need to utilize their personal networks, especially the contacts in the desired professional areas.

## Conclusion

This research contributes to the personal network literature by analyzing the

foreign-born Chinese immigrants' use of interpersonal ties in their job searches. The fact that 52.5% of respondents found jobs via personal networks demonstrates its critical viability during job searches. A majority of the job informants were identified as weak ties. Thus the strength of weak ties persists even in an intercultural context.

I provided explanations and presented findings on the mechanism, function and impact of personal network as a job search approach. I have shown that the personal network as a job search strategy leads jobseekers to occupational opportunities.

Four benefits, namely the information benefit, trust building benefit, position creation benefit, and job market expansion benefit have been analyzed and conceptualized. First, personal networks play a role in matching and sorting of jobseekers to the publicized and hidden job vacancies. Second, personal networks also assist jobseekers in establishing a foundation of trust with their potential employers. Third, well-situated internal referrals can motivate employers to accommodate a jobseeker by creating a new position. Fourth, personal networks can help jobseekers expand their opportunities from the advertised job market to the hidden job market and learn about opportunities known only to insiders.

Among the foreign-born Chinese immigrants whose jobs were found via personal networks, a significant majority obtained job information through weak ties, which were connected by infrequent contacts of fewer than once-every-two-weeks. There was no difference between Chinese men and Chinese women in terms of the intensity of using



personal networks as a job-search strategy.

In summary, this chapter shows the personal network approach enacts a trust-building invisible handshake between jobseekers and employers for a higher success rate in occupational appointment. Some findings on personal network function might be applicable to network organizations. Stohl (2001) stated many scholars view global network as the quintessential organizational form of the postindustrial global information society (Hastings, 1993). The qualities of an emergent personal network could be parallel to global network organizations in many ways. In the next chapter, I will analyze culture's impact on personal networks by comparing its function in the context of Chinese and American cultures.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: CULTURE'S INFLUENCES ON PERSONAL NETWORKS

### Introduction

Chapter Seven presented the mechanism of weak ties and benefits of personal networks for job search. This chapter will analyze the impact of culture on the function of personal networks in a job search context. More specifically, I will examine similarities and differences of personal networks in Chinese and American cultures. This chapter addresses the following research question:

*RQ<sub>6</sub>: How do personal networks function in Chinese and American cultural contexts?*

### The Concept of Guanxi

In popular terms, personal network is named *guanxi* in Chinese culture. Guanxi can be loosely translated as "connection," "social networking," or "special interpersonal relationship." The concept of guanxi carries additional connotations of power, social status, social hierarchy and resource transfer (Hackley & Dong, 2001; Ma, 1997; Yeung & Tung, 1996). Guanxi implies a strong dyadic link with the obligation for the exchange of favors between parties involved in a personal network (Tsang, 1998; Wellman, 1999;

Wellman et al., 2001b). For the Chinese, Guanxi requires intentionality and reciprocity for social capital exchange within a whom-you-know rather than what-you-know framework.

In Chinese etymology, guanxi is a combination of two Chinese characters: Guan and Xi. “*Guan*” means door, gate, or passage, while “*Xi*” means connection, group or organization. The combination of these two Chinese characters refers to “access to a group, community or organization.” When the Chinese say “zhao guanxi,” they mean, “we have to find the entrance to a group, community, or organization.” To find the entrance, personal connections must be developed (Hackley & Dong, 2001). To be successful in Chinese societies, especially in job search, personal connections must be maintained and strengthened (Wong & Leung, 2001).

As described in Chapter Four, a majority of both survey respondents and interview participants came from Mainland China, with the remaining coming from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and Southeast Asia. The participants from Mainland China (People’s Republic of China or PRC) reported the changing trend of the job search networking in China.

From 1949 when PRC was founded to the late 1980s when the economic reform was starting to be implemented, most Chinese graduates accepted jobs assigned by the government. For many, government appointment was the only method of employment distribution in China. Proximity and strength of connection with key governmental

decision-makers or human resource administrators were vital to being awarded job opportunities. Consequently, such government-monopolized environment brews heavy public reliance on personal networks. Historically, China has been a country with centralized governments since the Third Century B.C. when Qin Shi Huang<sup>21</sup> established the first united Chinese dynasty. Therefore such reliance on personal networks amid limited occupational opportunities has been a tradition implanted in Chinese culture.

Beginning in the late 1980s, especially in the 1990s, with the development of free market economy, there have been more job opportunities in Mainland China. The growth of job opportunities has been robust in the private sector. Subsequently, diverse means of job seeking, including direct application, assistance from employment agency, job fairs, print publications, and the Internet have been adopted by jobseekers in China.

Despite the emergence of new communication strategies, *guanxi* remains the essential job search strategy in China (Wellman, 1999; Wellman, 2001b). Interpersonal and inter-organizational relations can still strongly facilitate people's job-seeking efforts in both the state-owned and private-owned organizations. Research shows that most jobseekers learn about job openings through their relatives, friends, and casual

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<sup>21</sup> Qin Shi Huang (260 BC - 210 BC): Personal name Zheng, Qin Shi Huang was king of the Chinese State of Qin from 247 BC to 221 BC, and then the first emperor of an unprecedented unified Chinese Dynasty of Qin from 221 BC to 210 BC. Emperor Qin Shi Huang and his Prime Minister Li Si passed a series of momentous reforms aimed at cementing the unification. They undertook a number of Herculean construction projects, most notably the herald version of the current Great Wall of China. They also unified Chinese language and systems of measurement. Therefore the formation of Qin laid a foundation for a centralized China, and amalgamated Chinese culture, illustrated a legacy of more than two millenniums (Wikipedia, 2004a).

acquaintances (Wellman, 1999).

Interview data show that job search networking is critical not only in Mainland China, but also in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao and other Chinese cultural circles. Dr. A, a 56-year-old software programmer at a financial service firm was from Taiwan. He said: “In Taiwan, you have to rely on guanxi a lot.”

For both traditional and modern Chinese societies, guanxi serves as an important strategy of job searches. Chapter five revealed that 52.5% of respondents found jobs in the U.S. via personal networks. It seems that personal approach is an effective job search approach for jobseekers in both American and Chinese cultures. However, the degree to which personal networks influence hiring processes is different in the two cultures. In the following text, I will present qualitative findings on similarities and differences of personal networks in Chinese and American cultures.

### Similarities

Findings from in-depth interviews reveal that as the Chinese version of personal networking, guanxi demonstrates both similarities to and differences with its American counterpart. When guanxi is used to attain job information, it works as American networking. The flow of job information within the guanxi network follows the same pattern as that of personal network ties discussed in Chapter Seven.

Regardless of the cultural context, personal networks function as a constructive

communication strategy in obtaining job information. Dr. P, a 48-year-old contractor in a media research institute had professional experience in China, Canada and the United States. According to him, although the three cultural contexts are different, human nature remains the same. “Acquaintance makes things easier all over the world,” he said.

Dr. W, a 46-year-old mathematics professor had been an employee in China, Germany, England and the United States. From his job search experiences worldwide, Dr. W said, “we live in an imperfect society with imperfect market information about employment. No matter how different cultures might be, we still live in human societies sustained by human communication. Therefore, we will always need guanxi in our lives, no matter what kind of culture we live in.” As presented in Chapter Seven, the imperfect job market necessitates guanxi. Personal network in both cultures yields the four major benefits as discussed in Chapter Seven, namely information, trust building, position-creation, and job market expansion.

### Differences

Chinese guanxi significantly differs from its American counterpart in two particular aspects. Guanxi, in addition to attaining job information, can actually influence an employer’s decision-making process about whom to hire. A jobseeker’s strength of connection with the potential employer can substantially influence the employer’s final hiring decision.

Conversely, it seems that the American personal network merely facilitates job information attainment. Integrity outweighs connection concerning the decisions for final employment appointment in the American context. From the in-depth interview findings, it is discovered that compared with Chinese guanxi, American networking involves a higher degree of equality, especially in the final decision-making process.

#### *Potency of influence*

In cultures of PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and Southeast Asia, personal networks are not only essential in attaining job information, but also important for influencing an employer's final decision. Scholars have proposed that Chinese guanxi is less of a fair game than U.S. practices and that it yields inequality in the hiring process. In contrast to American ethics, Chinese guanxi is based on often-secret personal ties and "under-the-table" dealings (Hackley & Dong, 2001). In other words, a jobseeker might be given a job just because of the insider connections he or she has developed over the years.

The American networking does not entail an implicit force for employing certain individuals just because of kinship, friendship or reciprocal obligations. Dr. M, a 45-year-old computer programmer in a media research firm grew up in Mainland China. In her opinion, American networking differs from Chinese guanxi in that it is more consistent with an equal opportunity promise: "American networking is internal reference. It verifies that a given candidate is trustworthy. In America, bosses draw on

their personal networks to conduct background check on candidates. American networking is not a kind of ‘qundai guanxi’<sup>22</sup> [in the Chinese sense] that get you into the ‘back door’.” A jobseeker might be hired because he/she has the best guanxi, not necessarily the best qualifications.

Dr. M’s statement shows a fundamental difference between the functions of personal network in China and America. Although a personal network functions as a channel of job information gathering in both cultures, guanxi has a stronger impact on employment decision-making. Compared to Chinese culture, the American employment market provides relatively more equal opportunities for jobseekers. A connection might lead a jobseeker to the “front door” of a hiring organization; but it is the jobseeker’s qualifications and presentations that will often win the job.

American personal networks exert less influence than Chinese guanxi on the decisions of employing authorities. As found in the interview with Dr. J, a 45-year-old IBM worker, “There is Guanxi here [in the U.S.], too. But it is not the most important thing here. More important is your background, your abilities.” Ms. J, a 44-year-old university accountant added: “[In America,] even if you have a referral, but with low qualifications, you wouldn’t get the job.”

Dr. P, a 48-year-old Canadian was born in China. He now works as a contractor with

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<sup>22</sup> Qundai guanxi: A Chinese version of the old boy club, which transfers privilege and opportunities only to network members’ relatives and close friends based on biased standards. This term is equal to the meaning of nepotism, the act of favoring one’s family members in a situation where doing so is considered inappropriate. Some biologists have suggested that a tendency towards nepotism is instinctual as a form of kin selection (Wikipedia, 2004b).



a media research company in Florida. Dr. P found most of his contracting opportunities in the U.S. through the Internet. He stated that personal networks had almost no influence on the decision making process of the employers. However he did recommend the information benefit of networking in the U.S.: “Your personal network has no influence on the hiring process. Most of the time, human resource departments have independence in recruitment decisions. They follow rules. I have seen employees who inform their relatives or friends about job openings. But those people still need to go through the same procedures that others do. You can only learn where openings are and what the descriptions of positions are. Your network can only get you there.”

Integrity outweighs personal connection in the American society. Qualifications, not connections matter in the final decision making process. Dr. J, a 45-year-old consultant with IBM was born in Mainland China. After completing his degree in Europe, he worked at a temporary job in Singapore. Not satisfied with his employment situation, he then found a Florida job online. By comparing the functions of personal network in China, Europe, Singapore, and the U.S., he said: “Guanxi exists in the U.S., but it is not the most important thing here. More essential is your background, your abilities.”

Dr. S was a 46-year-old female software engineer with a Ph. D from China in physics and a MS from Texas in computer science. She said: “Here it is fair. Even when they use guanxi, they normally don’t lie. If you ask your manager for recommendation letters, they will be honest in the letter. But in China, recommenders will jot down

whatever is beneficial to jobseekers. American employers truly examine jobseekers' credibility while Chinese employers are not so serious in this aspect. The American networking is more of a fair game."

Limited opportunities reinforce people's reliance on guanxi in Chinese cultures. Dr. T, a 38-year-old cancer researcher found the job information in Florida via the Internet while in Hong Kong. She came to Florida for the interview and was hired by outperforming a few other candidates. She compared her job-seeking experiences in China, Hong Kong and the U.S. as follows: "In China, it might be more common for you to be recommended by friends or acquaintances. The job opportunities (in China) are not as many as in the U.S.; especially the more desirable positions are limited. In Hong Kong, jobseekers also rely much on Guanxi, but fairer than in China. In the U.S., there seem to be more opportunities. Even if you have no connections, as long as you work hard and persist, there will be opportunities for you. Although I must say with the economic development in China, there are more and more occupational choices in China. I have heard good things about China in recent years."

#### *Depth of emotional attachment*

Chinese guanxi differs from American personal networking in the degree of emotional attachment, which is termed as *renqing* in Chinese culture. In Chinese language, "ren" stands for "person," and "qing" stands for "emotion." Renqing is the emotional obligations built by members in the Chinese personal network that encourages

reciprocity of service among network members. In Chinese culture, a jobseeker with emotion-rich connections with potential employers is more likely to be offered a desirable job. In American culture, the emotional attachment in a personal network seems to be much weaker. The U.S. is an individualistic society and people are more independent of each other, such kind of emotional debt is not as strong as in China.

In Chinese culture, *guanxi* is a hierarchically structured network of relations. Over time, these obligations are fulfilled through the network members' mindful management of the emotional attachment of *guanxi*. Most interpersonal bonds are governed in part by a norm of reciprocity (Bochner, 1984) and interpersonal debt (Burt, 1992b). Indeed, actors in *guanxi* are confined by mutual obligations that need to be returned because they are emotionally bonded.

The purpose of nurturing emotional attachment is to sustain the interpersonal bonds between network partners and therefore construct a more emotionally rich relationship. Consequently, an emotionally rich relationship opens doors to a relationship partner and makes him/her an in-group member. When an individual becomes an in-group member, all deals become easy (Wong & Leung, 2001). Consequently, this individual's goals are easily achieved by activating personal networks when he/she becomes an insider.

Dr. K noted how personal networks in China and the U.S. differed in terms of emotional involvement. She mentioned: "In America, everybody tries to be politically correct, they are not as close. But in China, you are either very close to one another as

in-group members, or you don't talk to each other at all as out-group members.”

Dr. D, a 47-year-old pharmaceutical researcher was a Canadian citizen born in China. He had worked as a pharmaceutical research specialist in the U.S. for seven years. Dr. D explained on the emotional attachment of *guanxi - renqing*. He said: “Guanxi here in North America is not the same guanxi in China. Guanxi in China means more of *renqing*. In China, you might get the job just because of your guanxi. But here, your guanxi can tell you where job opportunities are, and then it is up to your merits to get it. That's a big difference. In China, even if you are not the best candidate for the job, you still get the position because of your guanxi. Here, your guanxi will inform you on job opportunities; therefore a possible interview might follow. With the interview, you will possibly get the job.”

Therefore, in Chinese culture, members of a personal network are emotionally bonded as in-group members. A potential employer might feel obligated to hire a member in his/her personal network even if this candidate's credentials are relatively weaker than other candidates. However, in the American culture, members in a personal network are not so much emotionally bonded, especially not as obligated. Equal opportunity employment regulations further make it undesirable to hire a member of one's personal network just because you feel obligated to his/her relationship. For American employers, qualifications speak louder than connections.

## Conclusion

The implementation of free market economy in Mainland China since 1978 has renovated Chinese employment system. Employment administration in China has been transformed from the state's assigning jobs to people's seeking jobs. Jobseekers now enjoy greater freedom in adopting different strategies to look for jobs, rather than just accepting government appointment. Despite the increased freedom in job-seeking strategies, *guanxi* remains as an indispensable tool for job search success in contemporary China.

*Guanxi*, the Chinese version of personal network or personal networking, displays similarities as well as differences with its American counterpart. On the one hand, *guanxi* provides information benefit to jobseekers. In Chinese culture, job information flows through *guanxi* networks that are rich in emotional attachments. Such information flow in the Chinese context follows the general pattern of personal networks described in Chapter Seven. On the other hand, *guanxi* significantly differs from its American counterpart in two aspects. First, Chinese *guanxi* allows for less equality than American networking does. In many cases, Chinese *guanxi* is less of a fair game, and leads people to the back door rather than the front door. Second, Chinese *guanxi* embodies a stronger emotional attachment. Practitioners of *guanxi* consider personal networking as an emotional investment for future reciprocal outcomes.

Qualitative findings presented in this chapter suggest that the personal approach

enacts a trust-building invisible handshake between jobseekers and employers in both Chinese and American cultural contexts. The exact causes that lead to differences between Chinese guanxi and American networking need further investigation.

## CHAPTER NINE: THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON JOB SEARCH

### Introduction

Since the 1990s, the growth of the Internet has revolutionized our physical and virtual worlds in an unprecedented manner. The invention of such communication technologies as telegraph, telephone, radio, computer, fax, cell phone, palm top, laptop, set the stage for this unprecedented integration of the Internet structure. The Internet is at once a platform for worldwide information exchange and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals regardless of geographic location. Needless to say, the Internet is influencing every aspect of our lives. Jobseeking is no exception. This chapter explores the impact of the Internet on the job-seeking communication strategies of foreign-born Chinese in the U.S. This chapter addresses RQ<sub>7</sub> of this research:

*RQ<sub>7</sub>: What is the impact of the Internet on the job market and foreign-born Chinese jobseekers?*

On October 24, 1995, the Federal Networking Council unanimously passed a resolution defining “the Internet” (ISOC, 2004). This definition was developed in consultation with members of the Internet and intellectual property rights communities.

RESOLUTION: The Federal Networking Council (FNC) agrees that the

following language reflects our definition of the term "the Internet." The Internet refers to the global information system that -- (i) is logically linked together by a globally unique address space based on the Internet Protocol (IP) or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons; (ii) is able to support communications using the Transmission Control Protocol. The Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) suite or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons, and/or other IP-compatible protocols; and (iii) provides, uses or makes accessible, either publicly or privately, high level services layered on the communications and related infrastructure described herein (ISOC, 2004).

Starting the late 1970s and especially early 1980s, widespread use of browsers and the World Wide Web allow users easy access to information in the cyberspace. The Internet grows beyond its research roots initiated by Tim Berners-Lee<sup>23</sup> (Berners-Lee & Fischetti, 1999). The Internet has enhanced commercial activities and shaped virtual communities worldwide. Through the web one can search for maps, hotel prices, airplane tickets, U-Haul location, movie content, restaurants, and academic journals online. Today, the Internet serves as a global information infrastructure for support of

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<sup>23</sup> Tim Berners-Lee: Sir Timothy John "Tim" Berners-Lee, KBE (TimBL or TBL) (b. June 8, 1955) is the inventor of the World Wide Web and head of the World Wide Web Consortium. In 1980 Berners-Lee proposed a project based on the concept of hypertext, to facilitate sharing and updating information among researchers. The first website Berners-Lee built was at <http://info.cern.ch/>, activated on August 6, 1991, which explained what the World Wide Web was, how one could own a browser, how to set up a web server, etc. (Wikipedia, 2004c). For the early history of the World Wide Web as told by the Web's creator, see Tim Berners-Lee with Mark Fischetti (1999) in *Weaving the Web: The original design and ultimate destiny of the World Wide Web by its inventor*.



commercial, educational, academic, governmental, and non-governmental activities.

Since the 1990s, a tremendous increase in the amount and speed of information transmission on the Internet result in a reduction of communication cost for organizations, industries and services. Likewise, the Internet provides convenience for jobseekers, employers, and headhunters in occupational opportunity distribution. In the following text, I present findings from the survey and in-depth interviews targeting the impact of the Internet on the job-seeking experience of foreign-born Chinese immigrants in the United States.

#### Internet Job Search Effectiveness

In Chapter Five, it was reported that about 12% of the 176 organizational employed respondents found their jobs via the Internet. The percentage of respondents found their jobs via the Internet (12%) was higher than those via printed publication (11%), direct application (9%), employment agency (8%), relative (4%), and job fair (3%) respectively. The only two channels that were more popular than the Internet were *friends/acquaintance* (32.5%) and former *employer/co-worker* (16.25%), both of which belong to the personal approach category. There were more people found their jobs by contacting friends, acquaintances, and former employers, and co-workers than those who found jobs via the Internet. The findings indicate that the Internet is less effective than personal network, but has grown to be more effective than any other traditional job

search channels. The relatively high effectiveness of jobseekers using the Internet as a job search strategy is a rising phenomenon.

#### Age as a significant predictor

On the survey questionnaire, respondents' intensity of utilizing the Internet as a tool for job search was measured on a scale of 0 to 4, with 0 being "*Never*" and 4 being "*Very often*."

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to identify predictors of Internet job search intensity. Age, gender, educational level, marital status, income level, and English proficiency composite were identified as potential predictor variables. The result indicated that the only significant predictor for jobseekers' intensity of Internet job search tendency was "age" (Beta = -0.054,  $p = 0.004$ ). This explains 10% of the variance in jobseekers' intensity of relying on the Internet. (R Sq. = 0.010). (See Table 8).

Table 8: Multiple regression and descriptive results  
on the likelihood of using the Internet for job search

	Mean	S.D.	B	S. E.	S. B	t	Sig.
(Constant)			3.540	1.139		3.107	0.002
Age	41.420	7.479	<b>-0.054</b>	0.018	-0.282	-2.958	<b>0.004</b>
Gender	0.443	0.499	-0.393	0.269	-0.137	-1.462	0.146
Education	3.069	0.852	0.185	0.162	0.110	1.145	0.255
Marital status	0.863	0.346	0.258	0.375	0.062	0.687	0.493
Income	4.489	2.381	-0.036	0.059	-0.059	-0.600	0.549
English	2.595	0.494	0.074	0.272	0.026	0.272	0.786
	R Sq.	0.100	ANOVA results:		F		2.286
	Adj. R Sq.	0.056			Sig.		0.040

Dependent variable: Likelihood of job search via the Internet

Predictor variables: Age

Following the multiple regression analysis, a crosstabulation (See Table 9) was conducted between the two variables of “age” and “Internet search intensity”. The result showed that jobseekers’ job search intensity through the Internet was negatively associated with their age. The younger a job applicant is, the more intensively he/she might browse the Internet job opportunities (Gamma = -0.196,  $p = 0.004$ ). Therefore, the Internet poses a greater influence on younger jobseekers. The younger a jobseeker is, the more likely he/she browses the Internet for occupational positions. The Internet proved to be a more popular tool for younger jobseekers as a search tool.

Table 9: Crosstabulation between age and Internet search likelihood

Symmetric Measures		Value	Asymp. Std.	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	<b>-0.196</b>	0.068	-2.908	<b>0.004</b>
N of Valid Cases		137			

## Qualitative Findings

In-depth interview result confirmed the quantitative finding on the critical prediction value of age. The younger participants showed a higher appreciation for the Internet as a job search strategy. Most of the twenty interview participants agreed that the Internet had become and would remain to be a crucial job search medium. When asked about their future job-search strategies, a majority of the participants stress that they will definitely use the Internet.

Dr. T, a 38-year-old female cancer researcher stressed the role of the Internet for her career success. Dr. T found her job by browsing the employer's online job posting while in Hong Kong: "I think the development of the Internet ensures a great contribution to society. The Internet provides convenience for both jobseekers and employers. The employers can easily list positions online to reach a maximum of job applicants, and jobseekers enjoy the option of securing jobs beyond physical limitations. That is, one can not only find jobs in his/her vicinity, but also tackle opportunities far way, even in other countries. With the Internet, we can approach a few jobs at the same time so that we can compare and contrast."

Mr. N, a 30-year-old computer programmer in an IT company agreed that the Internet held importance for job search. He said he would definitely search for jobs on the Internet in the future. Mr. N found his current job via the website of an employment agency. When asked about the impact of the Internet toward people's job-seeking

behavior, Mr. N said: “I think the Internet has made job-hunting easier for both companies and potential employees. It’s a useful and helpful medium.”

Dr. H, a 47-year-old male software programmer in a multinational financial service company, found his Tampa job over the Internet while he was working in Arkansas. He told me that the Internet was the best choice for job search. He asserts the advantages: “I think information flows faster [with the Internet]. You have access to jobs nationwide, or even worldwide. In the old days, the geographical area limited us. I remember in 1992, it was much more difficult. For each job, you have to send your resume, and physically visit the city. With the Internet, things are much easier.”

The findings indicate that more and more jobseekers were realizing the advantage of surfing the Internet for jobs. The Internet indicates job vacancies, serves as an information platform, and thereby functions as a directory of job-leading individuals and organizations. The next section will cover the reason why the Internet itself created millions of job opportunities, especially for the IT industry.

#### *The mid-90s Internet boom*

The speedy growth of the Internet in the mid-1990s (Maliniak, 2004) expanded jobseekers’ capacity in virtual job hunting. After the mid 1990s, jobseekers started to rely more on the Internet as a strategy. In addition, such a boom in mid-1990s expanded the IT job market and therefore created numerous IT job positions.

Dr. H, a 46-year-old male said, “In 1993 the job market was not that great. It was

not the golden period. The job market for computer science became superb in 1996 and 1997.” Dr. A was a 56-year-old male from Taiwan who came to the U.S. in 1969 for his PhD in computer science. He worked as a software programmer in a financial service company. He observed the growth of computers and the Internet during his 30 years of career in the computer industry. He proclaimed “the Internet has greatly changed our lives in the past 10 years. In the old days, the computers were huge. Now they become smaller, faster, and cheaper.”

Before the mid-1990s, most participants found jobs through more traditional approaches, such as reading printed publications, contacting headhunters, utilizing personal networks, or applying directly to organizations. Dr. S narrated her story of finding the first IT job via *The Tampa Tribune*: “At that time [in the early 1990s], people did not find their jobs through the Internet. We found jobs from newspapers. I did try the Internet, but with no success. On newspapers, there were usually about three to four pages listing IT jobs. I think nowadays the Internet provides more information on job openings.”

Many respondents were confident about the utility of the Internet in the future. Dr. T, a 38-year-old female cancer researcher found her current job via the Internet. She stated that she would use the Internet as a predominant job search method: “You want to find a job that is a good fit for your interest and experience. On the Internet, there are numerous job postings. In our field, there is the journal of *Science*. On the *Science*

website, there are a few pages providing employment opportunities.”

The mid-90s Internet boom beefed up the job market in IT. The research data indicated that 21.51% of the survey respondents were working in IT industries. Besides, many respondents listed in other industries, such as financial service, and government, were also working as software programmer or network engineers.

Participants working in IT industry were aware of the benefit of this Internet boom. Mr. N, a 30-year-old software programmer worked for a small size telecommunication company. He said: “Many Chinese went into IT space because they knew they could easily be employed...But now, the Internet boom has cooled down. I don’t think IT is the number one choice anymore.”

As indicated by Mr. N’s statement, *job availability* motivated jobseekers in their decision about education and career choice. The research findings revealed that many Chinese found computer science positions easily in the 1990s. Such a straightforward job-hunting experience therefore encouraged hundreds of Chinese students in the U.S. to switch fields of study from physics, chemistry, mathematics, or political science to computer science.



Dr. H, a financial service software programmer, came to the U.S. as a visiting scholar through the CUSPEA program<sup>24</sup> in the early 1980s. He later transferred to be a full time doctoral student in physics. After completing his Ph.D., Dr. H obtained a master's degree in computer science. Dr. H explained why he switched from Physics to Computer Science for his education: "At that time, on the one hand, I was interested in computer science, on the other hand, it was difficult to find a job in physics and I dread at the idea of working as a post-doc in the lab... We had scores of graduate students in the Physics Department that were taking classes in computer science."

With a doctoral degree in physics, Dr. M was working as a computer programmer for a media research firm. When asked how she found this job, she replied: "At that time (in mid-90s), it was very easy. You just read the newspapers, or send your resume to headhunters, and they will arrange interviews for you...I didn't study computer science; instead my PhD was in physics. I just read some computer science books on my own, and that was sufficient for me to switch career."

Dr. S, a 46-year-old female with a doctoral degree in physics obtained in China was working as a software programmer in a multinational electronic company. Once in the

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<sup>24</sup> The CUSPEA Program: In early 1980s, Nobel laureate Dr. T. D. Lee of Columbia University started a program to introduce the best of physics graduates in China to universities in North America. This program was called China-U.S. Physics Examination and Application program (CUSPEA). Every year, about 100 students were selected through written and oral exams, and then accepted by participating universities for graduate study in physics. The CUSPEA program lasted for many years, and introduced many hundreds and perhaps more than a thousand Chinese physics graduates to North America. This program has had significant impact both in the U.S. and China. Today, participants of the CUSPEA program are professionals in their fields. Most of them have chosen to stay in Western countries (<http://members.tripod.com/~cuspean/>)

U.S., she obtained a master's degree in computer science from a university in Texas. She said that when she was looking for her first job in the early 1990s, she only mentioned her MS degree in computer science from Texas." She thought a master's degree in computer science was more practical than a Ph.D. in physics, chemistry or other natural sciences for career choice.

Ten years after the advent of mid-90s Internet boom, many of the participants were still benefiting from the jobs thus created. However, they were not sure how long they could remain on this bandwagon. Thirty-five-year-old Mr. Z came to Florida in 2000 with an MS in System Engineering from Singapore. In Florida, he obtained an MS in industrial engineering in 2002. Mr. Z had a hard time locating a job after graduation. It almost took him a year until he finally secured a full time IT position at a local government agency. Although neither of his master's degrees is in computer science, Mr. Z said they both are related to programming. Besides, he managed taking quite a few courses in computer science in preparation for job search after graduation. He described the difficulty in securing this particular job given that fact that he had to find a job in the Tampa Bay area because his wife was working on her doctorate here. Mr. Z's search for this IT position was not as easy as other job searchers who were hunting for IT positions in the mid-1990s. Mr. Z described the competitive situation of this one position as a computer programmer with the county government: "The competition was tough. I know there were 562 people applying for this position and I was the only one that was hired. I

tried my best and was confident for the interviews. I went to so many interviews, didn't really know which one will blossom. So I tried my best for each interview."

In summary, the mid-90s Internet boom created thousands of jobs in the IT industry. Many Chinese switched their career to computer science to be more competitive in the job market. In addition, the Internet boom popularized the idea of searching jobs via the Internet.

### *Information platform*

The Internet has become a borderless information platform. With new capabilities provided by the Internet, we can now engage in shopping, taking courses, managing finances, and doing original research online (Neustadt et al, 2002). Likewise, the Internet serves as an incredible information resource for job search. Information on the Internet is abundant and the connection between each webpage is instant. Every webpage is on average only 19 clicks away from any other page on the World Wide Web (Albert, Jeong, & Barabasi, 1999; Barabasi, 2002).

The Internet has emerged as a viable medium for job search. Mr. G, a 30-year-old male civil engineer said that he relied on the Internet for potential positions. He said that it was necessary for him to read job descriptions online from potential employers' websites before submission of job application packet. Although Dr. S, a 46-year-old female computer programmer found her job from the printed version of *The Tampa Tribune*, she agreed that in the future the Internet would be an efficient job search

channel to adopt: “[The Internet] is convenient because of its abundant information.”

Ms. R was a 44-year-old female university accountant. She used to live in Hong Kong with her husband and her two sons. In consideration of providing a better future for her sons, Ms. R decided to move to the U.S. Ms. R’s sister, who worked as an officer at this university informed her of her current position. Her sister discovered this job vacancy from the university’s employment webpage while Ms. R was in Hong Kong. When asked about her opinion of the Internet for future job search, Ms. R said: “I predict lots of people will find job information from the Internet. It is fast, convenient and direct. I am not sure how many people are still checking out openings from newspapers...I think I will find most of the information from the Internet.”

This section of the chapter proposes that the Internet serves as an information platform for job search. It provides first hand instant information for potential employers and their job postings. The next section will continue to elaborate on the function of the Internet as an information platform, but on aspects of the digitization of traditional job search channels.

#### *Digitization of traditional job search channels*

During their job search, my respondents and participants tried various search strategies. Aside from the Internet, many of them tried printed publication, personal network, conferences, headhunters, and job fair. In-depth interviews revealed that almost all traditional job search channels expanded with digital versions online. Jobseekers

could browse the online version of the classified of job vacancies or visit the web pages of potential employers. Jobseekers could obtain exhibitors' list and driving directions to job fairs. Moreover, jobseekers could find headhunters from the World Wide Web. They can contact personal networks via email, intranet, list serve and online community.

First, the digital version of professional journals proved to be a strategic job search channel. Many jobseekers effectively browsed classified ads through the online versions of regional, national, and international newspapers and professional journals. Dr. H found a software engineer position in Tampa from Arkansas by reading the online version of *The Tampa Tribune*. Here is Dr. H's story: "I checked the websites of *The Tampa Tribune* and other local newspapers for job postings. I sent resume to a few companies listed, and about three of them contacted me in a very speedy fashion. In the future, if I wanted to move to San Francisco, I would read the online version of San Francisco newspapers for jobs. I think this method has been most effective for me."

Mr. N, a 33-year-old male was working at a telecommunications company. He recalled that he probably checked both printed and online versions of *The Tampa Tribune* for job vacancies: "I found it from the newspaper. They advertised the position on the newspaper and on the Internet. I don't remember exactly which paper or which resource, but more than likely, they advertised on the newspaper and the Internet. Back in 1999, there were lots of positions open in IT." Dr. W, a 46-year-old mathematics professor stressed that it was effective to check the online version of professional

journals for jobs in the mathematics field.

Second, employment agencies are available online. Dr. K found several of her past jobs through employment agencies. When asked about her method of locating these headhunting companies, Dr. K said: “You can find them from newspaper, and from the ASA (American Statistical Association) website. The employment agency provided me with the position at Johnson & Johnson. They set up interviews and negotiated salaries for me.”

Third, there is a digital version of professional conferences where members can visit for job information. I myself benefited from the website and listserve of NCA (National Communication Association) to locate academic job postings in communication for the 2004-2005 academic year.

Fourth, aside from digital version of printed publication, headhunters, and job fair, there are digital forms of personal networks. The virtual forms of personal networks are networks of people connected by the Internet through listserves and online communities. Such digital personal networks are composed of *wired ties* linked by emails, the Internet, intranet, and online community technologies. When computer networks link people and machines, computers become part of the social network (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002). With the Internet is incorporated into the routine practices of everyday life, traditional social capital is augmented in the virtual world and becomes geographically dispersed (Quan-Haase et al., 2002). Email, the Internet, Intranet, Listserve, and various

forms of online communities wire people together and create virtual communities. The Internet consequently generates wired personal networks.

In conclusion, the Internet, as an information platform digitizes traditional job search channels, such as direct application, printed publication, employment agencies, job fairs, and personal networks. The digitization of traditional job application channels is a rising phenomenon in vocational behavior and needs to be researched further.

### *Virtual mobility*

Pervasive growth of the electronic gadgetry since the 1990s makes the Internet part of many people's daily routine. Consequently, the Internet has fashioned a virtual mobility for job search and work/life balance. This brand new and far-reaching wireless infrastructure enabled us to *go mobile* (Maliniak, 2004) and work in *virtual organizations* (Cascio, 1999; Deprez & Tissen, 2002).

The 24/7 availability of the Internet affirms a virtual mobility for job search and work/life balance. On the one hand, the Internet necessitates the possibility of searching for a job without physically visiting the potential employer. Jobseekers can easily live in one state, but search for jobs in another state, or another country. Geographic locations of jobseekers pose less of a limitation on their career choice. On the other hand, the Internet blurs the boundary between work and home and generates a new work/life balance. Eisenberg and Riley (2001) noted that with the availability of the Internet and other new media, there was a blurred line between work and home so that we needed to

redefine what it meant to be local. The remote might become local through the Internet, while the local might become remote because of lack of contact. Many people nowadays work at home and communicate with their colleagues remotely through electronic media.

The Internet makes remote job search possible. One can be in China and search for jobs in the U.S., or live in San Francisco, but search for jobs in Florida. The previous method of knocking at the door of a potential employer is becoming a distant memory. Dr. T, a 38-year-old female cancer researcher in Florida found her job while in Hong Kong. She said: “I heard that in the past, without the Internet, jobseekers would knock at professors’ doors one by one for jobs.”

Dr. H, a 47-year-old software programmer discovered his first job in Florida while living in Arkansas: “I contacted Ajilon that I found from the Internet. It is a hi-tech consulting company, who is actually an employment agency. At that time, we knew our family liked Tampa. We liked warm places. We were trying to decide whether to go to Phoenix, Arizona or Tampa, Florida. I searched for jobs on the Internet for both locations. I found positions at both places. In the end, we decided to come to Tampa.”

Dr. H’s story clearly demonstrates how the Internet blurs regional boundaries within the U.S. for job search. The Internet intensifies global job search mobility. For example, the cancer researcher Dr. T helped her friends in China or Hong Kong to search for jobs in Florida. She said: “Some of them (the candidates) just got their degrees and want to



come to the U.S. I would let them know who the project leaders of our institution are.

Then they can search the Internet and email to these professors directly from China or Hong Kong.”

Dr. T suggested that if American employers intended to hire Chinese scientists, they could place job ads on printed publications or online. If the Chinese candidates discover job postings of their interest, they would be able to apply from China. Again this shows a virtual mobility in job search across national borders.

Dr. P, a 46-year-old computer programmer, worked as a contractor at a media research company in Florida. He obtained his PhD in computer science from Canada. After graduation and a few years of work in Canada, he decided to pursue a career in the U.S., mainly for better benefit. Dr. P found a job with the Indiana government in the U.S. through the Internet while in Canada. When asked whether he used google as a job search engine, he laughed: “At that time there was no google.<sup>25</sup> I was using Yahoo. I did key word search at monster.com. Then I called the employers and was offered interviews. I found many jobs on the Internet.”

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<sup>25</sup> Google: A popular search engine useful also for job search. Google is a play on the word googol, a term coined by Milton Sirota. The term refers to the number represented by the numeral 1 followed by 100 zeros. Google's use of the term reflects the company's mission to organize the immense, seemingly infinite amount of information available on the web. On September 7, 1998, Google Inc. opened its door in Menlo Park, California. As 2000 ended, Google was already handling more than 100 million search queries a day — and continued to look for new ways to connect people with the information they needed, whenever and wherever they needed it (google.com).

Dr. P had been a contractor for a few consulting companies, assigned to work at a variety of American organizations since 1996. Dr. P said that he discovered all of these contractor positions online. His first assignment as a contractor was with the Indiana state government. He worked there for two years from 1996-1998 in statistician position focusing on tax collection.

These stories show that the Internet makes it possible for job applicants to physically live in one location, and search for jobs elsewhere. In the following text, I will argue that the Internet connects work and life in a novel manner. More and more employees nowadays are working at home, serving their organizations remotely en route of the Internet. The Internet and other communication technologies dissolve traditional boundaries in time and space.

Two of the twenty in-depth interview participants work from home for their employers. Dr. S worked for a large electronics company. Dr. S mentioned the advantages and disadvantages of working at home: “It is convenient and flexible, especially if you have kids. But you cannot meet people easily. So you feel kind of isolated. But then you get used to it, it becomes better because everybody else is still working in the office. I always talk to them on the phone. However if they suddenly switch me to a different group, that would be difficult, because I would not know the manager and the colleagues by person.”

Similarly, Dr. J had been working for a multinational computer technology company

at home since 2000. Dr. J said that as a computer programmer working remotely at home, he sometimes was requested to travel to the clients' sites. When Disney awards a project, his company would organize a team to go to Disney and complete the project. If Dr. J is selected to be a member of this team, he would travel to the Disneyland in Orlando, Florida and stay there for the weekdays. Dr. J discovered this job via the Internet. This job created a work/life balance that Dr. J liked very much.

In conclusion, the Internet makes two kinds of virtual mobility possible. First, there is more freedom in searching for jobs on the Internet regardless of geographic location. One can find a job in other cities, other states, or other countries by clicking the mouse in his/her home. Second, the Internet presents the convenience of working at home, remotely serving one's employment organization. The Internet provides innovative vocational opportunities for jobseekers. However, the Internet is not a bandwagon for everyone. There is a subtle gap in the job search intensity among respondents and participants marked by their age and gender.

#### *A digital gap among jobseekers*

As presented earlier in this chapter, there is a digital gap among jobseekers divided by age. Respondents' ages were negatively associated with their intensity of using the Internet as a job search strategy. The younger a jobseeker is, the more likely this person is going to use the Internet for employment opportunities.

The multiple regression result presented earlier in this chapter showed "gender" was

not a predictor variable for job search intensity. There was no difference between men and women in terms how much they might use the Internet to search for jobs. However, there is a certain group of males that use the Internet “very often” to search for jobs from a crosstab result. This group of males demonstrates what might be termed as the “male geek effect.” A crosstab was conducted between gender and Internet job search strategy (See Table 10). The lambda value was not significant. There was no obvious relationship between one’s gender and one’s intention of using the Internet as a job search strategy. However, the column percentage shows that among those respondents who “*very often*” utilize the Internet, men outnumbered women by a 15% margin. This suggests that there were more men than women among those who “*very often*” explored the Internet as a job search strategy. This phenomenon, tentatively named as “male geek effect,” was verified and explained by in-depth interview findings.

Table 10: Crosstab of Internet search likelihood and gender

Internet search frequency		Male	Female	Total
Never	Count	18	17	35
	% within gender	22	27	24
Rarely	Count	12	7	19
	% within gender	15	11	13
Sometimes	Count	16	17	33
	% within gender	20	27	23
Often	Count	16	17	33
	% within gender	20	27	23
<b>Very often</b>	Count	<b>20</b>	6	26
	% within gender	<b>24</b>	9	18
Total	Count	82	64	146
	% within gender	100	100	100

Most male participants, especially those at IT-related positions, recommended the Internet as a palatable solution for job search. Dr. H, a 47-year-old computer programmer in a financial service company found his first job in Tampa via the Internet from Arkansas. Dr. J, a 45-year-old computer programmer at an IT company agreed with Dr. H, saying the Internet would be his first choice in locating future jobs: “You can pick some companies, and then go to their websites. Of course, there is the method of going through friends. But because we are immigrants and our friends here are limited, it is kind of difficult.”

Mr. G, a 30-year-old male civil engineer, was the youngest among the interview participants. He appreciated the value of the Internet as a channel of job search, although he finally found his job via a friend: “The Internet is channel that should not be ignored. I mailed at least 30 or 40 resumes on the Internet. And I got ten responses. Some gave me interviews, including onsite and telephone interviews. If you have friends introducing jobs to you, you still need to post resumes online.”

In-depth interview data confirmed the male geek effect generated from “gender and Internet job search intensity crosstabulation.” Women seem to be declined to cruise the Internet for jobs. Dr. M, 45-year-old software programmer at a media research company told me that she had never used the Internet to locate a job. In contrast to her husband Dr. H, Dr. M thought there were not that many jobs on the Internet: “I don’t think that’s (the

Internet is) an effective way to find jobs. Most of the time, you send out your resume, but it goes to the great unknown. And I think if you want to find a local job, it is still better to use personal networks.”

In conclusion, there are digital gaps among jobseekers in terms of “age” and “Internet search intensity.” The younger a jobseeker was, the more likely he/she would search jobs on the Internet. Second, men had a higher tendency in using the Internet as a job search strategy than women, especially if they worked for the IT industries as software programmers and network engineers.

I have shown the many functions that the Internet extends for jobseekers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The mid-90s the Internet boom created millions of IT jobs. The Internet provides information for jobseekers worldwide with no geographical limitation. The Internet makes it possible to digitize traditional job search channels. The Internet generates job search mobility and work/life balance.

Despite all the benefits brought over by the Internet, there are digital gaps among jobseekers on the borders of age and gender. Younger jobseekers had a higher tendency in using the Internet for job search. A portion of the male jobseekers, especially those with computer science background were more liable in search jobs online.

Chapter Seven of this dissertation elaborated on the function of personal networks in job search. Since 52.5% of respondents found their jobs from relatives, friends, acquaintances, former employers and former co-workers, it is apparent that personal

network is still the most powerful job search channel, even in the Internet age. With the rising power of the Internet as a job search strategy, will the Internet replace, reduce, or augment the power of personal networks? The next section of this chapter will reveal findings in this respect.

### *The Strengths and weaknesses of the Internet*

My participants were inquired to weigh the importance of the Internet and personal networks for future job search. Most of them have a balanced view and perceive the Internet and personal network as two different strategies with separate strength and weakness.

#### *Strengths*

There are several apparent advantages seeking jobs on the Internet in comparison with personal networks. The Internet job search strategy tends to be fair and treat all applicants as equals since there is no personal connection involved. Dr. S found a job from the Internet with a large electronics company without knowing anybody in this company. The impersonal character of the Internet is considered as particularly important for foreign-born Chinese immigrants. Most of the participants shared their experiences of the Internet and personal network as job-seeking channels. They said that because they were foreign-born immigrants with limited connections with local Americans, Internet provided an alternative job search channel.

Dr. P, a contractor from Canada working at a media research company recognized

the importance of personal network as a resource, but emphasized the convenience of the Internet: “When I came to the U.S., we did not have important connections. If I had some good friends in New York, they might help me with job information if new positions open up at their companies. These friends could give me referrals. This way, the employer would consider me as trustworthy....But this kind of personal network resource is limited. The Internet is the easiest way to go. You don’t have to rely on anybody.”

The foreign-born immigrants have limited personal network connections in the new society in the earlier stage of their immigrant life. In this case, the Internet is an indispensable fair tool for job search. As the new immigrants settle in and develop their lives in the new society, they make more personal connections through school, work, and social life. Consequently, the Internet becomes a supplemental strategy for these jobseekers. Mr. G, a 30-year-old civil engineer successfully found his first job two years ago from a friend, although he tried the Internet intensely. He said the first job position would generate a professional personal network that would assist him to find a second job if needed. The Internet would not be as critical in the future as it was for his first job.

In addition to the fairness of the Internet, especially its fairness to network-poor foreign-born jobseekers, the Internet provides prompt response. Interview participants indicated that one’s application via the Internet was expected to receive immediate feedback. Dr. P had used the Internet for job search in late 1990s for several of his



positions. Dr. P reported that he always received interview invitations 2-3 days after resumes were posted on the Internet. However this advantage has since been questionable based on the credibility and efficiency of job posting websites.

Moreover, the Internet extends employment choices worldwide. It is impossible for jobseekers to have personal connections anywhere in the world, but it is possible for them to find a job anywhere in the world connected by the Internet. Jobseekers can now choose among tens or hundreds of vacancies available globally.

Fourth, an Internet job search is cost efficient. Comparing with physically visiting an employer, purchasing newspapers, subscribing to professional journals, calling friends, attending job fair, activating traditional job search strategies online is cost efficient. The Internet technology makes instant communication possible at a reasonable price.

#### *Weaknesses*

The Internet provides abundant job information in an instant and seemingly most updated manner. In addition, the Internet poses no limitation on geographical and organizational boundaries. However, the Internet also has some obvious disadvantages, especially when compared with personal approach.

The Internet provides challenges for job searchers. The openness of the Internet invites more competition for the same position. One might end up with Guang Zhong Bo Shou (meaning to broadcast immensely, but with limited harvest). Moreover, because the

Internet is such an impersonal interface, it assures no obligation in responding to one's resume posting. The immediate feedback possibility might just be an empty promise.

Many times, my respondents experienced what they named as Shi Cheng Da Hai (meaning a rock sinking to the bottom of an ocean) after they posted resumes online.

The response rate for the Internet job application is not guaranteed.

Mr. Z, a 35-year-old computer programmer who worked for a county government in Florida told me that his two major strategies of job search was through the Internet and newspapers. Mr. Z's wife was working on her Ph.D. in Tampa at the time of job search. Therefore, Mr. Z's employment opportunity was restricted by the geographic location of Tampa Bay. He confessed the response rate was very low, either by applying online or in person. The job search websites that Mr. Z used were montster.com, dice.com and careerbuilder.com. Mr. Z said that he sent hundreds of resumes on the Internet, but received limited response. Most of the job opportunities posted on the Internet appeared to be invalid.

Dr. P, a 46-year-old computer programmer in a media research company found all of his contracting jobs via the Internet in the 1990s. But recently, his friends had been complaining about the low response rate of Internet application: "Last year (2003), when the job market was not that great, some people sent out hundreds of resumes with diminutive return. They didn't even receive emails of confirmation. So I think it depends on the economic situation at the time of job application." Dr. P said that some of his

friends could not find a job through the Internet, even if they had tried over a period of one year. One of Dr. P's friends used to work for SUN systems as a skilled contractor. When his contract with SUN was completed, this contract was not renewed. Due to the unpromising job market in 2002 and 2003 for IT positions, he has a hard time in locating a new job. After one year's application, he finally found a position at Verizon Florida through the Internet while in New York.

Aside from the increased global competition, and recent low response rate for Internet job application, jobseekers convene the challenge of relationship development with the virtual employers. On the Internet, an individual applicant is facing a virtual organization, not a person or a group of people per se. Since there is no personal relationship involved, there is no foundation for trust and continuing relationship. This is certainly a drawback as compared with the strength of personal networks. A personal network will point to an employer's door because of its impact in initiating a trusting relationship from the very beginning. The trust will provide jobseekers with a competitive edge over other applicants with no internal referrals. Some of the participants said that the trust ensures a strategy called "Zhong Dian Gong Ji" (meaning targeting specific positions with focus). This kind of focus ensures less competition and higher success rate.

In addition, the Internet seems to be career-specific and does not benefit jobseekers of all professions. There are plentiful job postings for positions especially in information

industry, academia, marketing and consulting occupancies. However, for other careers, such as quantitative analytical positions, personal network is perceived to be a stronger channel. Dr. K was a female statistician working for a major financial service company. She seemed to downplay the importance of the Internet for job search in her field: “I am not sure. I think personal network is still very important. My career is very specific for a statistician job.”

Dr. D was a 47-year-old pharmaceutical researcher. He told me that he did use the Internet for information about the potential employer. “But the success rate is very low. For the job interviews that I went, they were all provided to me by headhunters”, he said. During my interviews, I found that professionals in pharmaceutical, medical and healthcare areas mostly have a highly tendency of using headhunters as a major job search strategy.

Finally, contrary to popular belief, Internet job search can be high in cost and low in reputation. I was trying to look for a part time consulting job, so I went to this website called “recruiter.com”, they asked me to fill out the forms, and then they asked me to pay \$19.95 with my credit card as the processing cost. I paid and got no response of either payment confirmation and job information. However, this amount was shown deducted from my account from the credit card report. Ms. N told me that he would never pay for this kind of job search engines. He said the most reputable job search engines offer free service. Inexperienced Internet surfers might pay unnecessary fees online with

unsatisfactory results.

## Conclusion

The value of the Internet as a job search strategy is substantiated. About 12% of respondents found their jobs via the Internet and most of the participants confirm the vitality of this strategy. The Internet as a job search channel is a rising phenomenon at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The mid-90s Internet boom created millions of IT jobs and made Internet job search possible. There is a digital gap in jobseekers' intensity of using the Internet marked by age and gender. Younger people have a higher tendency in surfing the Internet for jobs. In general, men and women do not differ much in their usage of the Internet. However, some men, especially those who work in IT related positions tend to rely more on the Internet than women for career opportunities.

The strength of the Internet as a job search engine includes its function as a borderless information platform, a global opportunity provider, a digitized solution for traditional job searching channels, and a vehicle for job search mobility and work/life balance. Therefore, to search jobs through the Internet generates greater freedom in occupational location, and ensures more efficient management of jobseekers' time, money and effort.

The weaknesses of the Internet as a job search engine are real. The Internet, as a

network of computers, is *impersonal*. It is difficult to ensure response after Internet resume posting. Second, it is almost impossible to establish relationship between the candidate and the potential employer over the Internet. Third, compared to personal approaches, the Internet does not grant trust to the candidate in front of the potential employer. Fourth, the openness of the Internet invites more competition worldwide.

The impact of the Internet on people's job-seeking strategy cannot be overestimated, especially among the younger generation in the years to come.

## CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

### Conclusions

Globalization has intensified the need for intercultural research on organizational communication issues (Stohl, 2001). The present research addresses this need. I investigated the communication strategies and obstacles of foreign-born Chinese jobseekers (hereafter referred to as jobseekers) in the United States. Previous chapters presented the impact of culture, gender, age, and the Internet on Chinese immigrants' job-seeking strategies and obstacles. This chapter presents the conclusions, limitations and implications of the research findings. In addition, this chapter offers practical suggestions for jobseekers, potential employers and employment agencies for jobseeking and job posting.

This research identified a number of substantive hypotheses and research questions, drawing on literature on job mobility, intercultural communication, network communication, immigration study, and especially Granovetter's (1974) classic study of the strength of weak ties. The research was conducted with a multi-method approach that incorporated systematic observation, questionnaire surveys, and in-depth interviews.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using purposive and quota sampling, respectively. The data were collected from a representative sample located in the Greater Tampa Bay area of Florida. The following findings resulted from the analysis of the collected data.

#### *Job search communication strategies*

Jobseekers adopted three main approaches in their jobs search: Traditional, Institutional, and Personal. The traditional approach was characterized by creating resumes, researching potential employers, direct application, and reading print publications. The institutional approach involved browsing the Internet, attending job fairs, contacting employment agencies. The personal approach included contacting people in one's personal networks, e.g., relatives, friends/acquaintances, previous employer/co-workers, and job-leading third parties. The traditional approach was the most impersonal of the three while the personal approach is the most personal. Hence, one might think of the three approaches as different points lying on the impersonal-to-personal continuum.

#### *The strength of weak ties*

Personal networks proved to be a strong means for identifying career opportunities. Personal networks enabled one to obtain new information, to capitalize on trusting relationships, and to expand one's reach within the job market. Personal networks served as channels towards employment opportunities that exist in both publicized and hidden



job markets.

The data suggested that 52.5% of respondents found their jobs via personal networks. Moreover, 69% of this group of respondents found their jobs through weak ties. Their weak ties were characterized by infrequent contacts (less than once every two weeks) at the time of job search. The notion of “the strength of weak ties” was as applicable in the age of the Internet as it was in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Personal networks, especially weak ties, were the most effective means of securing employment opportunities for foreign-born Chinese jobseekers.

Guanxi is the Chinese version of personal networking. Like personal networking, guanxi provides jobseekers with insider information on job positions and job requirements. The mechanism through which job information travels within guanxi is similar to that within personal networking. However, guanxi differs from its Western counterparts, at least in two ways. First, Chinese guanxi entails a less equitable allocation of employment opportunities among jobseekers. Guanxi is relatively less of a fair game in that it leads people to the “back door.” More specifically, in the Chinese context guanxi might unfairly privilege some job applicants despite their less impressive qualifications. Second, guanxi demands a stronger emotional attachment. People involved in guanxi regard it as an emotional investment that entails reciprocal outcomes in near or distant future. In a collectivist society like China, people attempt to cultivate relationships that are enriched by emotional attachment. Many people intentionally

spend time with friends and family members for emotional bonding.

#### *Job search communication obstacles*

Ethnic barriers, structural barriers and intercultural communication gap were the three types of job search obstacles identified in this study. Ethnic barriers included obstacles created through racial discrimination and cultural obstacle. Ethnic barriers pertained to the innate qualities of Chinese jobseekers because both groups of obstacles were due to their biological traits. Structural barriers and intercultural gap generally stemmed from misunderstandings (miscommunication) due to (1) speaking English as a foreign (at best second) language, (2) improper legal status, (3) inadequately developed personal networks, (4) low qualifications, and (5) difference in communication style. Most jobseekers did not consider themselves as having low qualifications because they possessed graduate degrees.

The findings suggest that increased English proficiency substantially reduce almost all job-seeking obstacles. Higher English skills in reading, writing, and speaking build a strong bridge to job search success. Given similar credentials, a foreign-born jobseeker who is fluent in spoken English and professional in reading and writing gains critical advantage over his/her competitors for job search success.

Gender is associated with the degree of job search obstacles. Compared with Chinese men, Chinese women faced lower levels of cultural obstacle, linguistic obstacle, and other inconveniences specific to immigrants. Jobseekers' country of origin

especially influences the strength of their personal network. The more Westernized a person's country of origin, the more easily he or she can find a job in the U.S. Jobseekers from Southeast Asia, Macao, Hong Kong, and Taiwan face less severe structural barriers than those from Mainland China.

The in-depth interviews indicated that an invisible communication gap existed between the American employers and Chinese jobseekers with four dimensions: directness vs. subtleness, aggressiveness vs. modesty, courtesy vs. command, and American vs. Chinese experiences. This gap is shaped mainly by cultural differences, thinking patterns, linguistic habits, experiences, and differences in worldviews (philosophies of life). Despite the obstacles that immigrants encounter, the U.S. remains the world's number one destination for immigrants. Sixty percent of foreign-born respondents became U.S. citizen in less than fifteen years of stay in the U.S.

### *The Internet*

Findings further underscore the importance of the Internet as a job search channel. About 12% of jobseekers found their jobs via the Internet. Most of the respondents, especially IT professionals stressed the vitality of this channel. The impact of the Internet on younger jobseekers' strategies cannot be overestimated. The Internet serves as an information platform, a global opportunity provider, a digitized substitute or complement for traditional job search channels, and a vehicle for job search mobility.

Younger jobseekers, especially who are under 40, have a higher tendency to surf the

Internet for jobs. Men and women do not differ much in their usage of the Internet.

However, some men, especially those working in IT industries tend to rely more on the Internet than women.

The weakness of the Internet as a job search engine is also apparent. The Internet, as a network of computers, is impersonal. The spatial and temporal distances created by the Internet reduce the response rate. Candidates who apply for jobs online might never catch confirmation emails about the receipt of their resumes, let alone share job information. It is nearly impossible for jobseekers to establish an emotional bond with potential employers over the Internet. Compared to personal approaches, communication through the Internet hardly generates and enhances mutual trust. Finally, the accessibility of the Internet invites more competition from job applicants worldwide

### Limitations

The present research revolves around job-seeking issues that reside at the intersection of Chinese and American cultures. Research conducted in such intercultural contexts demands *mindful* selection (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003) of theories and methods. Several scholars have identified cultural biases embedded in social-scientific and interpretive theories in organizational studies (Asante, 1987; Boyacigille & Adler, 1991; Hofstede, 1984; Sanborn, 1993; quoted in Stohl, 2001). Steers and his colleagues (quoted in Stohl, 2001) believe that organizational studies, especially those in

intercultural settings, are subject to three types of limitation: theoretical, methodological, and pragmatic parochialism. Since pragmatic parochialism is concerned with the geographic fragmentation of theories derived in the U.S., it is unlikely to have bearing for this research. Therefore, I will only present limitations arising from theoretical parochialism and methodological parochialism.

#### *Culture bound theories and justifications*

Theoretical parochialism refers to the fact that we rarely have been concerned with the cross-cultural applicability of the “culture-bound” theories we employ (Stohl, 2001). Most organizational theories are “made-in-the-US” and are “influenced by the political, economic, and cultural specificities of the United States” (Boyacigiller & Adler, 1995, p. 19). The question is whether theoretical premises presented in this dissertation serve as a reliable foundation for conducting any intercultural research. More specifically, theories such as “six degrees of separation” and “the strength of the weak ties” were both generated in the U.S. culture by White male scholars. Although the present research was conducted in the U.S. society, the survey respondents and interview participants were all from an ethnic population: Chinese. The three arguments of globalization summarized in Chapter One – Americanism, Cultural protectionism, and Cosmopolitanism – were basically U.S. centered. Theoretical premises generalized from White American contexts might not be transferable to foreign-born Chinese population.

Issues of theoretical parochialism are complex, and there is ample need for more

sophisticated ethnographies, case studies, and comparative studies consistent with the multivocal, equivocal, and embedded activities of organizing (Stohl, 2001). Following Stohl's (2001) recommendation, I adopted a multi-method approach for the research and collected both quantitative and qualitative data. On the one hand, deductive reasoning guided the development of the survey instrument, the distribution of the surveys, and the statistical analysis of data in an etic fashion. On the other hand, inductive reasoning directed the systematic observations and in-depth interviews. I took an emic view in conducting in-depth interviews that involved recording and summarizing job search narratives. The systematic observation satisfied the embedded activities criterion suggested by Stohl (2001) for overcoming theoretical biases. The emic perspective in the research design was critical in providing an equivocal representation of the Chinese minority. Therefore, theoretical parochialism is not a serious concern in the present study.

#### *Methodological parochialism and justifications*

Methodological parochialism refers to issues of transferability of research protocols, entailing considerations such as construct validity, interpretive reliability, statistical appropriateness, cultural diversity, and multilingual research context.

The bilingual nature of this study was the major methodological issue. One concern has been how accurately the questionnaire was translated into Chinese? Translation was deemed necessary because Chinese prefer to respond to documents in their own

language (Cable TV Ad Bureau, 2004). The questionnaire, developed based on Granovetter's (1974) scale items, was written in English. I myself translated the revised questionnaire into Chinese. After the translation was completed, I did not attempt to verify its accuracy by translating it back into English. Instead, I employed a multilingual research team approach (Stohl, 2001), which substantially enhanced the quality of the translation. The team consisted of bilingual leaders within the Chinese community of the Greater Tampa Bay area. These leaders were fluent in both Chinese and English languages and were familiar with both Chinese and American cultures. I had several meetings with the multilingual research team concerning the improvement of both the English and Chinese versions of the survey instrument until they confirmed that the meaning of the Chinese version best reflect the meaning of the English version. However, we were aware the cultural sensitivity in the Chinese cultures and kept words and phrases that were respectful to the Chinese culture in the Chinese version.

A second concern in methods pertained to one of the sampling methods utilized for the survey. The survey data was drawn from a purposive rather than a random sample. In Chapter Four I argued that I obtained a representative sample. However, while purposive sampling facilitates maintaining respondents, the findings are less generalizable across populations. I recommend that the reader consider the arguments of this study in light of the respective population: foreign-born Chinese who live in the U.S. Furthermore, the reader is encouraged to refer to Chapter Four for the demographic composition of the

sample: gender, country of origin, educational level, and percentage of the self-employed.

### Implications

This study has implications for jobseekers, employers, and employment agencies and future researchers in job mobility and communication. The implications from both qualitative and the quantitative analyses are divided into three sections as follows.

#### *Suggestions for job seekers*

Chapter Five offered a typology of job-seeking communication approaches: traditional, institutional, and personal; and elaborated on the effectiveness of each approach. Chapter Six presented job-seeking communication obstacles with which foreign-born Chinese confront, including racial discrimination, cultural obstacle, linguistic obstacle, legal background, inadequate network size, low qualifications, and intercultural communication gap. The three effective predictor variables indicated by multiple regressions for the first six obstacles are *English proficiency*, *gender*, and *degree of Westernization of respondents' country of origin*. Relying on these findings, foreign-born Chinese job seekers in the U.S. are strongly encouraged to strive for English proficiency, cultural multiphrenia, and strategic dynamism. Written and verbal communication skills in English are critical for the success of job seeking. This is consistent with Peterson's (1997) finding that personnel interviewers' perceive the



adequacy of applicants' communication skill as highly important.

### *English proficiency*

Various job-seeking obstacles exist on the job search journey of foreign-born immigrants. Elevated English proficiency is the key to reduce all job search obstacles. A foreign-born jobseeker needs to improve his/her English listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. These skills can be thought of as a prerequisite for successful job search communication. The survey data presented in Chapter Six indicated that respondents' English proficiency was negatively associated with both ethnic and structural job-seeking barriers. Increased English proficiency significantly reduced all job-seeking obstacles, including racial discrimination, cultural obstacle, linguistic barrier, legal background, insufficient network, and low qualifications. Inadequate lingual skills often led to disappointing experiences throughout one's job search.

Jobseekers should first evaluate their English language skills, including English listening, reading, writing, and speaking abilities. Foreign-born jobseekers might fall into the dilemma that they will never be able to speak as fluently as the natives. Many of them migrated to the U.S. only after they were in their mid 20s; yet they can strive to elevate their English communication skills to a more professional level. After all, native speakers of English also had to learn how to read, write, and speak properly through education. Diligence and systematic exercise construct the bridge toward a higher English proficiency.

### *Cultural multiphrenia*

The findings from in-depth interviews indicated that there was an intercultural communication gap marked by four dimensions between American employers and foreign-born Chinese jobseekers. This gap was mainly due to differences in cultural values, assumptions, norms, mindset and life experience. This gap was also marked by difference in thinking patterns, linguistic habits, experiences, and the influence of distinct life philosophies. Chapter Six reported four dimensions of such gaps between the U.S and Chinese culture: directness vs. subtleness, aggressiveness vs. modesty, courtesy vs. command, and different intercultural experiences. To more successfully position themselves into the host society, immigrants need to learn the new cultural norms in the host society. In particular, Chinese job seekers need to become more direct in their information exchange habits, more aggressive when introducing themselves, and more rhetorically courteous when communicating with employers. It is wise for foreign-born jobseekers to consider refreshing their knowledge of American cultural realities by watching movies and TV programs, reading novels, enjoying sports events, and especially hanging out with American friends and colleagues in a variety of social occasions.

To acculturate oneself to a new set of cultural norms does not necessarily require one to give up one's native cultural norms. I propose that a job seeker cultivate and maintain a state of multiple cultural identities – *cultural multiphrenia*, a term developed

from Gergen's (2003) *multiphrenia* concept. "Multiphrenia" entails the simultaneous performance of a multiplicity of identities. Possibilities for multiphrenia are strengthened by advancement in communication technologies. A multiphrenic person swims in ever-shifting and continuous currents of beings. The quality of multiphrenia opens up space for postmodern being (Gergen, 2003, chapter 3).

When applying the concept of multiphrenia in the context of cultures, we obtain the notion of "cultural multiphrenia." Competence in cultural multiphrenia enables an individual to move between different cultures while enjoying the benefits of membership in each.

Cultural multiphrenia refers to an individual's ability to adopt multiple cultural identities by adopting "multiple cultural perspectives", similar to the "software of the mind" concept described by Hofstede (1991). Cultural multiphrenia is an outcome of recognizing diversity and globalization, as well as the possibility of cultural accommodation. A sojourner or an immigrant who achieve cultural multiphrenia exemplifies double or multiple consciousness (Gilroy, 1993) of his/her cultural position.

Findings presented in Chapter Six indicated that competence in communication style significantly reduced job search obstacles for foreign-born Chinese immigrants. Competence in communication style derives from the development of cultural multiphrenia. There are four stages to achieve cultural multiphrenia in the intercultural adaptation process: *enculturation*, *acculturation*, *exculturation*, and *accommodation*. The

goal of cultivating cultural multiphrenia for an individual is to become a cosmopolitan – a global citizen.

In application, one early task toward self-cultivation for an ethnic job seeker is to become more cosmopolitan in cognition and behavior. In other words, an immigrant who develops cultural multiphrenia is mindful of local meanings. He/she thinks and behaves as the locals in both home and host cultures. A jobseeker should be able to observe various cultural norms and rules, examine multiple worldviews, and ultimately achieve a state of cultural multiphrenia between his/her own culture and host culture(s). Therefore, cultural multiphrenia has the potential to assist immigrants and sojourners in achieving full membership in home and host cultures. They will be able to appear, speak, think, and feel as the locals do. With no exception, cultural multiphrenia will assist sojourners and immigrants to secure occupational opportunities.

It is possible to develop and maintain multiple cultural identities. It is long observed that people switch codes (language, dialect, or accent) when talking to different groups. They switch codes to show degree of warmth and to illustrate group identification (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). If one can purposefully switch from one kind of language, dialect, or accent to another, he/she may also be able to switch from one cultural identity to another. Hence cultural multiphrenia is not only a utopian dream.

Cultural identity is not one's in-born biological trait. We learn cultural norms and values through education and experience, much as we learn language. Therefore just as

one can be multilingual, one can also be multicultural. Identifying with a certain ethnic group does not eliminate the possibility for an immigrant to identify with the mainstream American culture (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986). Meanwhile, the adoption of American cultural views does not require the abandonment of one's home country culture. One can be born to a certain ethnicity, and yet absorb cultural views of another. For example, one can be ethnically Filipino, and yet accepts American cultural values. Such an individual is expected to enjoy fuller membership in the mainstream American culture. At the meantime, this Filipino can keep his/her own traditional norms, assumptions and values nearly intact. The traditional cultural identities will be activated in traditional Filipino situations for his/her full membership in the Filipino culture.

Accordingly, foreign-born job seekers from China can act and communicate in American ways when searching for jobs in the U. S. It is to the job seekers' benefit to adjust their appearance, behavior and communication style in accordance with American norms. I suggest a foreign-born Chinese jobseeker perform more aggressive, assertive, and direct communication with a higher proficiency in American English. Such a foreign-born Chinese jobseeker would therefore acquire American professional attire during job interviews. Yet, well-aculturated Chinese jobseekers can still act just like the local Chinese when they travel back to China. When in China, Americanized Chinese can activate the cultural view that suits the peculiarities of Chinese culture.

Drawing on the intercultural adaptation model proposed by Gudykunst and Kim

(2003), I contend that the process of achieving cultural multiphrenia consists of four stages. First, we learn and acquire cultural norms of our native society through *enculturation*. This stage represents an unconscious development of identity. Socialization with significant others in our childhood involves conditioning and programming in the local practices of communication, including decoding (perceptual and cognitive) patterns and encoding (verbal and nonverbal) meanings in the native cultures.

Second, when we move into a foreign society and interact with the new host culture, the process of resocialization, or *acculturation*, occurs. Gradually, we begin to detect similarities and differences within the new surroundings. We then become acquainted with and adopt some of the norms and values of salient reference groups in that particular society.

Third, along with acculturation, however, the immigrants put aside some of their cultural patterns/habits of the native cultures. Putting older cultural norms/habits aside is an extremely difficult task and can take a few years. These old cultural patterns will be not be deleted in the immigrants' minds. These patterns will be re-activated once the immigrants are back to the native cultural contexts. As Brim (cited in Brim & Wheeler, 1966) suggests, more common adaptive changes in strangers take place in more superficial areas, such as the overt role behaviors expected or required at workplaces. Perhaps a new concept *exculturation* can serve as a tentative label for the third stage.

Fourth, as the dynamic interplay between acculturation and exculturation continues, immigrants undergo a cultural multiphrenia formation process by selecting what to activate and what to discard in certain cultural context. The development of cultural multiphrenia is dependent upon a change of the mindset. A person with the quality of cultural multiphrenia will obtain the cosmopolitan perspective. He/she will obtain communication competency in multiple cultures. Such levels of competency ensure benefits of full membership for him/her in multiple cultures. Accordingly, an individual with cultural multiphrenia becomes a true global citizen.

By achieving a state of cultural multiphrenia, it is possible for an immigrant to identify and extend a cultural common ground for communication with American employers. After all, communication is to make something in common (Bohm, 1996). The term “communication” is based on the Latin word “commun” and the suffix “ie”, which is similar to “fie,” meaning “to make or to do.” One meaning of “to communicate” is to make something in common (Bohm, 1996). Therefore, a cosmopolitanist who has achieved cultural multiphrenia is able to communicate with employers from any type of culture, native or foreign. Cultural familiarity and relational closeness with an employer support a common ground for communication between cosmopolitan jobseekers and employers of different cultural heritages. Jobseekers with versatile cultural views will be able to communicate with employers more efficiently, and therefore have a higher success rate in securing job opportunities.

### *Strategic dynamism*

In addition to improving written and oral English skills and reaching a state of cultural multiphrenia, jobseekers will benefit from utilizing diverse job-seeking strategies. Instead of solely adopting a traditional, an institutional, or a personal approach, job seekers are encouraged to employ a pluralistic perspective and to combine as many approaches and strategies as possible.

Findings presented in Chapter Five suggest that, if a job seeker relies on the traditional approach only (direct application, printed publications, etc.); the intensity of securing a job will be substantially low. If a jobseeker search jobs only through the institutional approach (the Internet, employment agency, and job fair), his or her chances of winning a job, although higher, are still limited. Finally, if a jobseeker adopts the personal network approach, he or she enjoys a relatively higher success rate in securing jobs through members of his/her personal networks. I suggest that jobseekers strive for strategic dynamism by utilizing a variety of approaches.

A multi-faceted job-search approach will very possibly increase jobseekers' success rate in occupational attainment. The Chinese jobseekers, in particular, need to take advantage of the services of employment agencies. Many job seekers are not aware that most employment agencies provide free services. Jobseekers should also seek employment opportunities online. It is my belief that a mindfully designed hybrid approach can actually bring about synergistic effects for the respective job seekers. Job



seekers also need to be up-to-date with the trends in the virtual job market. Most employers, employment agencies, printed publications have made their information accessible through the Internet. While pursuing job search in traditional channels is a fine starting point, one needs to adapt to the digital world. Such efforts will expand the geographical span of one's career opportunities while reducing the application costs of physical travels and other expenses.

### *Beyond homophily*

Beyond Jobseekers need to diversify their friendship and professional network linkages for greater social capital. They need to initiate contact and maintain relationship with ties in different race, ethnicity, gender, profession, age and cultural categories. Those weak ties that are rich in job information should be targets for network expansion in terms of jobseeking. Chapter Seven revealed that it was those weak ties that work at jobseekers' targeted organizations could offer constructive job information. Jobseekers' previous employers, previous co-workers, and college friends compose the valuable pool of weak tie reserve.

Descriptive data show that job-leading ties are discovered as evenly distributed among racial, ethnic and gender lines. People who provided job information to the jobseekers are not limited to the jobseekers' own race, ethnicity and gender. In fact, the rate of such diversity is around 50/50. Ethnic jobseekers have a tendency to associate more with those in the same ethnic and cultural background (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

However, the findings seem to suggest that jobseekers should go beyond personal networks with people of their own race, ethnicity, and gender. This means that jobseekers should expand their personal network connections to people who are less alike to them in demographic features.

Monge and Contractor (2001, 2003) state that *homophily*, that is, the selection of others who are similar to the communicators is one major predictor of the member diversity in one's personal networks. People tend to hang out with others who are similar in race, ethnicity, culture, social status, occupation, gender and age. "Similarity (in communicator demographics) is thought to ease communication, increase predictability of behavior, and foster trust and reciprocity" (Brass, 1995, p. 51).

Findings presented in Chapter Seven illustrated that the cultural background of job informants was evenly diversified. Possible job leads were given to jobseekers by both Chinese and non-Chinese informants. Fifty-six percent of the job informants were Asian, while 53% of them were Chinese, and 51% of them spoke Chinese. These percentages implied that about half of the jobseekers did not find jobs from job informants with the same cultural background.

Burt (1992a) argues that the diversity of individuals' networks, rather than the size, is a better predictor of their social capital. People who link others by filling the structural holes also enhance their own structural autonomy because they can control information flow between and among different network systems. Papa (1990) found that

organizational members with diverse networks across departments and hierarchical levels were significantly more likely to both increase productivity and hasten the speed with which this change occurred. To intentionally diversify one's personal network will be conducive to enhance job search success.

#### *Suggestions for potential employers and employment agencies*

The findings point to certain marketing strategies that employers and employment agencies might consider when they advertise job vacancies. Employers and employment agencies should display cultural sensitivity in their recruitment of human resources, especially when desiring multiethnic candidates. For example, a seemingly less assertive and less fluent candidate might not be truly incompetent for the positions advertised. Cultural sensitivity will facilitate American employers in recruiting more competent and efficient candidates worldwide. Furthermore, the employers should improve the accessibility of their job postings by trying both physical and virtual environments. That is, the employers and employment agencies need to make their job vacancies available on both physical and virtual means, including printed publications (e.g., newsletters, newspapers, and flyers), the Internet, and personal networks.

#### *Cultural sensitivity*

Today, creating a multiethnic workforce is not only commonplace but also recommended. Just as jobseekers need to achieve a state of cultural multiphrenia, employers need to develop cultural sensitivity. Chapter Six indicated that Chinese, like

other Asians, tend to be modest rather than aggressive in introducing and even marketing themselves during job interviews. If interviewing organizations are not aware of this fact, they might interpret Chinese modesty as their lacking of competency and qualifications. To achieve cultural sensitivity prevents employers from filtering potentially favorable interviewees who might seem under-qualified when judged through ethnocentric lenses.

### *Dynamic visibility*

To be accessible to an increased number of potential applicants in both physical and virtual environments, employers should consider advertising their job openings in multiple channels. Enabling jobseekers to access employment opportunities in various outlets can lead to a superior pool of applicants. Other than the traditional print outlets, employers should also collaborate with employment agencies, make presence on the Internet, and activate their personal networks.

Personal networks will spread news within the target population speedily and efficiently. Suppose the human resource department of a multi-national corporation is seeking a candidate with Chinese origin and excellent English skills for its subsidiary in Shanghai, China. Based on the six degrees of separation elaborated in chapters Two and Seven, this employer can simply contact its closest Chinese contact either in the local American communities or in China. Through such contact, the employer activates his/her social network with the Chinese communities and therefore might be able to

interview several candidates introduced by “trusted friends” within a short time frame.

Chapter Nine indicated that about 12% of job seekers found jobs via the Internet.

The Internet is a decisive channel under the umbrella of the institutional approach. The Internet has the power to publicize job openings for global candidates by removing geographical and cultural borders. Employers can now recruit a multiethnic workforce in the global labor market. Cultural sensitivity in candidates screening and dual presence in the physical and virtual worlds can help employers locate and attract the best candidate possible within a wider geographical domain.

#### *Suggestions for future research*

Intercultural job mobility is a critical issue in globalization. As concluding remarks, I propose the following dimensions for future research in this area.

Chapter Five indicated that jobseekers took three different approaches: traditional, institutional, and personal. These three approaches can be dotted on a continuum measured by the degree of interpersonal connection between jobseekers and future employers. A viable question is whether, in terms of effectiveness, the superiority of institutional approach over traditional approach, and the superiority of personal approach to the other approaches, truly stem from the higher interpersonal attachment in job search strategies. The present study does not offer explicit answers to this question. An important contribution in future research therefore is to directly test whether such a contention is in fact true.

The findings of Chapter Six suggest that female Chinese jobseekers encounter lower obstacles, including cultural obstacle, linguistic obstacle, and immigration background restriction. In other words, American employers somehow better receive Chinese women than Chinese men when offering jobs. It would be interesting to discover the reasons associated with such a discrepancy influenced by gender. Are female Chinese immigrants more adaptive to foreign cultures? Moreover, are Chinese women more adaptive to American culture? Are Chinese women more willing to accept low-paying jobs? Are they generally more capable of acquiring and putting in use communication skills in English? Do the white-male-dominated communities consider Chinese women less of a threat? Do these female minority applicants simply benefit from their exotic appearance? Do American employers general prefer foreign females to foreign males? These and other similar questions point to a second important avenue for future research in gender communication, intercultural communication, and job mobility.

General public in the U.S. tend to see the Chinese, or even all Far East Asians, as one homogeneous group. However, Chapter Six showed a difference in obstacles encountered among the various groups among the Chinese in the U.S., including those from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and Southeast Asia. The research findings show that the degree of Westernization of job seekers' country of origin significantly reduces structural job-seeking barriers, especially for those job seekers who favor and activate their personal networks. Accordingly, a native of Mainland China

might face greater structural barriers than a native of Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macao.

In-depth interviews revealed that immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao have stronger entrepreneurial capacities than immigrants from Mainland China. Future research can focus on the particular cultural intricacies that differentiate among various Chinese nationalities, more specifically among the Chinese from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. An important nuance to consider is whether this trend is changing to the favor of the Chinese from Mainland China. If so, how will different Chinese nationalities compare to one another in terms of the degree of structural barriers (immigration background, linguistic obstacle, cultural obstacle and low qualifications) they come across?

Since the impact of globalization on our world is profound, it is necessary to replicate the present study in the same and/or different contexts using the same and/or different methods, with the focus remaining on Chinese immigrants. Furthermore, a longitudinal study of the communication strategies and barriers pertaining of foreign-born Chinese job seekers can cross-validate the findings offered by cross-sectional studies and point to important directions for further research.

As a fifth topic for future research, this study can be revised and replicated on other Asian groups, such as the Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese. In the presence of such studies, findings on job seeking strategies and obstacles can be compared and contrasted for more general inferences. Alternatively, replications can take place in a non-U.S.

context, where immigration rates are (moderately) high. An interesting study might focus on the job seeking communication strategies and obstacles of Americans who have immigrated to, or have long lived in, Mainland China. The booming economy of China has been attracting jobseekers from outside of China. This trend has forced the Chinese government to devise and grant Chinese Green Cards to the non-Chinese born people who intend to reside in China indefinitely. Regulations on Examination and Approval of Permanent Residence of Aliens in China have been approved by the State Council and are effective from August 15, 2004. The Alien Permanent Residence Permits are valid for five or ten years (Xinhua News Agency, 2004)

My final suggestion for future researchers revolves around the notions of *guanxi* and networking. Chapter Eight reported the influence of culture on the size and effectiveness of job seekers' personal networks. Different parts of the world have traditions that resemble and function instead of *guanxi*. An extension of this study can attempt to investigate such traditions and compare them to the American notion of networking and Chinese concept of *guanxi*. Collectivist cultures other than that of China, such as those of Japan, Korea, Mexico, Iran, and Turkey are excellent starting points (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996).

This chapter presents conclusions, limitations and directions for future research pertaining to the findings discussed in previous chapters. It also contains several practical suggestions to future (ethnic Chinese) job seekers, American employers, and



employment agencies. While the most important hint for job seekers is to adopt a pluralist approach, an approach rich in interpersonal connection is recommended. The employing authorities are encouraged to enhance their cultural sensitivity. It is strategic for employers to bridge the physical and virtual world by advertising positions in multiple channels, such as printed publications, the Internet, employment agencies, and personal networks. For particular positions where they intend to increase minority quota, the employers need to send job information in the personal networks of ethnic circles. I anticipate the research findings will benefit those who seek or offer employment opportunities. I trust the expanded theoretical framework will draw more scholarly attention to studies in global job mobility and intercultural communication.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire survey cover letter



January 22, 2004

Dear friends,

Happy Chinese New Year!

To help our Asian community to become more successful, we are conducting a questionnaire survey on job mobility of the foreign-born Chinese in the U.S. Please help us by completing the attached survey questionnaire concerning how you found your current job. Your participation will greatly benefit our Asian American community.

Please participate in this study **ONLY IF** you have a full time job in the U.S. For each question on the survey, please check or circle only the **ONE BEST ANSWER**. This survey is anonymous. Please do not write your name anywhere on the form. Thank you for your cooperation and support in this very important project.

Sincerely yours,

The researcher  
Asian American Community

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

University of South Florida \* 4202 East Fowler Avenue, CIS1040 \* Tampa, FL 33620-7800  
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**FOR ASIANS WITH  
FULL-TIME JOBS IN THE UNITED STATES**

PLEASE PICK **ONE** BEST ANSWER FOR EACH QUESTION.

**Job Mobility and Intercultural Communication Survey**

INSTRUCTIONS: THIS SURVEY IS COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THIS FORM. THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

**SECTION I: ABOUT YOUR CURRENT JOB.**

1. What is your current employment status?
- a. ☐ I am employed by a company/organization (You are employed by others). (IF SO, CONTINUE).
  - b. ☐ I am self-employed (You are your own boss). (IF SO, CONTINUE).
  - c. ☐ I am a full time student. (IF SO, PLEASE STOP HERE.)
  - d. ☐ I am currently unemployed. (IF SO, PLEASE STOP HERE.)



Thank you!

PLEASE CONTINUE IF YOU CHECKED "a" OR "b"; PLEASE STOP IF YOU CHECKED "c" OR "d".

2. What year did you move to the US? (Do not count short-term visits) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What year did you get your first full-time job in the US? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many full time jobs in the US did you hold before your current one? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you lived in Florida? \_\_\_\_\_ years
6. Did you move to Florida because you were offered a job here?
- a. ☐ Yes.
  - b. ☐ No.
7. When did you start your current job? \_\_\_\_\_ (month/year)?
8. What is your current job title? \_\_\_\_\_.
9. What kind of organization do you currently work for?
- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> Education                     | b. <input type="checkbox"/> Information technology | c. <input type="checkbox"/> Financial service |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> Health care                   | e. <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmaceutical         | f. <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing     |
| g. <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing                     | h. <input type="checkbox"/> Public relations       | i. <input type="checkbox"/> Research          |
| j. <input type="checkbox"/> Other, Please specify: _____. |  |   |

PLEASE CONTINUE TO QUESTION • 10 IF YOU ARE EMPLOYED BY A COMPANY/ORGANIZATION. PLEASE JUMP TO QUESTION #40 IF YOU ARE SELF-EMPLOYED (YOU ARE YOUR OWN BOSS)•

10. How long did it take you to find and secure your current job?
- a. ☐ Less than one month.
  - b. ☐ One to five months.
  - c. ☐ Six months to a year
  - d. ☐ From one year to two years.
  - e. ☐ Over two years.



<b>Instructions for questions 11-22:</b>						
How often did you do the following during the search for your current job? For each question, please circle <u>one number only</u> .		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
1.	I read the help wanted/classified ads in a newspaper, journal or professional association publication.	0	1	2	3	4
2.	I used the Internet to locate job openings.	0	1	2	3	4
3.	I talked to my relatives to get their ideas about possible job leads.	0	1	2	3	4
4.	I talked to my friends/acquaintances to get their ideas about possible job leads.	0	1	2	3	4
5.	I talked to previous employers or people I used to work with about possible job leads.	0	1	2	3	4
6.	I worked on my resume.	0	1	2	3	4
7.	I consulted a private employment agency or search firm.	0	1	2	3	4
8.	I sent a resume to a possible employer or turned in a job application.	0	1	2	3	4
9.	I went to job fairs.	0	1	2	3	4
10.	I telephoned or visited a possible employer.	0	1	2	3	4
11.	I tried to learn more about the places where I was applying for work.	0	1	2	3	4
12.	I contacted someone who was referred to me as knowing about a job.	0	1	2	3	4

<b>Instructions for questions 23-28:</b>							
How often did you feel the following were obstacles during your job search? Please circle one number only. Please use the following answer choices: 1 = Strongly disagree                      4 = Slightly agree 2 = Disagree                                      5 = Agree 3 = Slightly disagree                      6 = Strongly agree		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
13.	I felt discriminated against because of my race.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.	I felt it was difficult to find a job because of my cultural background.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.	I felt it was difficult to get a job because my English is not that good.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	I didn't have the right immigration background for some jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17.	I didn't know enough people to help me find a job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18.	My qualifications were not good enough.	1	2	3	4	5	6

19. **How exactly** did you find out about your current job? (Please check the most important one).

If you checked  
any of a, b, c,  
CONTINUE to  
question #30

- a. ☐ A **relative** told me about the job.
- b. ☐ A **friend/acquaintance** told me about the job.
- c. ☐ **The employer** contacted me and said I had been recommended for the job.
- d. ☐ I saw an advertisement in a **printed publication** (newspaper, magazine, trade or technical journal, classified, etc).
- e. ☐ I saw an advertisement on the **Internet** (or through an email list serve).
- f. ☐ I found it out through an **employment agency**.
- g. ☐ I found the job through a **job fair**.
- h. ☐ I **asked the organization directly** if they have a job opportunity.
- i. ☐ I found this job through **other ways**: Please specify:  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you checked any  
answer between d-i,  
Please SKIP Section II  
and JUMP to question  
#40 on the next page

PLEASE COMPLETE SECTION II (QUESTION #30 TO QUESTION #39) ONLY IF YOU FOUND YOUR CURRENT JOB THROUGH AN INDIVIDUAL (RELATIVE/FRIEND/ACQUAINTANCE).

**SECTION II: PLEASE DESCRIBE THE PERSON WHO TOLD YOU ABOUT THE JOB.**

1. How did you happen to know this person? (Please choose **the most important connection**.)
  - a. ☐ We were part of an immediate/extended family.
  - b. ☐ We went to high school together.
  - c. ☐ We went to college together.
  - d. ☐ We grew up in the same neighborhood.
  - e. ☐ We immigrated to the USA together.
  - f. ☐ We belong to the same social club. If so, what is the name of that social club:  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - g. ☐ I once worked with him/her.
  - h. ☐ I got to know him/her through another occasion. Please specify:  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. When this person told you about the job, did they know that you were looking for a job?
  - a. ☐ Yes.
  - b. ☐ No.
3. During the time when you were looking for this job, how did you and this person mainly communicate with each other? (Choose the **most frequent** one).
  - a. ☐ Face to face.
  - b. ☐ On the phone.
  - c. ☐ By e-mail.
  - d. ☐ By letters.
  - e. ☐ Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
4. **How often** did you and this person communicate with each other during the time you were searching for the job?
  - a. ☐ Less than once a month.
  - b. ☐ About once a month.
  - c. ☐ About once every two weeks.
  - d. ☐ Once or twice a week.
  - e. ☐ A few times a week.
  - f. ☐ Daily.
5. How did this person know about the job?
  - a. ☐ He/She was in the same place where the job opened up.
  - b. ☐ He/She was a business friend of the employer.
  - c. ☐ He/She was a social friend of the employer.
  - d. ☐ He/She was the employer.
  - e. ☐ Other. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. ☐ I don't know how this person found out about the job.
6. Did this person put in a "good word" for you?
  - a. ☐ Yes
  - b. ☐ No.
  - c. ☐ I don't know.
7. Is this person of the same **race** as you (e.g.: Asians)?
  - a. ☐ Yes
  - b. ☐ No.
  - c. ☐ I don't know.
8. Is this person of the same **ethnicity** as you (e.g.: Chinese/Japanese/Korean)?
  - a. ☐ Yes
  - b. ☐ No.
  - c. ☐ I don't know.
9. Does this person speak your **native language** (Chinese/Japanese/Korean)?
  - a. ☐ Yes
  - b. ☐ No.
  - c. ☐ I don't know.
10. What is this person's gender?
  - a. ☐ Male
  - b. ☐ Female

---

**ALL RESPONDENTS CONTINUE HERE.**  
**SECTION III: ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND**

1. What is your **age**? I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.
2. What is your **gender**?
  - a. ☐ Male
  - b. ☐ Female
3. What is your **ethnicity**?
  - a. ☐ Chinese.
  - b. ☐ Japanese.
  - c. ☐ Korean.
  - d. ☐ Other, Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your **marital status**?
  - a. ☐ Single.
  - b. ☐ Married.
5. How many **children** do you have?
  - a. ☐ None.
  - b. ☐ One
  - c. ☐ Two
  - d. ☐ Three
  - e. ☐ Four or more
6. What is the **highest degree** you have earned?
  - a. ☐ High school or lower
  - b. ☐ AA. (Two-year Associate degree)
  - c. ☐ BA/BS. (Bachelor's)
  - d. ☐ MA./MS. (Master's)
  - e. ☐ Ph. D. (Doctorate)
7. Did you earn your highest degree in the US?
  - a. ☐ Yes.
  - b. ☐ No. If No, Please specify which country/region: \_\_\_\_\_
8. How well do you **read** English?
  - a. ☐ I don't read English
  - b. ☐ Minimal
  - c. ☐ Intermediate
  - d. ☐ Professional
9. How well do you **write** in English?
  - a. ☐ I don't write in English
  - b. ☐ Minimal
  - c. ☐ Intermediate
  - d. ☐ Professional
10. How well do you **speak** English?
  - a. ☐ I don't speak English
  - b. ☐ Minimal
  - c. ☐ Intermediate
  - d. ☐ Fluent
50. In which country/region were you **born**?
  - a. ☐ USA
  - b. ☐ China, People's Republic (Mainland)
  - c. ☐ Taiwan, ROC
  - d. ☐ Hong Kong, China
  - e. ☐ Macao, China
  - f. ☐ Japan
  - g. ☐ South Korea
  - h. ☐ Other, Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
51. In which country/region did you **grow up**?
  - a. ☐ USA
  - b. ☐ China, People's Republic (Mainland)
  - c. ☐ Taiwan, ROC
  - d. ☐ Hong Kong, China
  - e. ☐ Macao, China
  - f. ☐ Japan
  - g. ☐ South Korea
  - h. ☐ Other, Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
52. What is your **immigration status**?
  - a. ☐ F1 or J1 student/scholar visa
  - b. ☐ H1b working visa
  - c. ☐ With Green Card (Permanent residence card)
  - d. ☐ US Citizen
  - e. ☐ Other, Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
53. Which of the following best describes your **personal income (before taxes) per year** from your current job in US dollars?
  - a. ☐ Under \$20,000
  - b. ☐ \$20,001 to \$30,000
  - c. ☐ \$30,001 to \$40,000
  - d. ☐ \$40,001 to \$50,000
  - e. ☐ \$50,001 to \$60,000
  - f. ☐ \$60,001 to \$70,000
  - g. ☐ \$70,001 to \$80,000
  - h. ☐ \$80,001 to \$90,000
  - i. ☐ \$90,001 and up

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## Appendix C: Qualitative in-depth interview guide

This is an interview guide for 20 semi-structured qualitative in-depth interviews conducted in natural settings. A naturally setting for a particular interview included working and living environments of the participant. A natural setting provides additional contextual information on a participant's occupational status. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. This interview guide was created based on Mark Granovetter's 1974 version with much adaptation and revision for the current dissertation study. The underlined questions were Granovetter's original questions. This interview guide facilitated the qualitative data collection for this dissertation.

All interviews were conducted and completed between April 25 and June 15, 2004. All interviews were conducted in a language most appropriate to the participant, whether English or Chinese. The interviews were then translated and transcribed into English within three days after the interviews. The researcher recorded the context, process and impression of the interviews in field notes.

Before each interview, I notified the interview participants with the following:

1) I will not ask private questions. If you are uncomfortable in disclosing certain information, please feel free to avoid them.

- 
- 2) The interview results will be kept anonymous. You will have to sign a consent form before we start the interview.
  - 3) The interview will last between 45 minutes to one hour long. The interview will be audio-taped.
  - 4) Not all questions on this guide will be asked.
  - 5) The main purpose of the interview is to share your stories concerning job search communication strategies and obstacles in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world.

### I. Background

(Explain a little bit about my dissertation). How long have you had this job? Tell me a little bit about how you moved to Florida.

1. Can you share the story about how you found and secured your current job?

### II. Job-search communication strategies and obstacles

2. Where did you first learn about this job? Is it from the Internet, newspaper, a relative, friend, an acquaintance or other channel?
3. Among various job search strategies, which one did you try the most and why?
4. Suppose that you wanted to look for a new job, how would you go about it?
5. When you were searching for this job in the US, did you encounter any obstacles, such as racial discrimination, cultural barrier, linguistic barrier, insufficient network, or incompetent qualification?

- 
6. Among the various job search obstacles that you have encountered, which one is the most significant?
  7. What strategies were effective, if any, at overcoming these obstacles?
  8. When looking for a job, whom did you talk to? Where did these conversations take place?
  9. Did some group of people help you with the job-searching process? Tell me a little bit about this person and your relationship with him/her.
  10. Have you recently played a role in helping another person to find a job?

### III. Culture

11. How did you find your jobs when you were in China? What were some of the differences or similarities in job seeking process when compared with the US?
12. Do you have job seeking experience in any countries other than China and US? In which country (countries)? Please talk about your job searching experience in all of these countries, for example Japan, the UK, Singapore.
13. Do you know Guanxi? What is your understanding of the concept Guanxi?
14. Have you thought of using Guanxi in USA? What are the differences and similarities between Chinese Guanxi and American Networking in your mind?
15. What expectations did you have when you first try to look for a job in America? What were the frames (stereotypes) in your mind about Americans employers when you first tried to find a job in US?

- 
16. What lessons have you learned about how to best communicate with the Americans for a more effective job search?
  17. What should American organizations do if they want to reach out to the Chinese for potential employment positions?

#### IV. The Internet

18. Did you try to use the Internet for information and opportunities during your job search process?
19. How and in which way the Internet has assisted you in searching and securing your current job?
20. What are some of the websites that you used in job search? Were they helpful?
21. What is the impact of Internet and its related technology, for example Intranet, listserv, emails and chat rooms, instant messages, toward your job search experience?
22. Do you think Internet is more important than personal networks in job search?
23. Can you reflect back on the similarities and differences for your job search now in the Internet age and then in the old days?

THANK YOU!

CONSENT FORM

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You are invited to participate in an in-depth interview project for a dissertation entitled *The invisible handshake: Interpreting job-seeking communication strategies and obstacles of foreign-born Chinese in the USA*. I will interview you in an interactive manner with open-ended questions about your insights and stories concerning your experience in successfully securing your current and past occupational positions.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Share your experience and thoughts on issues of job seeking strategies and obstacles worldwide, and especially in the U.S.;
2. Agree to be tape-recorded during the interview(s).

All information collected in this study will be kept strictly confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone. Your name and affiliation will not be associated with any published paper. If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, please contact Dr. Eric M. Eisenberg, Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication, University of South Florida at (813) 974-6823 or May Hongmei Gao at (813) 295-0916. Thank you.

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You are making a decision about whether you will participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw from this study at any time without prejudice after your signing this fom.

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Signature

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Date



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Appendix E: Overview of in-depth interview participant diversity

	Name	Organization	Origin	Sex	Age	Terminal degree	Country of terminal degree	Interview language	Interview time	Tape
1	Dr. S	IT	China	F	46	Ph.D.	China	English	4/24/2004	Y
2	Dr. T	Cancer research	China	F	38	MD	Hong Kong	English	5/5/2004	Y
3	Dr. W	Education	China	M	46	Ph.D	Germany	Chinese	5/6/2004	Y
4	Dr. K	Financial service	China	F	39	Ph. D	USA	English	5/11/2004	Y
5	Dr. A	Financial service	Taiwan	M	56	Ph. D.	USA	English	5/11/2004	Y
6	Dr. H	Financial service	China	M	47	Ph. D.	USA	Chinese	5/11/2004	Y
7	Dr. J	IT	China	M	45	Ph.D	Switzerland	Chinese	5/16/2004	N
8	Dr. Q	Health care	China	F	44	MD	China	English	5/16/2004	Y
9	Dr. L	Education	China	M	45	MD	USA	English	5/16/2004	Y
10	Dr. M	Media Research	China	F	45	Ph. D.	USA	Chinese	5/18/2004	Y
11	Dr. P	Media Research	China	M	48	Ph.D.	Canada	Chinese	5/18/2004	Y
12	Mr. G	Civil engineering	China	M	30	MS	USA	English	5/18/2004	Y
13	Ms. B	Marketing	Taiwan	F	47	BA	USA	English	5/18/2004	Y
14	Ms. R	Education	China	F	44	BS	USA	Chinese	5/23/2004	Y
15	Dr. D	Pharmaceutical	China	M	47	MD	Canada	Chinese	5/23/2004	Y
16	Ms. C	Advertising	China	F	42	AA	USA	Chinese	5/23/2004	Y
17	Mr. N	IT	China	M	33	MS	USA	English	6/4/2004	Y
18	Mr. Z	Government	China	M	35	MS	USA	Chinese	6/10/2004	Y
19	Ms. U	IT	Taiwan	F	52	High school	Taiwan	Chinese	6/10/2004	Y
20	Mr. E	Financial service	Hong Kong	M	39	MBA	USA	English	6/11/2004	N

\* Sorted in chronological order of the interviews conducted.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hongmei Gao, also known as May, was born and raised in the People's Republic of China. Her research interest covers network communication, intercultural adaptation, intercultural conflict management, and dialogue. Prior to coming to the U.S. in August 1998 for her MA in Mass Communication at Brigham Young University, and then in August 2000 for her Ph.D. in Speech Communication at the University of South Florida, Hongmei had served as a public relations practitioner at the University of Science and Technology of China and a TV anchorperson at China Anhui Television Station in Hefei, China. Through her global educational journey, Hongmei is inspired by Confucius, who said, "What Heaven imparts to mankind is human nature. To follow this nature is the Way. To cultivate the Way is through education." Dr. Gao now works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at Kennesaw State University in metro Atlanta, Georgia.