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FROM THE LUCKY LAND TO THE BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY  
ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION OF FUJIANESE TO THE UNITED STATES

by

Miao Lin

Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology  
Eastern Michigan University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Criminology

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October 24, 2005

Ypsilanti, Michigan

## ABSTRACT

It is puzzling why Fujianese are willing to pay seventy thousand dollars, which could entitle them to a comfortable life in China, to be smuggled to the United States. Despite the voluminous body of research, the life of Fujianese illegal immigrants has not been systematically explored. This study confirmed that people smuggling is a phenomenon that combines cultural, economic, and political factors. Furthermore, Fujianese who came to seek an American dream have lost something much more valuable than what they have gained, such as their youth and family connections.

In addressing the smuggling strategies, causes, and experiences of Fujianese immigrants, this thesis has relied on interviews with former illegal immigrants from Fujian Province, China, as well as literature reviews. The respondents in this study are average people among tens of thousands of illegal immigrants. Their true stories provide a vivid picture of Fujianese emigration.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### *Introduction*

In China, people call the United States *mei guo*, which literally means *a beautiful country*. For the past century, numerous Chinese have immigrated into the United States, pursuing an American dream. Among these either legal or illegal immigrants, a great number of them are of Fujian origin. Fujian Province, also known as *Min*, literally refers to a *lucky land*, but in history it is not fortunate or wealthy. The initial reason that drew thousands of early Fujianese out of their hometown was its poverty. Although the investments from abroad and China's economic reform have dramatically changed the financial situation for today's Fujian, the urge for emigration has never stopped. When legal channels for emigration are hindered because of various reasons, people choose illegal means despite the exorbitant smuggling fees and risks during the trip

It is estimated that the number of illegal Fujianaese immigrants per year currently exceeds the number of legal immigrants. There were more than 100,000 Fujianese living in New York City by the end of 1994, and an estimated "additional 10,000 enter every year" (Einhorn, cited in Kyle & Koslowski, 2001, pp. 190-191).

A series of social problems appear following a surge of illegal immigration. Because the smuggling fee is far above the average income for a Chinese family, a lot of snake people (illegal immigrants) and their families seek help from usurious loan sharks. Because human smuggling is a complicated process that requires collaboration in China, transit countries, and the United States, it encourages corruption globally; because human smuggling is a business with high profits, people at every social level from different countries have zealously engaged in it; and because of the sensitivity and weakness of

Fujianese illegal immigrants, they are more likely to be the victims of crimes during the trip and after they land on the United States. In fact, more negative consequences do exist beyond my description.

Nevertheless, it seems that nothing can reduce Fujianese enthusiasm for emigration. The would-be illegal immigrants in Fujian are patiently waiting in line. What they worry about is not how to repay the \$70,000 smuggling fee but whether they have found a reliable smuggler who can “help” them leave China swiftly.

Among social scientists, the dominant explanation of Fujianese smuggling is the *pull and push* theory (Kwong, 1994, 1997; Chin, 1999; Kung, 2000; Kyle & Liang, 2001; Morse, 2004; Heckmann & Wunderlich, 2000). The *pull factors* refer to the needs of the American economy, higher wages in the United States, and the lenient U.S. immigration policies. The *push factors* include family expectation, peer pressure, unemployment, economic and political uncertainty, and governmental corruption and negligence. Human smuggling is considered to be the result of interaction of pull and push factors, while the pull factors play a more important role than the push factors (Kwong, 1997; Chin, 1999).

The pull and push theory argues that illegal immigration has deep roots in the United States economy. To survive ruthless competition, some small businesses in labor-intensive sectors demand great amounts of cheap labor. Although these jobs are described as poorly-paid, requiring long hours, and without benefits, unauthorized Fujianese are willing to take them because the salary is much higher than what they earn in China. Such an income disparity reached to 1: 18 (\$130 vs. \$ 2300) in 2002. At the same time, the majority of Fujianese immigrants who have limited education suffered from unemployment in China; but in the United States, they can find a job where no specific

knowledge and working experience are required. If a Fujianese person stays in a position more than three years and he is frugal, the smuggling fee can be paid off. After that, he begins to build his own fortune. And he has the chance to get a Green Card if he gets married to an American citizen or is granted refugee status or amnesty. After he has legal status, his family is qualified for legal immigration, according to U.S. laws. In the villages of Fujian that most youth have left, remaining at home is depressing. Some people with a satisfactory job are thus pushed out.

The pull and push theory indeed is the *rational choice* theory. In the light of rational choice theory, the decision to do something illegal is made after careful cost-benefit calculation. If what a person can obtain from illegal behavior is more than what he may lose, it is likely he will commit crimes. And the greater the gap between the benefit and loss, the higher the possibility for illicit behavior. Costs because of human smuggling may include exorbitant smuggling fees, the danger of traveling, years of hard work, and the risk of being deported. But all of these are not worth mentioning in comparison to the high income in America, the lenient enforcement by the United States authorities, and the opportunities to gain legal status. There is no doubt that the pull and push theory reveals the causes of Fujianese smuggling, but it cannot explain why America becomes the biggest receiving country for undocumented Fujianese in the world. Both pull and push factors can be found in the case of Canada and Australia, which offer more advantages in some respects, such as lower smuggling fees and easier access to legal status.

What makes the United States unique to the Fujianese, from my point of view, is closely related to the inconsistency of America's immigration policy. Even though politicians fiercely criticize the negative effects of illegal immigration on the economy



and public order, undocumented aliens are always welcomed by the United States. When ships were the primary tool for smuggling, the control of American waters was soft. When ships were replaced with airplanes, the countermeasures against people smuggling became perfunctory. The illegals will proactively report to the authority in the airport about their smuggling because they know they will be released after brief questioning and a short-term imprisonment (Melhman cited in Barbour, 1994). But after Fujianese enter America, the door for them to be legalized is closed. Currently it is very difficult for Fujianese to obtain asylum status. Meanwhile, they are reluctant to go home because returning without a Green Card results in a kind of social stigma. In order to reunite the divided family, Fujianese have to pay for their spouse and children to be smuggled.

### *Problem Statement*

There are three central questions that guide my study: (1) Why are Fujianese smuggled into the United States, especially what is the impact of America's immigration policy on their decisions? (2) How do Fujianese come to the United States illegally? And (3) what are the social consequences resulting from human smuggling? More specifically, while discussing the third question, great emphasis is placed on (a) the work and spiritual life of the Fujianese; (b) the criteria for illegal immigrants in selecting a spouse; (c) the influence of long-term separation on the parent-child relationship; and (d) how loyalty to the spouse is challenged because of the long-term separation and how a spouse's betrayal finally yields to traditional morality.

### *Purpose of the Study*

With respect to the rapid increase of illegal Fujianese immigrants, human

smuggling from Fujian has drawn a lot of attention from all sides. Sociologists pay particular attention to the causes of human smuggling, its strategies and routes, and the characteristics of illegal immigrants and those who plan human smuggling (snakeheads), as well as the impacts of unauthorized Fujianese on the United States. However, few social scientists have explored the real lives of Fujianese illegal immigrants. The purpose of this study is to fill this void. I will take a close look at the Fujianese's working conditions, living conditions, leisure activities, and human relationships. I hypothesize that Fujianese illegal immigrants are materially wealthy but in extreme spiritual poverty. If the hypothesis can be supported by my research, Americans will see the struggles that Fujianese are undergoing and reduce their bias against them. The government will realize the gap between the immigration law itself and the practices of protecting human rights and controlling crimes. Consequently, society will call for a reform of present immigration policies that feature stiff administration. On the other hand, I want the youngsters in China to know the truth about human smuggling. An inefficient prevention and control policy against smuggling partly lies in the low degree of awareness in Chinese youngsters. Only when these potential illegal immigrants realize that youth, freedom, and happiness are the prices for an American dream may illegal immigration from Fujian come to a halt. In addition, discussion about the reasons for smuggling has significant implications for the authorities, who need to rethink and reform U.S. immigration policy.

### *Background*

According to the United Nations Protocols on Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (UNPTMS) in 2000, human trafficking is defined as:

An action consisting of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position of vulnerability, giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve consent of a person having control over another, for the purpose of exploitation (including, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others, or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.

(Gallagher, 2001, pp. 986-987)

Human smuggling refers to the procurement of the illegal entry of a person into a state party of which the person is not a national or permanent resident for the purpose of economic or other material benefits (Gallagher, 2001). Although human smuggling and trafficking are similar in some aspects, say, purpose and criminal methods, there are three major differences. First of all, illegal immigrants have consented to be smuggled. They understand the risks during the process of smuggling, but volunteer to become snake people. On the contrary, human trafficking victims never offer any consent to the traffickers. Even if some kind of agreement ever existed, it becomes invalid under the force, coercion, deception, or other means that goes against the will of the victims. Second, smuggling of human beings ends when the immigrant arrives at the destination, while trafficking victims continue to be exploited after arrival. Third, human smuggling is a transnational action, which involves at least two countries. However, people can be trafficked within one country from one place to another.

The illegal immigrants from Fujian province make oral or written contracts with the snakeheads before they leave for the United States. Such an agreement is composed

of payment (the amount of the smuggling fee, when and how to pay it), sharing in risks (who pays for bail and lawyers if the immigrant is arrested in the host country), and so on. The relationship between the snake people and the snakeheads will terminate as soon as the immigrant's family pays off the smuggling fee. Hence, the vast majority of Fujianese immigrants are not trafficking victims because (a) they were smuggled voluntarily, even though a few female immigrants were forced to work as prostitutes if their families failed to pay on time, (b) the illegals were allowed to leave prostitution as soon as the snakehead collects the unpaid debt instead of staying in continuous exploitation.

## CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Sociologists employ both quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand undocumented Chinese, including surveys, interviews, observation, and content analysis. This study utilizes the qualitative method that gathers data by interview. The strategy associated with this qualitative research is the narrative interview, which is “a form of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives” (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). Interview as a research method in this study was approved by the Human Subjects Committee at the College of Arts and Sciences of Eastern Michigan University on February 25, 2005. The committee granted me permission to proceed with my research.

An interview is designed to collect four categories of data as follows:

1. The characteristics of subjects (such as age, arrival time, region of origin, education, marital status, family structure, occupation, and income) and the responsibilities for their family
2. The reasons for illegal immigration
3. The procedure of human smuggling: the methods used to enter the United States illegally, the amount of time spent in transit countries, their experiences during the trip, legal treatment by U.S. authorities, and the amount of the smuggling fee
4. The lives of the illegal immigrants:
  - (a) Working conditions: the length of work, consequences of long-term work, and the amount of time to repay the smuggling fee
  - (b) Living conditions: the satisfactory degree of accommodation, whether the facility is crowded, and leisure activities after work

(c) The quality of marriage and the relationship with children

(d) Other personal problems

Furthermore, a secondary data analysis is used in this study for the purpose of tracing the history of Fujianese emigration, discovering the methods used by snakeheads, and revealing the causal factors of human smuggling. Data come from prior studies found in sources such as books, government reports, journals, newspapers, and on-line web sites.

### *Sample and Sampling Technology*

Participants in this study were Fujianese with legal status who came either legally or illegally. I recruited the participants by the snowball method. First of all, I interviewed my friends and acquaintances who were smuggled into America. They later were asked to refer their relatives, friends, and acquaintances to me. On the other hand, I asked my friends who came to America legally, such as Fujianese students or immigrants, about certain questions and asked them to introduce some eligible interviewees.

The sample of this study includes eight males and four females. Five participants came from Lianjiang County, three from Fuzhou City, and three from Changle City. Four of the twelve participants entered legally as immigrants, students, or tourists. Fifty percent of the participants were over thirty years old (four were over forty years old and two were between thirty and forty years old) and fifty percent were under thirty years old (between twenty-one and twenty-eight years old). The average length of residency among the sample was eight years, ranging from one year to fifteen years. Half of participants (6) had been married and had children before they left China, two got married in the United States, and four were still single. Additionally, among the ten participants whose educational level is known to me, only two got their high school diploma, and none went

to college in China.

### *Implementing the Interviews*

The participants were interviewed face to face in public settings where Fujianese do not congregate, such as a private room in a library. The length of each interview was about one and a half hours. Because some participants felt more comfortable speaking in the Fuzhou dialect, sometimes interviews were conducted in the Fuzhou dialect. At the beginning of the survey, I gave participants an introduction letter from Eastern Michigan University. I explained orally and in writing that my research was university based and that I had no association with the United States government, which helped to produce honest responses. I stated that this interview had as its objective a full understanding of the causes of human smuggling and the experiences of Fujianese illegal immigrants. I assured the respondents of their anonymity and my confidentiality orally and in writing; the participants and people they discussed in the interviews have been assigned pseudonyms; their names, locations, or other information that might help people identify them have not been included in this study; a list with the participants' identification was separate from notes and consent forms and was stored safely at home. Each participant was informed that he/she could refuse to answer any questions without excuse and suspend or conclude his/her participation at any time. Then I interpreted the consent agreement in Mandarin or the Fuzhou dialect. The participant was free to ask questions regarding the research. After signing the consent agreement, the participant got a copy that is identical to the original one. He/she was told about the importance of keeping this copy safe. During the interview, I used tape-recording and took notes. The participants had the right to reject tape-recording. Those who agreed to have their interviews tape-

recorded were informed that the tapes would be destroyed within two days after transcription was completed. At the end of interviews, I let participants know that there would be an interview report, a research summary, and a copy of the thesis available to them by telephone request. Participants had the right to make corrections and additions.

### *Data Analysis*

Creswell (2003) stated that a typical data analysis process involves data organization and preparation, data coding, and data interpretation. Transcribing interviews is the first step for data analyzing. As a result of the interview questions and the study purposes, I created categories such as *parent-children relationships*. Narrative data were organized by the columns first. Because all the questions were asked and answered in Chinese during the interview but had to be translated into English, the difference between languages is an issue in this study. To fully represent the interviewees' thoughts and reflect their cultural and educational backgrounds, the transcriptions strictly tally with what the interviewees said despite faulty wording or formulation. Moreover, each interviewee has been given a fake name in this paper in an effort to protect him/her from being identified. The second step of data analysis is to "read through all data" "to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning," in which I created several subcategories, sorted data into them, and identified each of the categories with a term (Creswell, 2003, pp. 191-192). For example, the subtitle parent-children relationship includes *little communication, alienation, and love and responsibility*. I repeatedly read the text data in each category to think deeply about their meaning and to draw conclusions that appear as the major findings in my study. These findings are interpreted and supported by narrative evidence.



Transcription of the tape-recorded interviews was conducted as soon as possible after the interviews. The tapes, in general, were destroyed within three days after the transcription had been completed.

### *Validity and Reliability*

I come from the Fujian province of China, where emigration has become a culture. Human smuggling is not a taboo subject, and sometimes people help each other gain access to a snakehead. Because I speak the Fuzhou dialect and there are few students from Fujian Province, I have gotten to know some Fujianese legal immigrants and make friends with them since I came to the United States. Some of them shared their experiences with me, because of which I wanted to learn more about the lives of the Fujianese. My personal experience may enhance my awareness and help gain a better understanding; but it also brings some biases to my study, which might have a negative influence on my question design, data collection, and data analysis. Additionally, because interviews explore personal experiences that happened many years ago, the participants may be biased because of the passage of time.

There are two ways to reduce the bias and at the same time increase the validity of my research. One is self-reflection, for which I need to identify my biases and clarify them in my study; the other involves the report of data analysis to participants afterwards. The participants have access to requesting the interview reports, research summary, and a copy of my thesis. They are allowed to question my interpretation, require a correction, or replenish information at any time (Creswell, 2003).

Before the implementation of interviews, the questions were cross-examined with the interview designed by Ko-Lin Chin (an expert in Fujianese smuggling research)

(1999) in order to ensure reliability.

## CHAPTER 3: A HISTORY OF CHINESE EMIGRATION

### *The Beginning (1400s-1840s)*

The history of Chinese emigration began in the fifteenth century during the Ming Dynasty. The first Chinese in the United States were “sailors and stewards (who) toiled in cargo ships that plied the waters between Manila and Acapulco” in 1565 (Tong, 2003, p. 1). In 1644, the Manchu in North China defeated the Ming troops and established the Qing Dynasty. Because of a fear of collaboration of overseas Chinese with anti-Qing forces, the government prohibited any nongovernmental emigration. The penalty was death by beheading; anyone who had assisted people with secret emigration was also sentenced to death; local officials had to enforce strict border control in order to get promotions (Chang, 2003; Tong, 2003). Because of this situation, between the fifteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, most Chinese came to the United States as merchants or cultural emissaries. Afong Moy, the first-recorded female Chinese immigrant to the United States in 1834, was a museum exhibit. Museums in New York City invited the sixteen-year-old Moy to display how she ate with chopsticks, counted in Chinese, and used the Chinese *calculator*, the abacus, as well as her *three-cun* lily feet (Chang, 2003). Although China had become the most populous nation in the world, the number of permanent immigrants during this period was tiny. According to the statistics of the United States government, only eleven Chinese entered America from 1820 to 1840 (Babkina, 2001). Americans had great curiosity about these exotic people from China.

### *The Coolie Era (1840s-1870s)*

A large scale exodus of Chinese did not happen until after the first Opium War, between 1840 and 1842, which China lost to Great Britain. As a settlement, the government of China ceded Hong Kong and opened five cities--Shanghai, Guangzhou (in Guangdong province), Ningbo (in Zhejiang province), and Xiamen and Fuzhou (both in Fujian province)--for English trading and residence and paid 21 million silver dollars to Great Britain. Most economic and legal privileges for Englishman soon expanded to other countries, such as the United States and France. Foreigners soon gained the upper hand in China through unfair treaties, while Chinese became second-class citizens in their own country (Chang, 2003).

A push factor within China was its population explosion. In 1762 there were 200 million people in China, but by 1846 the population had increased by 420 million, of which 80-90% were peasants (Chang, 2003; Tong, 2003). Cultivated land became scarcer and the landlords kept raising the rents. Plus, increasing taxes levied by the government for indemnities caused many peasants to struggle on the edge of starvation. At the same time, antigovernment rebellions rose one after another. None of these rebellions overthrew the Qing authority, but they increased the destitution and homelessness among the peasants.

Meanwhile, the industrial revolution swung into full gear in Europe and North America. With the abolishment of the international slave trade, the Western countries were eagerly seeking alternative cheap labor (Chang, 2003; Kyle & Koslowski, 2001; Tong, 2003). The exploration for gold in California in 1848 further triggered employment. Labor brokers were hired by foreign employers to recruit Chinese workers, mostly in

coastal cities. They bragged about plenty of opportunities overseas, comfortable working conditions, and high wages. When their deceit failed, some brokers even abducted the victims and locked them up in the Whites' houses (which were exempted from legal investigation) until the departure date. The opening of XieMen, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou based on the Treaty of Nankin facilitated human trafficking. According to Kwong (1997), 250,000 to 500,000 Chinese emigrated to Cuba, Peru, Chile, and the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) through these ports. In the port of Xiamen, the coolies were almost naked, and the brokers "stamped their chests with letters indicating their destination--for instance, "P" for Peru, or "S" for the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii)" (Chang, 2003, p. 31). The conditions during the journey were so harsh that the death rate of coolies was between 15% and 45% in the mid-1800s (Chang, 2003; Kwong, 1997).

Despite wild boasts by the brokers, many newcomers soon found their experience of emigration to be like a nightmare. For example, Chinese in Cuba sugar plantations had to work twenty-one hours a day and could eat at most three unripe bananas per meal (Chang, 2003). Coolies went to the United States either as contract laborers or debtor laborers. The former were offered free voyages by labor brokers. The laborers signed a contract to work for the employers for five years. In return, they got food, lodging, wages, and medical care. An example of contract laborers was the people working in the sugar plantations in Hawaii. The debtor laborers borrowed voyage fees from the brokers and then repaid the loan plus interest (Tong, 2003). They, to a great extent, were free laborers. The majority of Chinese immigrants laboring in the mines or for railroads were debtor laborers.

About 12,000 Chinese participated in building the Central Pacific Railroad. They

were paid the least but assigned to the most dangerous jobs. By the time the project was completed in 1869, almost ten percent of the Chinese workers had lost their lives (Chang, 2003). Chinese laborers later helped build “the Northern Pacific Railroad from Kalama, Washington, north to Tacoma; the Southern Pacific Railroad’s north-south line along the California coast that eventually extended to El Paso, Texas; and the California Southern Railroad that connected with the main Santa Fe line” (Tong, 2003, p. 37).

Within a few years of the discovery of gold, two out of three Chinese (24,000) in the United States and 85% in California were engaged in placer mining. Although most of the time they were searching for gold in the lands the Whites had abandoned, with skills and diligence, Chinese found more than ten percent of the gold and silver, which was valued at over seventy-two million dollars between 1855 and 1870 (Tong, 2003). In 1852, the Foreign Miner’s License Tax was levied on Chinese who were not eligible for American citizenship according to the 1790 Nationality Act, which reserved the right only for the Whites. In the meantime, the Whites intimidated the Chinese away from the desirable mines by burning their tents and equipment, robbing or assaulting them, and even murdering them. Violence spread when Chinese laborers were legislatively prohibited from providing testimony in the courts.

Because of the scarcity of gold and growing anti-Asian sentiment, some Chinese turned to the fishing trade in the mid-1860s. They paid extra license fees to the government of California. In the 1870s, Chinese fishermen were limited to night fishing after Italians, Portuguese, Greeks, and Balkan Slavs resorted to legal restriction on them. Some Chinese miners engaged in truck gardening and farming from the late 1860s. They rented lands from the White landlords to grow “grain, hay, potatoes, onions, beans, and

vegetables” (Tong, 2003, p. 38). However, the 1913, the Alien Land Act and its Amendment in 1920 prevented noncitizens, including Chinese, from leasing or purchasing cultivatable lands through “corporations or in the names of their American-born Children” (Tong, 2003, p. 38). Others former coolies ventured into industry, but their lives were not easy either. They worked long hours but received much lower wages than their White counterparts.

Chinese coolies were primarily recruited in Guangdong and Fujian province. Except in North America, England, and Hong Kong, Fujianese laborers predominated almost everywhere (Myers cited in Smith, 1997). Consequently, today “eighty percent of the Chinese in the Philippines, fifty-five percent in Indonesia, fifty percent in Burma, and forty percent in Singapore are of Fujian origin” (Liang & Ye cited in Kyle & Koslowski, 2001, p. 193). In Hawaii planters also preferred Fujianese laborers from Xiamen City. For the rest of the ports in the United States, the number of Cantonese in general exceeded that of Fujianese. If the destinations were the mines in California, coolies came as a group of family members, friends, or neighbors in order to ensure high-level cooperation.

Under pressure from the West, the government of China gradually removed its restriction on emigration. In 1868, China signed the Burlingame Treaty with the United States, in which Chinese citizens secured the right of voluntary emigration. Twenty-five years later, overseas Chinese were allowed to return to China. During the 1840s through the 1870s, the total number of recorded Chinese immigrants to the United States jumped to 228,934--20,812 times as many as from the 1820s to the 1840s (Babkina, 2001). Most immigrants were males who had left their families behind. The majority came as laborers, holding a dream of making a fortune in the “Gold Mountain” (an old word for the United

States). Similar to the American Indians, Chinese were forced to move from one *reservation* (working place and occupation) to another. Some finally achieved their financial goals, but many died penniless. During this period of time, Chinese immigrants witnessed Americans' changing attitude. Being a vanquished nation, China was no longer shrouded in mystery as a powerful, ancient, civilized country. Americans, who had held curiosity toward the Chinese people, now had a strong sense of superiority.

#### *The Exclusion Era (1880s-1940s)*

Anti-Asian sentiments were steadily growing. In 1871, the Los Angeles anti-Chinese riot killed twenty-two Chinese and injured many. Furthermore, hostile forces resorted to legislation to sabotage Chinese family reunification and formation. There were only 4,779 Chinese women but 100,686 men in 1880 (the proportion was one female to twenty-one males). Even so, the Page Act of 1875, in an effort to stem the surge of prostitution, made the entry of wives of Chinese laborers and any single women extremely difficult. Immigration officials thought the prostitutes would disguise themselves as relatives of legal residents (Tong, 2003).

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first immigration policy based on race and nationality in American history, became the turning point for Chinese emigration. It suspended the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years; deported laborers who came after November 17, 1880; denied the entry of Chinese wives who could not prove their residence prior to June 6, 1882; and forbade the court to grant nationality to Chinese (Chang, 2003; Tong, 2003; Zhao, 2002). Chinese who remained in the United States were subject to strict exit and entry regulations. The purpose of the Exclusion Act was to control the population of Chinese Americans by separating couples and discouraging



marriages. In practice, many Chinese who were neither laborers nor the exempt class (merchants, diplomats, teachers, students, and travelers), such as “spouses and children of exempt-class immigrants, accountants, doctors, and other professionals,” were denied entry to America (Tong, 2003, p. 56).

The Exclusion Act of 1882 did not specifically reject female immigrants. Since most women in China did not work, they were not identified as “laborers.” An amendment in 1884, however, began to change the situation. It required Chinese wives to provide a certificate issued by the government of China and acknowledged by the United States for entry. In the same year, a judge ruled that the legal status of a Chinese man did not automatically entitle the entry of his wife and minor children. Another court defined Chinese wives as “laborers” because they should take on themselves the status of the husband (Zhao, 2002).

In 1888, the Scott Act denied the reentry of any Chinese laborers who returned to China even for a short-term visit, despite the fact that they had been granted legal residence in the United States. In 1891, a law empowered the federal government to deport anyone it considered to be excludable. Accordingly, the Geary Act of 1892 ordered all Chinese laborers to register for a certificate of residence. And the laborers had to bring the certificate with them; otherwise they might be arrested and deported. In 1894, the government of China signed the Gresham-Yang Treaty with the United States, in which China accepted the extension of the Chinese Exclusion Act for another ten years but in which “domiciled laborers who had left temporarily and who had family or property in the United States” were allowed to return to America (Tong, 2003, p. 60). In 1904, the Chinese Exclusion Act became a permanent governmental policy.

The Chinese community took concerted actions against the discriminatory legislation. Each laborer donated a couple of dollars with which the Chinese associations hired good lawyers to challenge the constitutionality of the Exclusion Act. Most efforts failed except for the landmark cases *Tsoi Sim v. the United States* in 1902, in which the court ruled that Chinese with American citizenship could get married in China and then bring their alien spouses to the United States. Another case having a substantial impact on Chinese emigration was *the United States v. Mrs. Gun Lim* in 1900, wherein the Supreme Court ruled that the wives and minor children of Chinese merchants could come to the United States without any certificate. The Chinese laborers who had been desperate for family reunion suddenly saw new hope from this case. They invested and became partners in Chinese companies, changed their status from that of laborer to that of merchant, and brought their families back. These two legal principles stood for two decades until the Immigration Act of 1924 was put into effect.

The Immigration Act of 1924 blocked access to nationality for most Chinese. It claimed that aliens were not eligible for citizenship. In addition, aliens were not admitted by the United States even though they were the spouses of American citizens. As a result, no Chinese women entered as the wives of citizens between 1925 and 1930. To fight back, Chinese resorted to legal petitions and political support, but these produced few results.

The extreme difficulty of legal immigration contributed to one early form of human smuggling: paper sons and paper daughters. First of all, some Chinese who commuted between America and China would falsely claim a baby (usually it was a son) when they returned from China. Then they would receive a paper from the United States government with which they could legally take a child to America after he or she grew up.

Years later the claimant sold the paper on the black market. The market price was one hundred dollars for each year of the child's age in Guangdong province in 1934. Tung Pok Chin thus paid \$2,000 for a paper because he was twenty years old at that time (Chin, 2002). Chinese wives, if legal entry was hopeless, would also purchase a paper to come as someone's daughter. Their age (Chinese women traditionally got married at an early age) and appearance (they usually looked younger) made smuggling possible. However, many paper sons and daughters were based on kinship instead of monetary deals. Lew Chuck Suey obtained his merchant status in 1907, which gave him privileges to bring his family to the United States. Chuck Suey brought his nephew as his son and helped his cousins go abroad. His brothers also came with his help. They later helped his youngest sister emigrate. Chuck Suew's children did the same thing. One of his American-born sons brought two clan members as his sons. So did his American-born daughter (Zhao, 2002). To help their clan members live abroad was not only a cultural responsibility for Chinese men, but also answered a demand for family strengthening. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake stimulated the flow of illegal immigrants. Because of the loss of city birth certificates, some Chinese falsely claimed to be American citizens and then brought their families or sold their papers for a good price (Chang, 2003; Tong, 2003).

The Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed by the Magnuson Act on December 17, 1943, sixty-one years after it had been put in effect. However, the quota system (105 Chinese immigrants annually) embedded in the new policy still hindered family reunions. Not until the Immigration and Nationality Services (INS) Act of 1965 did the anti-Asian immigration policy come to a halt (Campi, 2005).

During the exclusion era, the central topic discussed among Chinese Americans was

family reunion. A study conducted between 1945 and 1952 among 798 war brides revealed that the average duration a Chinese wife had been separated from her husband was over ten years (Zhao, 2002). In spite of these harsh conditions, Chinese immigrants seldom forsook family responsibilities and continuously tried to create opportunities. The more difficult family reunions were to achieve, the more cherished were the mutual affections.

*A New Regime (1950s-the present)*

The first surge of emigration during this era occurred around 1949, when the Communist Party was about to take power in China. Being afraid of property confiscation and physical prosecution, many capitalists, landlords, and intellectuals fled China. They went to Hong Kong, Southeast Asian countries, Europe, and North America as refugees.

From 1959 to 1961, China experienced a great famine in which millions of people died. To release social pressure, the government of China suddenly opened the door for emigration in 1962. According to Chang (2003), 70,000 people left China within twenty-five days. Most of them moved to Hong Kong first and then attempted to go to the United States. Because the United States had a limited quota for Chinese immigrants all around the world, many of the refugees stayed in Hong Kong.

The government did not declare freedom of emigration until 1974, when it signed a trade treaty with the United States. As soon as the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1979, the United States witnessed a wave of immigration from China. More than 970,000 Chinese immigrated between 1980 and 2000 (Babkina, 2001; Campi, 2005). Chinese thus became the largest Asian ethnic group in America. The current quota system

for Chinese, however, is not enough if compared with China's 1.4 billion population. When legitimate channels are not available, people seek illicit means. It is estimated that about 200,000-400,000 Chinese were smuggled out without any documents from 1978 to 1995 (Wang & Zhou, 2005). Some Chinese came legally but stayed over after their visas expired. Persons in both categories are defined as illegal immigrants in this paper. The United States is one of the prime host countries for illegals, along with Japan, Australia, and Europe.

## CHAPTER 4: THE CAUSES AND TECHNIQUES

There are many factors that have contributed to the surge of illegal immigrants from China to the United States since 1991. Historical, cultural, economic, and political factors can all partly explain this phenomenon. The causes of human smuggling do change from time to time. Fujianese migrants who entered a decade ago have experiences different from the experiences of those more newly arrived in the United States. This chapter is an effort to explain Fujianese illegal emigration as a whole, while at the same time trying to explain the discrepancies within the group.

### *Cost-Benefit Considerations*

In the light of *Rational Choice Theory*, most human beings are rational. They make decisions based on a careful cost-benefit calculation. If costs outweigh the benefits, individuals are less likely to commit crimes; if the benefits outweigh the costs, the probability of behaving illegally increases. Therefore, crimes are prevented through maximizing the costs and minimizing the benefits (Brown & Shelden, 2003).

By the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the average annual wage of city workers in China declined to 605 yuan (about \$60 then), and the average income of peasants was only 62.8 yuan. Besides this economic crisis, the ideological disorder because of endless political struggles was beyond simple description.

The modernization program, which began in 1978, aimed to solve various social contradictions. The institution of a household responsibility system to replace the commune was the main focus in rural areas from 1978 to 1984. Between 1984 and 1988, reform in cities attempted to reduce procurement quotas and taxes on enterprises; relaxing price controls on an increasingly large number of products; enlarging managerial

powers of enterprises regarding wages, employment, trade, and finance; and revitalizing the private economy. These policy innovations and experiments have pushed China increasingly toward a market-driven economy (Perry and Wong, 1985; Riskin, 1987).

At the beginning of the reform, the central government kept a relative balance in the development of the city and the countryside. However, since the last decade, the focus of development has been gradually transferred to the cities. An overwhelming majority of national construction is concentrated in the urban areas and accordingly encourages employment in the cities. On the contrary, the prices of agricultural products continuously drop, and peasants simultaneously suffer from the loss from blind production because of incorrect marketing information. The disparity between the demand and supply of labor as well as irrational disposition of income has led to the pouring of crowds of peasants into coastal cities. Today the cities covering twenty percent of China's area are crowded by eighty percent of the population, while the population distribution in rural areas turns out to be the converse.

Fuqing City, Changle City, and Lianjiang County conventionally rely on fishing and farming. They are influenced by changing policies and fewer resources distributed by the local governments. As a consequence, the people affected try to find the best methods for changing their future. Obviously, working abroad is a sound way--faster than working in any Chinese cities and safer than running a business--to make money. For instance, Zelang, a village of Fuqing city, historically was so poor that people were used to eating two pieces of sweet potato and a glass of water. The household contract responsibility system did not bring about a fundamental change for Zelang villagers because of its large population and limited lands. Thus, a number of working-age adults began to make a

living overseas. Today Zelang is the richest village in the town: eighty percent of per capita income comes from overseas migrants' gifts.

Likewise, economic conditions in Changle City have experienced a remarkable change since the 1990s. The towns where more people were in poverty are much more prosperous than those with lower poverty rates before. The reason for this is that the latter was satisfied with the existing state of affairs, while the former was eager for a change through seeking opportunities overseas. The rise of overseas villages in Fujian province sets up a model of economic development for people in other areas.

Kwong (1997) argued that the key reason for people smuggling is the “the ever healthy demand of American business for vulnerable, unprotected labor” (p. 6). The competition among Chinese small businesses has become very keen in the United States since the 1990s. The owners of small businesses have to find workers who are “willing to work longer hours under inferior working conditions and at lower wages” (Wang, 2001, p. 350). Illegal immigrants are ideal candidates because they ask for lower salaries and benefits. For instance, Mexican immigrants who do odds jobs in restaurants can earn \$1,000 to \$1,500 per month. For Chinese immigrants who work as a chef or cashier, the monthly wage ranges from \$2,000 to \$3,000. The owner of the restaurant usually pays less than \$400 per month for a waiter or waitress, whose wages thus depend on the average tips they can get from customers. In practice, the illegal immigrants have to work twelve hours a day and six days a week. The average hourly wage is about \$7.79 for the Chinese and under \$4.67 for the Mexicans. Through hiring the illegal immigrants mainly from China and Mexico, the owners of small businesses reduce production costs in order for their businesses to survive.



Although the hourly salary for an illegal immigrant is much lower than the national average, most Fujianese immigrants are very satisfied with their income in the United States. The great income disparity between China and the United States is a direct factor triggering the large-scale illegal emigration (Kwong, 1994; Heckmann & Wunderlich, 2000; Kyle & Liang, 2001). In 1992, the Chinese per capita Gross National Product (GNP) was \$370, which was about 1.70% per capita of the GNP in the United States. In 2002, Fujian's per capita GNP was \$1,600, less than one twentieth of America's per capita GNP. The monthly income per capita in Fuzhou averages \$130, while an illegal immigrant who works in a restaurant can earn \$2400 plus free board and lodging. In other words, a Chinese citizen would spend a year and a half earning the same amount of money as an illegal immigrant could earn in one month. In his study, Chin (1999) found that 61% of the participants cited money as their only motive for emigration. If the income differential between China and the United States reaches 1:2 or 1:3, Fujianese will not choose the United States as their emigration destination.

Five respondents (all males) in this study have been in the United States for over ten years. Three of the five have surprising similarities in age, origin, and career. They are all over forty years old, came by boat from Lianjiang County, and were fishermen before leaving. For them, poverty was the primary driving factor leading to illegal immigration.

*Chen* described his struggles in China and why smuggling was the reasonable choice:

I grew up in a poor family. My father was over soft-spoken and timid. When people in the village began to build new houses, we still lived in the house in a terrible shape. One time I was asked by female classmates about where my home was. I felt ashamed to tell the truth and pointed to a nice building. I did not finish my high school. At that time, education was not very important for farmers' children.

I found a job. I was neither lazy nor stupid. Conversely, I worked very hard and knew many skills to make a living. I was a fisherman most of the time. But a good

harvest depended more on the weather and my luck than fishing skills. Sometimes the costs I paid were higher than what I could earn. For example, I needed to buy the cadres a gift in order rent a ship; I should pay the gasoline; I had to mend the nets after I returned from fishing.

Later I found I could make profits by selling crabs. But I had to pay the protective fee to local bully. Otherwise, they would rob off my crabs. In addition, more people realized that selling crabs could be a profitable business. They poured into the market, which ended my businesses because of lower profits.

People around me started talking about foreign countries and smuggling. I heard and saw overseas Fujianese and how they were welcomed by villagers. I decided to change my fate by sneaking out. I was young and had a lot of strength. Even though the life in the United States is not easy, I never regretted about my choice. Now I drive Lexus. How possible I can drive Lexus if I had been in China.

*Wang* holds a similar view regarding the causes of illegal emigration from Fujian province. He stated,

As a fisherman, I could not decide my earning. Although I could earn one thousand Yuan (about 125 U.S. dollars) each month, my net income might be zero because of bad weathers. I came to the United States just for making a living. Some people say it is difficult to survive in America. I disagree with it. I believe everyone can make money as long as he works hard. However, hard-working cannot guarantee a better life in my hometown. Thus, I feel it is easier to survive in America than in China.

For military reasons (Fujian is closest to Taiwan), the Chinese central government has intentionally pulled heavy industries out of the Fujian province. Modern Fujian relies on light industry, agriculture, and fishing. The current economic model does not afford sufficient employment for the Fujianese. Improvements in transportation and loose population control have increased the mobility of labor. People from inland China pour into southern China provinces, such as Shanghai, Jiangshu, Zhejiang, Guangdong, and Fujian, seeking a job. Compared with their inland counterparts, Fujianese are more disadvantaged because the inland laborers ask for much lower wages and benefits (Mooney, 2000).

The difficulty in finding a good job was frequently mentioned and cited as the major

reasons for emigration among the younger respondents in this study. *Yun* is one of them.

She stated,

If I had a good job, I would not think about smuggling. After graduating from the junior high school, I was unemployed for a long while. Then I was accepted a factory making groves. My salary was three hundred Yuan per month, that is, thirty-seven dollars.

The working conditions in that factory were really harsh, especially during the summer when the workshop was like a food steamer. We put a barrel of cold water beside the sewing machine. Every few minutes we would have to wipe the sweat away.

Some persons from the sending areas were running businesses to supplement their household incomes. However, it is hard to be successful unless they take early action to find a great opportunity or unless they have strong social connections. Collaboration between the government and commerce has been a feature of China's commercial culture for thousands of years. Political power is even more robust than economic power. There are many examples in history and in the present describing how successful businessmen built up fortunes with the help of influential officials and how their enterprises collapsed as a result of political conflicts. The majority of illegal immigrants were born in peasant or fisherman's families that generally feature a lack of social connections, making them unable to operate or more disadvantaged in business.

Additionally, many small enterprises are on the edge of bankruptcy under the pressure of transnational corporations. There are three international retail magnates (Wal-mart from the United States, Carrefour from France, and Metro from Germany) and three domestic retail magnates in Fuzhou. Unless they are located near the schools, office buildings, and traveling spots, the grocery stores that once dotted the city cannot compete with the magnates who offer standard goods at lower prices. People who hope to own a small business to support their families are disillusioned. *Rong*, a new immigrant

mentioned a series of failures he endured in China:

After my grandmother had become the American national, my family applied for the relative immigration. We waited a long time for an interview held at the American embassy in Guangzhou. Everyone got the immigration permission except for me and my elder brother because we were over eighteen years old. After my family left for the United States, I started to do some businesses. I opened a restaurant, sold porcelains, and raised soft-shelled turtles for sale. But I failed in all trades. Fortunately, my father gets American citizenship and I can apply for direct-relative immigration that does not have age limitation.

But the situation in the United States is quite different. Jobs for illegal immigrants are relatively plentiful and do not have heavy requirements. For people who lack experience or skills, employers will provide training. A basic prerequisite for Chinese workers--no matter what trades they are in--is diligence, which is a character trait of Fujianese. The requirements for a waiter or waitress include age and appearance. People over thirty-five years of age have difficulty finding a serving job in the food industry although they common could ten years ago. In general, restaurant owners prefer younger female workers without eye-catching scars or birthmarks on their faces.

Fujianese newcomers go and seek refuge with their families and relatives in order to minimize the risks of being fired. Currently plenty of Chinese enterprises are running under a classic, family model. Take the restaurant as an example. The husband can be the owner; the wife will be the manager and cashier; the brothers are the chefs; and the sisters are waitresses. Since most Fujianese are able to get a firm foothold overseas, this already sends a message to potential immigrants and their families that smuggling is feasible. And with the growing number of Fujianese residing in the United States, the possibility of finding relatives or friends the newcomers can rely on has substantially increased. Therefore, there is a widespread belief that immigrating to America is a worthy investment that could eventually benefit the youth and their families. Nowadays there are

abundant employment agencies targeting Fujianese located on “East Broadway or on the corner of Eldridge and Forsyth streets” (Chin, 1999, p. 111). It is roughly estimated that the employment rate among Fujianese is over 90%, much higher than any other demographic group.

Chinese people under the market-oriented economic system often suffer from inconsistency between central and local governmental policies and inconsistencies in policies and enforcement. For most Fujianese, the future is uncertain both economically and politically. And the public is aware of the difficulties in commercial operations. Thus, it is not easy for people to borrow money for the purpose of starting a business. But attitudes are different if the money is used for emigration to a developed country (He, Wang & Xiao, 2004). Creditors believe that people working in the United States are more reliable in paying them back than those starting a business in China. In practice, outgoing Fujianese have established good credit through prompt remittance to pay off debts.

The public attitude toward people smuggling in Fujian province is that although the smuggling fee is as high as \$65,000, at present, a person can pay it off in two or three years. After that, every penny the immigrants earn belongs to themselves. And most jobs for illegal immigrants do not have such specific requirements as education. People can find positions according to their needs and conditions. For instance, a newly arrived young person can first work as a waiter assistant in order to learn restaurant English and basic serving skills. Several months later, he can find another restaurant, where he can be a formal waiter because his English has improved. When his English gets even better, he may work in a high-ranking restaurant for great tips.

The costs of human smuggling include the exorbitant smuggling fee, the danger of

traveling, years of hard work, and the risks of deportation. As mentioned earlier, an illegal migrant is able to pay off his/her smuggling fee in three years. Hard work is considered a necessary price for future success and it will totally change his/her fate. The risks of being deported can be minimized based on sufficient information and the negligence of the authorities. The trip from China to the United States has become fairly safe since airplanes replaced boats as the primary transportation. Emigration to developed countries for Fujianese therefore has become a way to “maximize household income and minimize risk” (Chin, 1999, p. 15).

### *Deterrence*

The purpose of punishment is to prevent or discourage people from the commission of crimes. *General Deterrence Theory* holds that “by punishing individual offenders we set an example for others and deter them from committing crimes” (Brown & Shelden, 2003, p. 241). *Special Deterrence Theory* argues that penalties will deter present criminals from committing crimes in the future. Therefore, punishment should be severe, certain and swift enough to have deterrence effect (Brown & Shelden, 2003).

According to articles 176 and 177 of China’s criminal law, returnees will get a sentence of one to five years and a fine. In reality, only those who have past criminal records or organized the smuggling of illegal emigrants are subject to the criminal law. Most returnees are considered victims rather than criminals by the authorities.

The majority of returnees face fines, short periods of detention, or reeducation through labor. A report from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the United States Department of State (2004) revealed that the fine ranges from \$600 to \$6,000. Several factors explain the great range of monetary punishment. They are “the region of

China where the illegal immigrants is returning, the country the illegal immigrants are returning from, the method that the illegal immigrants departed (whether by boat or airplane), and whether or not the individual was returned as part of a ‘higher profile’ group such as those from the *Golden Venture*, or returned individually and ‘anonymously,’ that is, without unusual official or international attention drawn to the case” (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2004, par. 5). Fujianese typically are fined a larger amount of money than the national average because Fujian province is a primary illegal emigration source and it has a higher economic level than most provinces in China.

The frontier guards who belong to the Chinese People’s Liberation Army are responsible for keeping returnees and those who failed in smuggling in custody and responsible for collecting fines. Male detainees may be beaten by the legal professionals to hasten fine collection. *Yun*’s brother-in-law talked back to the guards and was beaten seriously. *Yun*’s parents were warned to pay within one day; otherwise her younger brother was going to suffer. The families of many detainees live miles away from the house of detention, which makes it more difficult to pay the fines on time. The family members have to use long-distance transportation to reach the jails and hand in specific amounts of money in an effort to prevent their children from potential physical abuse.

Financial punishment has little deterrent effect on Fujianese illegal emigration when the fine is fully or partly paid by the snakeheads. The smuggling fee for some snake people includes the fines incurred either in China or in any other countries. At times the smugglers and their clients share the fines and such legal charges as those paid to American attorneys who bail snake people out once they are detained at the entry points.

Some illegal immigrants pay all legal fees by themselves because they have not made a contract with snakeheads (mostly in oral forms) to determine the shares of responsibility. According to a female respondent,

The snakehead would offer a guarantor and pay the bails that if we were under arrest in America; if we were deported, they would pay fines for us in China. Financial responsibility had been discussed before we left China. Even though it was just an oral contract, we and the smugglers would be subject to the terms. The outsiders think snakeheads invest little but earn a lot. It is a myth. People smuggling is a risky business requiring large amount of investment. I know someone has been bankrupt because of failures in sending the customers to the destinations.

The regulations in China's Administrative Penalties for Public Security specify penalties of detention from one to fifteen days. The American Consulate in Guangzhou maintained that the returned Chinese nationals faced up to a one-month detention in 1996. If the returnees have been deported more than once, they will receive the sentence of a one-year reeducation through labor. Chin (1997) interviewed people who were detained in the reeducation centers in China or who know the life of detainees. In his study, for example, a respondent's brother was confined at the Lujian Institute in Mawei, a district of Fuzhou. He started working early in the morning without sitting. He was not allowed to leave unless he finished the assigned jobs. The respondent noticed that there were thousands of illegal immigrants in the reeducation center, locked up together. Heavy workloads made the respondent's brother almost paralyzed. Having mercy on his brother, the respondent bribed a corrections officer for a lighter job.

Nearly every returnee is aware of the tips for gaining a merciful jail treatment. They employ all the human resources they have to trade for better conditions. As for those who lack such connections, short-term confinement hardly persuades them to give up smuggling plans. Rather, unfair treatment resulting from unequal social status will push



them to search for a free land.

Not only officers in charge of investigation but also the frontier force of the Army is believed to be involved in people smuggling. In the early stages of illegal immigration, more people sneak into the United States by ships than any other means. They were told in advance that the snakeheads had got around the legal department. When the boat left the port, the illegal immigrants found that all frontier guards had disappeared. Moreover, a frontier inspector said that his director wore a watch worth \$8000, which was impossible on his salary or other legal income. Connections between corrupt officials and snakeheads have reduced the risks of human smuggling.

Compared with other developed countries, like Japan, for example, the United States has lax immigration policies that make it an attractive option for human smuggling. The highest risk for Fujianese in Japan is random ransacking by the local immigration bureau. If illegal migrants are arrested, they will be deported without delay after the Japanese authorities inform the Fujian provincial authorities. The INS may check identification, but deportation rarely happens in the United States. As a whole, the immigration departments turn a blind eye to illegal emigration even if they know where the immigrants are and how to locate them. According to a respondent,

I was a waitress in a small town. I liked working there because my boss was very nice and we were like a family. But someone told me that sometimes the INS would come to check ID. I really terrified. I had to go. Then I found another restaurant to work. Before I agreed to work here, I asked my boss whether the INS would do some checking for Chinese. He said “no” and then I made a decision. You know, we cannot take any risk in the United States. It is a tragedy both for my family and me if I was deported.

Lee Kuanyao, the former Premier of Singapore, told reporters in 1994 that the continuous pressure of China by the United States on human rights had caused “a

breakdown of order in China that could drive millions of Chinese to seek refuge overseas” (cited in Smith, 1997, p. 15). The asylum policy that was first codified into U.S. immigration law in 1980 allows any alien to apply for asylum status as a result of credible fear of prosecution “on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” (Wang, 2001, pp. 348-349). In 1996, the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) specified China’s One-Child Policy as a legal political reason for granting political asylum status. The provision protects a person who has received forced abortions or involuntary sterilization or who has been prosecuted for refusing to undergo such a treatment or who is discontented with the coercive population-control policy (Kung, 2000; Wang, 2001). Once uttering the words “political asylum,” the chances of remaining in the United States are 93% (Melhman cited in Barbour, 1994). Chinese citizens are allowed to gain asylum status through providing evidence, such as the receipt of a fine or medical records of forced abortions from the hospital. These documents, either real or forged, can be obtained without difficulty in China.

The asylum policy has been further abused by the snakeheads to help the snake people enter the United States At New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK), there were 63% excludable aliens (9,194 out of 14,688) asking for political asylum in 1992. After filling in the application, scheduling the preliminary hearing, and fulfilling a would-be short-term detention, the applicants will be released and get work authorization, and a lot of them will never appear on the court docket (Melhman cited in Barbour, 1994). A respondent in this study reported to the authorities and claimed his asylum status in a calm manner at the airport. *Chen* further explained how this policy in

practice prevents them from deportation although it has granted many fewer Fujianese legal status:

My wife really suffered from forced abortion. I submitted the notice of administrative disciplinary and the receipt of fine as evidence. The judge showed her pity and gave me the asylum status. I am lucky just because I came here early. If someone apply for political asylum by the like reason today, it is very difficult to pass. However, everyone would have a try. Let me tell you a tip If you failed in the court, you should say “yes” when the judge asked whether you have money to pay the airplane. Then they will let you go. You just disappear, find a new job, and the life is the same as before. But, if you say “no,” they may detention you, buy you a ticket, and send you back.

The life in American jails is not as harsh as in those in China. *Xin* was arrested because she held a passport that did not belong to her. She was sent to a jail for minor children. According to *Xin*,

The passport belonged to a twenty-seven-year old Japanese lady, while I was only sixteen at that time. Of course the immigration officer could not believe in my nationality. They sent me to a jail for children, where the youngest one was only six who smuggled with his mother. I was questioned for a couple of times, asking for the reasons of illegal emigration. I was too young to know anything about political asylum, so I told them I was forced by my parents to leave. I was in fear in the beginning because I could not predict my future. Then someone told me children would not be deported and usually be released within two months. I thus was not afraid any more.

We were treated quite well in the jail. Someone taught us English in the morning and we played in the afternoon. Knowing that the likelihood of deportation was limited, I preferred staying there longer to learn more English. I would not have this kind of opportunity after I left the jail. I had to work to repay the balance and nobody would teach me.

Amnesty by the United States government, at the same time, has encouraged illegal immigration from Fujian. The Chinese Students Protection Act of 1992 authorized permanent residence status to Chinese students who came to the United States for the Tiananmen Square affair. The policy later was expanded to include any Chinese nationals who arrived before April 16, 1990 (Wang, 2001). The snakeheads took advantage of the

Chinese Students Protection Act. During this time, a great number of illegal Fujianese immigrants were smuggled into the United States under the arrangement of the snakeheads. These later-coming illegals applied for legal status by providing fraudulent evidence to show that they came before April 16, 1990.

Some people who do not qualify for political asylum or who miss the opportunity for amnesty or whose asylum application has been overruled are still able to get legal status with the help of their children. According to the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, “all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the States wherein they reside.” The child of illegals who was born in the United States can automatically acquire citizenship based on the Fourteenth Amendment. When the child is twenty-one years old, he or she is qualified to apply for permanent residence for his/her parents who are illegal immigrants. Although the whole procedure may take more than ten years, most illegal Fujianese immigrants believe that they can finally become legal resident through their children.

Since the late 1970s, a Chinese family that has violated the One-Child Policy has had to pay a fine to the government, and pregnant women could be compelled to have induced abortions. Chinese citizens should provide the receipt for the fine as well as medical records of forced abortions as testimony at their prosecution. These documents can be obtained either in China or America for a certain amount of money. Because it is hard to verify the authenticity of the documents, judges could reject the petitions of people who truly suffered and grant legal status to those who did not with the help of experienced attorneys. Liang’s application for asylum status has been shelved time and

again because the authenticity of documents he provided was doubted by the district attorneys and judges:

What I said to the court is a true story. My wife endured forced abortion and I was physically threatened. After they took actions to my wife, the village cadres came to my house to arrest me for a birth control surgery. Being informed by friends in advance, I flee away before they arrived. Since the cadres could not find me, they were so angry that they took the roof off, smashed a set of new furniture, and broke the door by axes.

At the court, the district attorney collected evidences against me. He told the judge that the documents (including hospitalizing proof and some receipts) were for sale in New York China Town. Therefore, it is also possible that what I had presented was false. I believe whether a person can get legal status or not depends on his luck rather than the truth. Compared with other Fujianese who came in the early 1990s, I have a bad fortune.

Some immigrants submit an application on the grounds of religious persecution. They claim the Chinese government had offended their religious rights by means ranging from restricting meetings to imprisonment. These applicants are mostly single, young persons who are ineligible for identification as sufferers of the one-child policy. Nevertheless, it would be a hasty conclusion to say that appeals based on religious prosecution are generally based on fake evidence because house churches have long been flourishing in such areas as Changle City and Lianjiang County. Nevertheless, only a small portion of religious applications can be approved.

It is said that Fujianese immigrants hold two grand banquets in their lifetimes: one is for their wedding and the other is held after legal status is granted. The banquet is not to celebrate the end of prosecution but to celebrate their good fortune. Even though only five thousand political asylum entries are available worldwide each year, it has become routine for illegal migrants to seek legal status. After the applicants win their case, it still takes as long as seven years for their directly related members (spouse and children) to be

listed as asylum seekers and then transported to the United States.

### *A Learning Process and a Sense of Deprivation*

The basic theme of Sutherland's Differential Association is that criminal behavior is learned through interaction with other persons in a process of communication.

Differential Association Theory rests on the assumption that criminals hold similar motivations as conformists, such as aspirations for success. The former act illegally, whereas the latter do not because they are put into different social environments (Brown & Sheldon, 2003). Fujianese first learned about an outside world from their overseas relatives or friends in the late 1980s. Being impressed by the material prosperity of western countries, Fujianese who were eager to shake off poverty tried lawful emigrations at first. When the door for legal emigration gradually closed for various reasons, a portion of Fujianese began to risk their lives to be smuggled into their dream land. The success of these early snake people to some extent proves the feasibility of smuggling and the considerable rewards resulting from illegal emigration, therefore encouraging more Fujianese to imitate or model their behavior.

Fujian is a mountainous province with limited natural resources. Even working all year round, some Fujianese still could not provide enough food for their family. Poverty has drawn thousands of Fujianese out of their homeland since the Ming Dynasty, first to Southeastern Asia, then to Europe and America (Kyle & Liang, 2001). The early immigrants became successful in their host countries as a result of diligence and wisdom. After gaining a fortune, the overseas Fujianese sent money back home and rebuilt grand houses and ancestral graves, as well as invested in public education and transportation. When they returned to their homeland during the festivals, the overseas Fujianese would

live in a first-class hotel, treat local residents with high-level banquets freely, and hand out cash or gifts among relatives, friends, and neighbors. The community was envious of the lavish lifestyle of the overseas Fujianese, who specially generated a sense of relative deprivation among residents without family members abroad (Liang & Ye, 1996; Chin, 1999).

In some villages of Lianjiang County, most people have immigrated and left their houses behind. But they retain ownership because selling houses is an inauspicious event. Rather, they will return with great assets to build an imposing house in the neighborhood to honor their ancestors. When magnificent buildings are built through overseas remittance, local residents are inspired by the changes of immigrants who once were as poor as themselves.

The local residents accordingly are eager to follow the steps of earlier immigrants. They ask relatives or friends abroad to help the youth leave. With the development of communication, the residents can easily contact “capable persons” who might help send their children abroad at work age (Richards, 2001). Having grown up in a culture promoting consanguinity links, overseas Fujianese would like to help out. After a person left for the United States, gained a position, and paid off the smuggling fee, he would prepare for his brother or sister’s smuggling because prosperous clans are considered to be more important than successful individuals. Consequently, immigration networks based on patriarchal clans and friendships were formed in the sending and host countries, and an increasing number of Fujianese are involved. Today it is not uncommon for the average Fujianese to have some overseas relatives, and the percentage is much higher than in any other of China’s provinces except for Guangdong.

In this study, two respondents had parents in America before they came; seven respondents had close relatives here, consisting of brothers, sisters, cousins, and aunts; and the connections of the rest when they were smuggled into the United States are unknown. All the respondents received various help from their friends and relatives after they landed in America. Most respondents stated that they had no courage to struggle alone in a foreign country without the assistance of relatives and friends. Admittedly, the majority of respondents made the decision to be smuggled under the direct or indirect influence of overseas friends and relatives. For instance, Lei was encouraged by his aunt to find new opportunity in the United States after he sold out his restaurant in China and had nothing to do.

When they are not poor, young Fujianese are not as eager as the older generation to smuggle to the United States. Nevertheless, most youth finally yield to social and family pressure. “Families with children old enough to emigrate are looked on as inferior if those children do not make the attempt to leave” (Richard, 2001, p. 21). The young people without any plan to emigrate will be considered good-for nothings or lazy (He et al., 2004). In contrast, the more family members there are overseas, the more respectability a family gains (Kwong, 1994; Heckmann & Wunderlich, 2000).

Changxi, a village with a large emigration population in Fuqing city, has a specific smuggling culture. Nearly all males under forty years of age have smuggled out, including nine out of ten of their college graduates. Some of the respondents in this study tried illegal immigration under the pressure of their parents or other family members, such as their spouses. *Xin*, a respondent from Changle City, was subject to her parents’ will. She told me about how she became an illegal immigrant.



I came to the United States in 1997 when I was sixteen-year-old junior high school student. In my hometown, many people smuggled to foreign countries. In the 1980s, they rushed to Japan; since the 1990s, they poured into America. Each household I know had at least one child in the United States. They usually left when they were eighteen or nineteen years old. I was a kind of too young.

I did not want to come, but my parents pushed me out. I guess it was because I was the eldest child in the family. They took it for granted that I should be responsible for the family and younger brother and sister.

Another respondent, *Zheng*, likewise, did not take economics into consideration while making up his mind to leave for America because he was the only successor of a large restaurant enterprise in Fuzhou City. He tells his story as follows:

I have five elder sisters, and I am the only boy child in the family. My parents opened a restaurant in the early 1980s. Because their business started early, it was quite successful. I was spoiled by parents and sisters. I dropped out the school and became crazy about dance. I always went to Fuzhou City, where the first-class dance halls had at that time. I switched from one dance hall to the other, trying to find the best of the best. Sometimes when I brought friends or relatives who were Chinese-Americans with me, the girls would show special enthusiasm. I felt envied. I wanted to be just like them.

Because my parents have a lot of relatives overseas, I had opportunities to visit foreign countries and areas. I had been to Hong Kong three times, so I used to plan to immigrate to Hong Kong legally. But my girlfriend insisted to go to the United States. Through the help of my cousin working for a company in another province, we got the short-term labor visas that allowed us to lawfully stay for half a year.

Similarly, *Qing*'s eighteen-year-old brother is thinking about emigration after his peers have called for him time and again:

My brother did not want to leave home. My sister and I also oppose his coming. Our youth has been elapsing in the restaurants. We do not want our only brother to follow our steps. I told him if he really wants to come, he should come legally. It is pitiful if he stays without lawful status. My brother has a best friend who immigrated seven years ago and now has two restaurants. He keeps inviting my brother to the United States. I think my brother has been moved by his stories. Now he starts talking a lot about America.

### *Social Strains*

*Strain Theory* argues that people behave aberrantly under strains. The strains are the

products of dissociation between culturally defined aspirations and socially structured means. According to different reactions among people, Merton proposed five models of adoptions: conformity, rituality, innovation, retreatism, and rebellion. Except for conformity, the models are all considered deviant or criminal behaviors (Cao, 2004). The emphasis on the accumulation of wealth and power as the symbol of success in a society leads to a disregard for considerations of how that wealth was obtained. Fraud, vice, corruption, and crime prevail when achieving success through legal means becomes impossible (Merton, 1938).

China has become a society stratified by political and economic background. People with power and fortune are on the top level, followed by those with power but less wealth; people with fortune but lack of political power are on the third level; and people without money and social connections are on the bottom of the pyramid. Sixty-seven percent (six out of nine) of the families of the respondents in this study belonged to the fourth stratification prior to emigration, 22.2% (two of nine) could be classified into the third category, and 11.1% (one of nine) could be classified as being between the third and fourth levels. To get their heads above water, the lower-class people attempted to improve their social status through gaining wealth. Obviously, the safest and fastest way to achieve this for most Fujinese is to work in a developed country, like America. *Yun* described the frustration her family suffered because of lack of economic and political power:

After I left the school, my parents had continued to persuade me to sneak out. But I did not really want to. I suddenly made up my mind because of a conflict between my family and the neighbor.

My neighbor was an influential figure in the village. His daughter worked for the court and his son-in-law worked for China Custom Service. His other children also held decent jobs. The return of his children always put on quite a show. One day, he

told my parents that he planned to rebuild his house. Since we lived in the countryside where people used to share the foundations and walls, my parents concerned about the safety of our house. Therefore, my mother asked for few months grace for us to raise money so we could build houses together. However, he refused our request and insulted my parents. I was furious. At that night, I decided to leave. I wanted to earn a lot of money so that nobody could humiliate us.

## CHAPTER 5: VOYAGE TO THE UNITED STATES

According to Wu (2005), with respect to the smuggling fees, there have been five surges of Fujianese illegal immigration since the 1980s. Between 1982 and 1983, early illegal immigrants paid \$15,000. From 1985 to 1986, the snakeheads raised the smuggling fee to \$18,000-\$20,000 per head. Clients would go through checkpoints to reach Hong Kong, fly to Central America, and cross the United States-Mexico border. In 1987, Thailand became a transit port for people smuggling, where smugglers purchased fake or valid passports and visas with which the snake people could take a nonstop flight to the United States. The average smuggling fee at this time was \$25,000. The sea route was exploited in the 1990s in order to organize hundreds of snake people and grab greater profits. A would-be illegal immigrant would pay \$30,000-32,000; thus, the value of cargo was usually over \$6,000,000. Recently, the smuggling fee has risen to \$65,000 in the City of Fuzhou.

Few people smuggled into America before 1988 were detected by the authorities. Only one out of twenty-three people arriving in 1989 or before was apprehended, according to Chin's statistics (1999). Beginning in 1990, the detection rate increased. Although the rate declined again in 1991 and 1992, the total number of Fujianese illegals gradually decreased after law-enforcement agencies tightened border control and enforced strict deportation after the Golden Venture incident in 1994. The detention rate among illegals who took air routes was 73% higher compared to the whole population (64% vs. 37%) (Chin, 1999).

In the early stages, ineligible Chinese entered America with the help of *mom and pop* operations. The snakehead took three-to-five Chinese each time and smuggled them into

the United States one by one, charging thousands of dollars for each. The snake people would be allowed to repay the smuggling fee in monthly installments. But with the growth of business, particularly when the smugglers employed boats to carry human cargo, it became extremely hard and risky to collect money separately at different times. As a consequence, the snake people were asked to pay off the smuggling fee no later than several months after they arrived at the host country. *Lin Tao Bao*, a Peruvian-born Fujianese, was the first snakehead to set up safe houses for his clients; nobody was released without full payment. Some persons demanded down payments before they left China. The smugglers then used the money to pay transportation, hotels, and food.

Zhang and Chin (2004) described nine categories of snakeheads: recruiters, coordinators, transporters, document vendors, corrupt public officials, guides, crew members, enforcers, and debt collectors. The concept of coordinators is obscure, but the coordinators definitely play a vital role in the illicit operations. They usually have a specific relationship with primary links, such as government officers and transporters. Without their participation, it is impossible to either leave China or enter the United States. We should also distinguish transporters from guides and crew members. For example, snake people went aboard a fishing ship in a Chinese harbor. The ship carried migrants to a cargo vessel waiting in international waters. The people who steered the fishing ship were transporters. Later, Chinese migrants disembarked in Mexico. Snakeheads hired some Mexican guides to lead them across the border to Texas, USA. Crew members were those working in the mother ships. Enforcers usually were illegal immigrants who helped the crew do some cleaning, as well as distributed food and living supplies. There are controversies about whether there are corrupt officials who provide

services as snakeheads. It is believed that they are more motivated by money and sometimes do not care about who will benefit from their services. Not all roles are required in each air, sea, or land route. People coming by ship generally do not require the participation of document vendors; only the sea route requires crew members; the guides serve specially for the land route. Generally recruiters, coordinators, and debt collectors are necessary for all people-smuggling operations.

### *Introduction of Current Sending Regions*

Unlike the early migrants, who were mainly from Guangdong, the current flood of illegal immigrants predominantly comes from Fujian, a province in Southern China. Einhorn (1994) stated that “as many as 100,000 Fujianese lived in New York in 1994 and that an additional 10,000 enter every year” (cited in Kyle & Koslowski, 2001, pp. 190-191). In addition to the United States, Japan and Taiwan are the other most common destinations. The smuggling fee is the highest for people smuggled to the United States; Japan has the strictest immigration control, prohibiting the illegals from applying for residency and immediately deporting the arrested ones; Taiwan is less risky (because of its short distance from Fujian Province, smuggling there is easier and safer) but offers lower financial rewards (because of the lower incomes undocumented workers can make). Accordingly, each route is monopolized by a certain ethnic group. People from Changle City and Lianjiang County prefer the United States; people from Fuqing City choose Japan; and migrants to Taiwan are mainly from Pingtan County.

Fujian, known as *Min*, is a mountainous province; roughly 90% of the area is covered by hills and mountains. With a 3,324-kilometer-long coastline, Fujian has a well-developed water transportation system. The province has a population of more than

thirty-four million, comprising people of the Han, the She, the Hui, and the Gaoshan ethnic groups. Since China has enacted reform and open policies, Fujian has led in economic liberalization, along with Guangdong province. Fuzhou City became one of the first thirteen coastal cities to open; Xiamen City was one of the first four *economic special zones*. In 2002, Fujian's per capita gross national product (GNP) exceeded \$1,600 and ranked seventh in China.

Taiwan is closely associated with Fujian in many respects. Over seventy-three percent of Taiwanese are descendants of Minnanese in Southern Fujian. In the year 2000, investments from Taiwan made up one third of Fujian's total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Meanwhile, serious crimes committed by Taiwanese increased. Beginning in the 1980s, organized crime groups began to smuggle vehicles and drugs into Fujian. However, nowadays they are more involved in people smuggling because of the relatively low risks and huge profit.

Fujian is considered to have the most complicated and diverse dialects in China. The most prevalent are *Minnanhua* in Southern Fujian and *Fuzhouhua* in Eastern Fujian, particularly the areas surrounding Fuzhou City. People cannot understand each other if they speak different dialects. For most Fujianese illegal immigrants, *Fuzhouhua* is the only tool for communication.

Fuzhou City is the capital of Fujian. Two major regions sending immigrants to the United States (Changle and Lianjiang) are under its jurisdiction. As early as the first century, Fuzhou had commercial intercourse with Southeast Asia. In the fourteenth century, Fuzhou became an important port for foreign trade. The Peace harbor of Changle City was a base for Zheng He's (a Chinese navigator) fleets from 1405 to 1433.

Historically, Fuzhou was well known for its shipbuilding industry and ocean transportation. It was the birthplace of the Chinese navy of modern times. With respect to its frequent communication with outsiders, Fuzhou has a long history of emigration. Today 2.5 million overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Europe, and America are of Fuzhou origin. The overseas Fuzhouese contribute to China's cultural, economic, and educational development.

The percentage of agricultural laborers in Changle City and Lianjiang County was 87.3% and 90.3%, respectively. Because of the limited amount of cultivated lands in Fujian province, the local economy relies on overseas remittance. Changle is a famous *overseas Chinese village* (Qiao Xiang), with \$100 million of gifts and investments flowing in annually (Hood, cited in Smith, 1997). Of the hundred cities with the highest economic competition in China, Changle City ranked eighty-fifth in 2003. The only international airport of Fuzhou is located in Changle City. Lianjiang County is located across Mazhu, a frontier island of Taiwan province. The government of Fujian built a tax-free trading port there to facilitate small businesses for both sides. Lianjiang County is also an overseas Chinese village. In Lianjiang County, Guantou and neighboring Tingjiang are the largest immigrant sources. It is estimated that 1.6 million Chinese people in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan originally came from Tingjiang (U.S. Department of State, 2004).

Myers (cited in Smith, 1997), a leading expert on Chinese smuggling, concluded that more than ninety percent of illegal immigrants are married males who have left their families behind in China, which is quite similar to the early migrants from Guangdong, China. Fujianese people, in general, are loyal to their spouses and strongly responsible to



their children. Males who forsake their families in China would be accused of being immoral and heartless. Consequently, his connections with his sending village would be cut off. The principle of Fujianese emigration is “male first, and nuclear family members first,” which means money made by the seed population should be used to pay for shipping his adult sons (if not, his brothers), then his spouse and minor children, and then sisters to the United States. After the whole family is reunited, they would pool all their money to buy a small business. For Fujianese, it is usually a restaurant where wives, sisters, or adult daughters are cashiers or waitresses, husband and brothers are chefs, and teenager sons do odds and ends in the kitchen. Fujianese like to hire *zijiren* (our own people) who will not steal money and are lenient with stingy customers. Once Fujianese migrants make enough money from their business, they consider bringing members of their extended family (cousins or the in-laws) and close friends. The newcomers can be alternative laborers for a pregnant wife or an owner who is tired of working in the restaurants. This emigration model based on kinship and friendship is efficient in accumulating wealth and expanding influence.

### *Methods of Smuggling*

*The sea route.* It is not clear when smugglers explored the sea route, but some social scientists contend that it was the invention of the Vietnamese. During the Sino-Vietnamese war, the Chinese youth were forced to join the military and sent to the frontier in Vietnam. Chinese-Vietnamese had no choice but to escape into China. Most of them settled down in Guangxi, China, which borders Vietnam. Some of Fujianese origin chose to return to their hometowns. Dissatisfied with their lives in China, some Vietnamese plotted leaving for Hong Kong, where they could gain refugee status and

transfer to other countries. In the summer of 1989, those camped in the overseas Chinese state farm of Fuqing City of Fujian successfully departed China by sea. Wang and Zhou (2005) considered this incident to be the trigger for Chinese sea smuggling. No reliable evidence shows accurately the scale of sea smuggling after the overseas Chinese state farm incident, but the first boat, “the *I-Mao*, a Taiwanese cargo ship carrying 131 passengers, near Long Beach, California,” was not intercepted by U.S. authorities until 1991 (Chin, 1999, p. 63). During the first half of 1993, eight Chinese smuggling vessels were discovered by the United States Coast Guard. They were the *Manwanji*, with 180 immigrants, on January 25th; the *East Wood*, with 527 Chinese, on February 3rd; the *Beauty Fish*, with 243, on April 23rd; the *Bai Chang*, with 169, on May 24<sup>th</sup>; the *Angles*, with 120, and the *Parrot*, with 150, on June 2<sup>nd</sup>; and the *Golden Datong*, with 1999, and the *Golden Venture*, with 300, on June 7<sup>th</sup>. The frequency of smuggling ships near the United States warned the law-enforcement agencies of the seriousness of Chinese illegal emigration. The United States government decided to take decisive measures against sea smuggling from China. The United States Coast Guard and Navy were empowered to board and check suspicious ships and prevent them from entering America. Immigrants were deported directly back to China or a third nation so that they could not apply for asylum status, which is for those landing in the United States.

The Golden Venture incident, in which eight Chinese drowned near New York City, precipitated the decline of sea smuggling. Afterwards cargo ships with higher safety and better equipment were used to ferry a small number (usually under ten) of Fujianese migrants. They would then be transferred to private boats when the cargo ships approached the United States.

In spite of improvements by authorities, dozens of smuggling ships enter undetected. Chin (1999), based on his interviews with 300 Fujianese immigrants, estimated that “between October 1987 and September 1993 at least eighty-nine ships and some passengers were involved in smuggling activity without being apprehended” (p. 64). The sea route is relatively fixed: most ships go through the Pacific Ocean and then unload in Central America or the United States. Only a few, such as the *Golden Venture*, took the Atlantic Ocean line. If the ships unloaded in the countries of America, for example, Mexico, Fujianese migrants were escorted overland by local guides. In general, the snakehead would not use airplanes to continue.

There are two major reasons why the sea route became popular between 1991 and 1993. First of all, there was an increasing demand for smuggling services and allowed the smugglers to make large profits quickly. A big difference between the sea route and overland and air methods is the number of snake people involved. A smuggling ship is able to take hundreds of migrants each time, compared with less than twenty by air or land route. In addition, sea smuggling is less complicated. Documents and their vendors are not needed, so snake people can save much time in not waiting for passports and visas as smuggling by air requires. The crux of the sea route is threefold: a strong relationship (a) with Chinese law-enforcement agencies that will encourage them to look the other way when the ship departs China; (b) with the fishing trade to find an appropriate vessel and a loyal crew; and (c) with Chinese-American underground organizations so that migrants can be picked up near the United States, unloaded in the seaports, and confined until the smugglers receive their money. Second, the influx of Fujianese immigrants was one of the side effects of Taiwan fishing reform. “Without providing any alternative, this

policy change drove several hundred owners of such ships out of business and created a new business--smuggling groups purchased these ships and refitted them for carrying illegal immigrants” (Wang, 2001, p. 349). The officials of the legal system have confirmed the active role Taiwanese ships played in illicit smuggling. A large number of vessels detected were either registered in Taiwan or owned by Taiwanese, or employed a Taiwanese crew. Myer (cited in Smith, 1997) further reached the conclusion that sea smuggling was under the control of the Taiwanese.

Unlike overland and air smuggling, most sea smugglers rent a vessel first and then recruit snake people. The time between the ship being ready and deportation is always very tight. The recruiters must find as many snake people as possible; otherwise, it becomes a losing proposition. Therefore, the down payment is often waived, and the recruiters have to make up stories to cover the danger of sea routes. Although some would-be migrants have heard terrible stories about the smuggling ships before they make up their mind, the reality often proves to be much worse than expected.

The snake people, on average, change ships three times during the voyage. They first take a small boat for a few hours in order to catch the smuggling ship in international waters. Sometimes it might take the boat another several hours to find its mother ship in the designated place because of bad weather or low visibility. It is not hard to imagine how dangerous a poorly equipped ship with ten-odd people is at sea. If snake people fall into the water while climbing into the mother ship, the chances for them to survive are nearly zero. Jumping from the mother ship to the receiving boat near U.S. waters is another risk because snake people may be crushed if the two boats collide. Some people break their legs on the receiving boats when they jump. It is not uncommon for illegal

immigrants traveling by sea to lose their lives.

Because many smuggling ships were refitted from fishing vessels, they are in poor condition and unsuitable for a long journey with hundreds of migrants. The majority of ships have neither sufficient food storage nor sanitary equipment. The *Golden Venture*, for example, spent 425 days on the sea, crossing the Strait of Malacca, the Indian Ocean, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Atlantic Ocean. There were three days that the migrants had no food.

*Tian* was an illegal migrant from Changle City. He took the train from Fuzhou to Hanzhou (the capital of Zhejiang province) and reached Shipu by bus. At midnight, he and two hundred other people boarded a small, wooden boat in batches. They were transferred to a freighter called the *Sea Wolf*. More than one hundred seventy male migrants were packed into a base cabin no more than 160 square meters. They ate rice gruel with a 10-gram mustard tuber for each meal and drank a half bottle of mineral water a day (Wu, 2005).

*Chen*, a forty-year-old respondent from Lianjiang County, was an enforcer on the boat. He was diligent and kept himself busy all the time. Other than maintaining order and distributing food, *Chen* cleaned the bedrooms for the crew. The crew members appreciated his work, so they often gave him extra food. When reminded of the experiences of smuggling, *Chen* considers himself a lucky man.

I came to the United States by ship eleven years ago. The crew treated me well because I worked so hard on the boat. If they had some food left, they would give it to me. In addition, I often got something from other illegal immigrants who did not like the food or when they felt sick. As a peasant, I was such a big eater that I could eat up all I had. I was not intelligent, but I knew the importance of health, which is the capital to make money in the United States and repay my debts. I think I am fortunate enough even though the trip could not be regarded as a comfortable one. My cousin who left China illegally by ships two months later than I did almost

starved during the trip For some reasons, they spent more time on the sea and ran out of food before they reached America. Finally, they collected all of the White shirts and burned them to attract the attention of the United States Coast Guard. When the White shirts were burnt, the smoke is strikingly black. The United States Coast Guard easily located the boat and rescued all of the people.

But one thing *Chen* could not stand was coldness at nights and the inability to take a shower during the forty days.

We were packed like sardines on the deck. Each person got a very thin blanket which was not warm enough at night. Some passengers and I sewed the blankets together and hugged each other tightly to keep warm. Because of this experience, we become most intimate friends. During the 40 days trip, we never took a shower and constantly feared of being discovered. After getting to New York, the first thing I did was to take a shower. I will never forget the feeling. I was full of relief and felt so comfortably clean.

To avoid discovery by the authorities, snake people were prohibited from the deck in the daytime. The crew locked the snake people in the cabin, which lacked fresh air and sunshine. Migrants slept, ate, and urinated in the same place. People who felt seasick also threw up there. Since there was no extra water to clean their bodies, a lot of people got skin diseases.

In the first several days, the snake people were excited about heading for the United States and got along with each other. They talked a lot about their domestic careers and the way they had financed the down payment and smuggling fees, as well as their great aspirations for life in their new country. Friendships might break up when snake people faced the scarcity of food and other necessities. People from the same native village united to protect their interest as best they could. The leaders of each group were responsible for watching whether their villagers got as many supplies as the others. Fights erupted frequently between different groups just because of subtle differences in distribution. Some people were beaten and even stabbed nearly to death until the crew

fired the gun. However, sometimes fighting was only a way for males to show masculinity before female snake people.

Fujianese have the characteristic of a gregarious nature. In many villages of Changle City and Lianjiang County, people have the same surname. Although they have individual houses and private lives, socialization with relatives and neighbors remains very important. Being a member of an ethnic group brought a sense of safety and belonging to snake people who were far away from their families, while those who came from a region sending few people were extremely lonely and vulnerable to violence. They obtained less food, became forced laborers for other people, and endured robbery and abuses for no reason. Some of them still do not have the courage to remember their traumatic experiences during sea smuggling even to this day.

Usually only about ten percent of passengers on a boat were females. They would share a bedroom above the male cabin, but under some circumstances they had to stay with the males all the time. On the one hand, thanks to the scarcity of females, they were cherished by male passengers and the crew. *Yun* was a teenager when she was smuggled out of China. The following are her words:

The men made silly remarks on us. They elected the beauty among us, discussing our hairstyle, dressing, skin, and even gait. They would do everything to please the girl they loved. Then I was eighteen years old with long hairs. I never left my village prior to this trip, so I was very naive. A boy from Changle City was well disposed toward me. He was cute and gentle. One day there was no food but a piece of chocolate. He begrudged eating his and gave it to me. I did not want to accept it because I knew he was hungry, too. But he said, "I am a man. I could stand hunger. But you are a lady who is not as strong as me. Do not forget that we have to work as soon as we arrive in the United States. You should be aware of your healthy." He watched me eating the whole chocolate. At that moment, I really wanted to marry him after we got out of the ship.

On the other hand, women were vulnerable to sexual assault from either other snake

people or the crew. The females would be denied food and water by the sailors for several days. Then, the crew would present delicious food and eat before them. Some females finally yielded to pressure to avoid the fate of starvation. Or the crew would pretend to be merciful to the females when they suffered from thirst and hunger. They would imply they wanted a sexual relationship as a reward. Or the crew would mix sleeping pills with water or food and female passengers would lose consciousness. When they woke up, they had been raped (Chin, 1999). Among male snake people, the enforcers were the most likely to take advantage of female passengers. Enforcers were also illegal immigrants but always placed themselves above the other snake people. They would utilize strategies similar to those of the crew to exploit females.

Virginity is critical for any Chinese unmarried woman. When the female found out that she had been sexually violated, she was so grieved that she wished to die. Some committed suicide by jumping into the sea. Mental agony not only came from the victims themselves, but also from other passengers who had no sympathy for their tragedy. Some ruffians teased these women in public, considered them to be dirty, and even attempted to take advantage of them. If their requests were rejected, they would insult the female with scurrilous attacks.

Though nearly all the reports regarding sexual abuse focus on female victims, it did not eliminate the possibility for males to be sexually assaulted. On the *Jung Sheng* in July 1995, “a sixteen-year-old male passenger was repeatedly forced to masturbate in public. Moreover, two male passengers were forced to perform anal sex in the open. Some of the passengers were so traumatized by the experiences that they tried to commit suicide.” (Chin, 1999, p. 75) Growing up in a country where homosexual behavior was still



unacceptable, such mental scars were very difficult for males. They might relive these nightmares their whole lives.

*The air route.* Sneaking out by airplanes is safer in general and more comfortable than sea and land smuggling, so it is preferred by females and migrants with minor children. But air smuggling calls for a high degree of technical competence, such as passport-photo substitution and the forging of a U.S. visa, which often causes long-term delays for Fujianese in the transit countries. There are several indispensable steps to sending an illegal migrant to the United States by air. The first step is to recruit customers in some overseas Chinese villages of Fuzhou City. The recruiters can be very common people, for example, housewives who chat with their neighbors in order to gather information about who is searching for a snakehead, whether the family is able to collect the smuggling fee, and the potential customer's background and personality (to assure that he will not bring any trouble to the operation). Currently, the smugglers mainly recruit customers through referrals of relatives or friends because of the fear of being betrayed. The referees have to stay in the middle of the negotiations until smugglers and their clients build sufficient trust. The air route, unlike sea smuggling, involves no more than five people under most circumstances (Chin, 1999).

The second step is to obtain a Chinese passport. Nowadays it is not difficult for a would-be migrant to apply for a passport for ground travel. With China's economic development, many Asian countries (such as Thailand and Singapore) welcome Chinese nationals to visit their countries. For instance, a person who pays \$350 can enjoy a five-day Thailand tour. He signs a contract with the travel agency without any security deposit. And he gets verification for his future international travel for which the Public Security

Bureau will issue a five-year passport. Among all the itineraries for Fujianese, the Thailand route is the cheapest and most popular. But some snakeheads recommend that their clients choose the Singapore-Malaysia-Thailand itinerary. Many guides in Thailand have complained about the negative effect of the flow of Fujianese on their income:

It is impossible to pay off the hotel, food, transportation, and entrance tickets with three hundred and fifty dollars. So we have to add some “special” programs to this trip. But many Fujianese refused to spend one more cent on these. They just came for the passport with which they could smuggle to a developed nation. As a professional guide, I can easily tell who are prospective snake people and I know they are. Being a guide in Thailand is not only to provide some service for tourists, but also an investment. I lost much money when the touring party was filled with Fujianese.

The door for Fujianese from Changle City and Lianjiang County to get a passport has been closed because of international pressure. In 2004, Changle residents were denied access to passport application for months. When customers have difficulties in obtaining a Chinese passport, snakeheads will provide the service for several hundred dollars. They prefer buying passports from provinces where few people want to emigrate, such as Guangxi, to avoid unnecessary attention from the legal authorities in the transit nations.

As soon as their passports are ready, Fujianese migrants will fly out as members of a tourist party to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, or other countries. But when there were no folk-travel treaties between China and other Asian countries before 2000, migrants would go to Hong Kong or Myanmar as their first stop. Usually, they took the bus to Shenzhen (a city of Guangdong province bordering Hong Kong), pass through the Luohu Hostel, and arrive in Hong Kong. At this time, most snake people held a legal tourist visa issued by Thailand, Malaysia, or the Philippines with which they were allowed a seven-day stay. The smuggler would find a way to get his clients out within seven days. Otherwise they would pursue a doctor’s medical report for patients for an extension of stay for health

reasons. For the smuggler to arrange a direct flight to the United States, he either purchased a visa from people working in the American consulate or hired someone to steal passports from alien nationals exempt from needing a visa from the United States authorities (for example, Japanese) and substituted photos of snake people for those of Japanese in countries such as the Philippines (Hifumi, 1995). If a direct flight was not possible, snake people were most likely to be moved to Thailand, which was also the destination for the Myanmar line. Fujianese migrants took a bus or train to Kunming (the capital of Yunnan province), then hid in the truck to pass through checkpoints or crossed the mountains to enter Burma. Many of them had to cross the Burma-Thailand border through jungles to avoid discovery by the army and local people. The venture would take one week to ten-odd days. Migrants could lose their direction in the jungle even with an experienced guide. If their guides ran away for some reason, it became extremely difficult for them to survive and find their way out. Media accounts have revealed the fate of Fujianese when they attempted to cross Burma's jungles.

Illegal emigration from Fujian, China, is not a secret in Thailand. In its capital, Bangkok, there were some hotels owned by Thai people of Chinese descent providing services to smuggled Fujianese. According to some respondents, policemen in Thailand would stop travelers who looked like Chinese and order them to present identification. As the smugglers had instructed, undocumented Fujianese would bribe these officials with one hundred dollars. In return, they were escorted wherever they wanted to go. It is universally accepted that Thailand is the most important one among over fifty transit countries for Fujianese emigration. Fujianese would be sent to Europe, Central America, and south Asia prior to entry or would travel directly to the United States via Thailand.

The critical issue was whether the smuggler could obtain a visa (either fake or valid) to help Fujianese get on an airplane bound for Canada, Mexico (then land smuggling), or America.

Some migrants went to the United States consulate in the transit country to apply for a visa with a photo-substituted foreign passport. In order to comfort their clients so that they would act normally at critical moments, the smugglers would arrange for fancy hotels, delicious food, and nice touring. At the same time, training and rehearsal were necessary. Everyone was taught how to properly answer questions asked by different officers. Before leaving for the United States, migrants had to throw away personal belongings which have the mark *Made in China*.

Some left China with two passports and two tickets. They used their Chinese passport and a ticket to reach an international airport where they were supposed to switch to a plane to a third country. A snakehead waiting there would guide them to another lounge where people who had flown to the United States had been gathered. Snake people were told to immediately destroy their Chinese passports. Once they boarded the airplane, they had succeeded in immigrating to their dream country, the United States.

Some snakeheads would take advantage of America's status as a transit port of international airlines and would transport their human cargo this way. *Wei* was a fisherman in Lianjiang County who came to the United States illegally in 1991. *Wei* first took a train from Fuzhou City to Beijing (the capital of China), where he got a legal labor visa to the former Soviet Union. In Russia he found his snakehead, who gave him a set of international tickets with a destination to a third country but stopping over at New York City. After the airplane landed in America, *Wei* did not follow the other passengers to the

airport lounge. Instead, he walked over to the authorities and claimed asylum status.

After arriving on American soil, illegal immigrants generally have two choices. If the passports and visas they hold are genuine, they can pass through inspection without any fear. If the passport and visa are fake, the illegals may still walk out of the airport under careless questioning and checking. However, the smugglers suggest that their clients destroy their travel documents and flush them into toilets as soon as they get off the plane instead of risking passing the checking points. Or an escorter assigned by the snakehead will take everything back on another flight for future clients. Fujianese migrants, once landing in the United States, report to the authorities that they are undocumented and enter the United States for political reasons. They are taken to a separate room and questioned by immigration agents. They describe the severe persecution on them in China and that they had no choice but to escape. All the details have been rehearsed many times on their trip, so the immigration officials cannot tell whether it is true or not. After filling out some documents, snake people are confined in the detention center for several days and set free on a bail whose cost is shared with the smuggler or completely paid by the snakehead based on an oral contract. Most Fujianese migrants have a good time during their detention and do not worry about their fate at all. They know it is a part of a legal procedure that will eventually lead to their release. Because of the shortage of space in New York and Los Angeles detention centers (the majority of Fujianese illegals land at the JFK and Los Angeles international airports), some illegal immigrants are even released without any detention or bail.

*The land route.* Canada and Mexico are the most common last border-cross stations into the United States. Fujianese migrants are brought into Canada and Mexico either by

ship or air. There are various routes for them to arrive in these two countries. For instance, they may start from Hong Kong, stay in Thailand for several days, fly to European nations, enter Canada with a photo-substituted passport and visa, and be smuggled overland into the United States.

An easier way to land in Canada is to get a valid or photo-substituted Hong Kong passport with which migrants can enter without a visa. After entry, some Fujianese find an educational institution that can offer them a Canadian student visa so that they are able to cross the border without strict inspection. Most migrants refuse to spend much time waiting for a student visa; they want to be smuggled as soon as possible. According to Yates (1997), there are at least four ways to fulfill this purpose. First, illegal immigrants can hide in trucks or individual cars that are driven by non-Asian drivers to prevent drawing extra attention from the authorities; second, immigrants attempt “land crossing from Canada into the United States via an unmanned portion of the border,” but the detection rate is high; third, the safest and most successful way is to utilize “high-speed boats and/or snowmobiles across the St. Lawrence River from Canada into New York state; fourth, migrants make their way to the United States via the Niagara River near Buffalo, New York, by unreliable inflatable rafts purchased in local stores (pp.164-165). After landing in the United States, Fujianese are picked up by vehicles that take them to New York City. They may be confined in safe houses and released once their families repay the smuggling fee.

The Mexico route was developed because of (a) the relative ease in getting a Mexican visa and (b) the safety of snake people in the host country (there are many Chinese working in Mexico, so authorities seldom check Fujianese’s identification). The

smugglers would transport Fujianese clients to Mexico as working laborers, tourists, or businessmen. If exported as laborers, the illegals generally have all the legal documents required to enter Mexico, including legal passports, legal contracts specifying a labor relationship with Mexican companies, and a legal visa from the Mexican Consulate in Beijing (the capital of China). They will bring the contact number of the Mexican company with them in case they are stopped by policemen. The phone number truly exists, and someone always answers the phone to verify their working status.

If Fujianese leave as travelers or businessmen, the investment in the venture is higher than the costs resulting from the strategies formerly mentioned. The smugglers at first use their connections with state enterprises, governmental departments, and private companies to obtain passports under their senior employees' names. They then fabricate an invitation letter for business inspections through people working for the provincial agency in Beijing or provide one directly from a Mexico firm, based on which they could apply for a collective visa from the Mexican Consulate. At the same time, the recruiters begin to search for appropriate clients. Once a visa is received from the Mexican Consulate, snake people become the senior officials or entrepreneurs on a business trip. They disappear after landing in Mexico and find ways to sneak into the United States. As a result of China's economic development, the Mexican government used to simplify the visa application and handling procedure for Chinese nationals, which aimed at receiving more foreign investment. Unfortunately, such an immigration policy brought as much benefit to smugglers as to genuine businessmen. In 2003, the Mexican government decided to suspend the visa agreement with China because of a sensational smuggling case involving officials of a provincial public-security bureau in China who issued

passports for ineligible Fujianese residents. (Fang, Huang, Liu & Liu, 2005)

At one time, it was common for Fujianese first to settle in the local hotels and then perhaps be transferred to crude huts in suburban areas before crossing the American border. If American border patrols reinforced controls, the smugglers would patiently wait until the situation was easier. Some snake people were detained in Mexico for several months or even longer. The longest time snake people were held up in Mexico, according to the words of a respondent, was seven years. It was reported that the person concerned died of lung cancer last year and he had only repaid one quarter of his smuggling fee.

To sneak from Mexico to America, the illegals had to climb the mountains, wade across the river, hide in the trunk of a vehicle, or walk through the desert. One of the respondents in this study was guided by the local people to climb over the mountain in the middle of the night. He marched without any packs to go faster. On the way, he had a brief rest in a hut. It took him two hours to cross the border when no patrols were on duty. He and three other snake people were picked up by a vehicle waiting there and were taken to an airport where they bought tickets to New York City.

The risk level of land routes, on the average, is between those of sea and air smuggling. However, it could be very dangerous if the guides get lost in the forests or deserts. A respondent's friend spent seven days climbing a mountain that they could have tramped over in few hours. Consequently, that group of people had to endure hunger, thirst, and fear of dying in the forest. They sometimes had nothing to eat but half a banana per person for the whole day. The females were so thirsty that they had to drink urine.

Reports of Fujianese abuse during the land trips are rare, but some snake people do



suffer at the hands of the authorities, snakeheads, and guides. Some Fujianese were kidnapped for ransom money; some were robbed and beaten severely; some women were sexual assaulted; and some even lost their lives in the deserts (Chin, 1999).

*Other smuggling strategies.* Smugglers and their clients can achieve their smuggling goals by the use of government projects or bogus marriages, as well as by *flying in the back door*.

*(1) Governmental projects*

Compared with individuals and private companies, governmental departments and state-owned enterprises in China enjoy more privileges and more flexibility in passport and visa applications. They can secure a collective visa for their senior directors and are not subject to individual interviews by the consulates. Some governmental officials submit photos of would-be illegal migrants to apply for travel documents in the name of their employees and put them up for sale afterwards. In some instances, almost all members of a governmental delegation have vanished after they arrive at their destination. In one instance, it was later proved that they had no relationship with the sending organizations and in fact were illegals from the province of Fujian. As a consequence, some social scientists have doubts about what role the Chinese government plays in illicit emigration. They suspect an active bureaucratic involvement in this lucrative business.

The presence of corrupt officials, however, should not be considered as evidence of the involvement of China's central government. China attaches special importance to its international prestige. It will not participate in national activities that may cause negative global reactions unless China's stability or the Communist Party's authority has been seriously challenged. Taking part in human smuggling would present the government

with high risks but low rewards. Furthermore, if China really wanted to profit from illegal emigration, it could choose provinces that are closer to the United States or have greater population or economic pressure. Or it could smuggle munitions to countries at war for higher profits and with less attention.

The reality is that the message from the central government about economic development as the first priority has been misinterpreted by local officials in Fujian province. They either think that cracking down on smuggling operations is not important until the international pressure is raised following Fujianese snake people tragedies or that any actions that could boost the economic development are good, including sending out Fujianese who in return support the local economy by sending back a large amount of capital.

*(2) Flying in the back door*

Since air routes have been invented around the world, smugglers have begun to take advantage of loose administration at airports to transfer human cargo. To avoid inspection requires collaboration with working personnel who are responsible for airport security, with employees of international airline companies, or with both. A respondent in this study paid fifty-eight thousand dollars to fly through the back door. His venture was like the reproduction of a *007* movie in the real world. The plot was a plan to disguise him as an airport staff member and to have him go through inner passageways connecting international airlines. Prior to deportation, the snake person had to wear the uniform and walk through the airport hall twice, one time in which he passed the inner passageways. This process was intended to increase his confidence. The purpose was to impress the snake people and to make sure that they would be calm under actual conditions.

When the day came, the Fujianese immigrants were divided into several couples, each consisting of a female and male. They wore the uniforms and hung on identification tags. They got on the buses for the working personnel and went through two check points. When my respondent and his partner were inspected at one of the points, the security guards looked suspicious but did not stop them for further investigation. After inspection and before entering the cabin, they took off the uniforms and hung them on their arms like common suits. They showed their tickets to the airline attendant and were allowed to board.

In this case, the illegals held sub-photo passports so that they would not receive either regular customs or border-frontier inspections. When they took the staff bus, they had a set of tickets with them. These tickets and boarding cards were obtained by the smugglers from the airline companies. The staff at the boarding gates, bribed by the snakeheads, added them into the computer system so that the number of people checked through the boarding gates was equal to that of people actually boarding the airplanes.

### *(3) Bogus marriages*

Because traveling to the United States with counterfeit documents has become increasingly difficult, Fujianese-Americans with citizenship or permanent residency are encouraged to take advantage of their legal status once or more in their lifetimes to make money. A female respondent in my study told me that every time she returned to Changle City, someone either familiar or unfamiliar with her would try to persuade her to enter a fake marriage with local men for thousands of dollars.

American citizens are preferred by smugglers who arrange for bogus marriages, followed by permanent residents, and then refugees. According to U.S. immigration law,

a national can bring his/her spouse to the United States without a long waiting process (although it takes several months from application to landing in America), and the beneficiary will get a temporary green card that will be changed into a permanent one two years later based on evidence of a true marriage.

The smuggler, in this case, first finds customers in China. After making an agreement with potential immigrants and receiving a down payment of about \$10,000, Fujianese-Americans controlled by the snakeheads start sending letters to China in order to create an impression that they are building an initial communication with a Fujianese. These correspondences sometimes will be written by the smugglers if an ideal Chinese-American is not available but a would-be immigrant has been found. The envelopes, to a great extent, are more important than the contents of letters. The snake people need the postmarks to prove contacts with their so-called spouses. Some letters are so simple and obscure that the name of the Chinese American will not appear until the date of interviews by the Guangzhou Consulate is decided, in case one party quits the business. The smuggler arranges a date between *the couple* in China. Snake people pay the fare for their American partner. The airline tickets are used as evidence of their connection during the visa interviews. After a period of time, an international marriage would be registered in China because from that an immigration application can be legally filed. The couple has a luxury banquet for relatives and friends, who probably know the truth and come as actors. The wedding must be video recorded so that one day it can be evidence presented to the immigration officials. On the day of the interview, some *responsible* smugglers command Chinese-Americans to accompany their *spouses* in order to improve the success ratio.

The smuggling fee for bogus a marriage is currently seventy thousand dollars for one person. The rate increases if the beneficiary has minor children with him/her. In some cases the marriage is real, but the couple will sell their quota of minor children to a family who can afford the thousands of dollars in smuggling fees; some middle-aged Chinese Americans will falsely get divorced from their spouses and seek prospective immigrants by themselves; some potential legal immigrants will sell the titles of their spouses to those who could not achieve the American dream through legal methods. For instance, a female is able to legally immigrate to the United States after her father gets legal status. She can easily find someone who is willing to become her “husband” by paying tens of thousands of dollars. The couple will both be interviewed by the U.S. embassy. Under most circumstances, the officials emphasize some questions about the father-and-daughter relationship. The female has to answer most of the questions, and her *husband* is seldom allowed to participate in the conversation.

Some young American nationals use bogus marriage as a way to gather initial capital for their businesses. All the majority of Fujianese know is how to make a living in the food industry. They lack the necessary information and skills to operate other kinds of businesses. Currently, Fujianese with the intent of running a carry-out restaurant need at least fifty thousand dollars to set up their business; it costs more to open a dine-in or buffet restaurant. Therefore, some people cannot resist the temptation to earn easy money. Despite the variety of bogus marriages, it is difficult for the U.S. authorities to detect them, and therefore, it is difficult to refuse a visa. The officials at the U.S. embassy in Guangzhou City are aware of bogus marriages; thus, they demand applicants to prove their marital relationship, but a professional smuggler can gather all required documents

that are even more detailed than those provided by a real couple. An official having any concerns about the validity of a marriage has the right to defer offering a visa and to demand the supplemental materials. However, they usually issue an immigration visa because there is no conclusive evidence to prove their doubts.

### *Make a Payment*

In the early age of human smuggling, the smugglers were mostly American citizens of Chinese origin who transported two or three snake people each time. The down payment was not necessary, and snake people were allowed to pay back the smuggling fee month by month. Such loose arrangements did not last a long time, and full payment was soon required for almost all snake people, particularly after shipping enabled snakeheads to carry hundreds of people at once. Among 288 respondents in Chen's study who owed the balance of their smuggling fee upon arrival, 38% percent claimed that the balance was paid by family members in the United States; 37% made payment through their families in China; and 16% paid part of the fees in China and the rest in America. Further, Chen stated that the methods and time of smuggling and the regions where the snake people are from influenced the ways the smuggling fees were paid. Specifically, people coming by boats were mostly likely to be detained, and full payment was demanded in America although the rate has gone down since 1993; people from Changle city mostly paid off their smuggling fees through families in China, while those from Lianjiang County paid in the United States (Chen, 1999).

All respondents in this study came after 1990 and thus paid at least twenty thousand U.S. dollars to the smugglers. None of them was able to pay from their own family. The respondents first borrowed money from relatives and close friends. The

remaining--as high as 100 percent of smuggling fees--was from usurious loans with 1%-3% monthly interest. If the borrowers (usually the snake person's family) have good credit in the neighborhood, they can borrow money directly from the usurers; if they are not creditable enough (poor reputation or living in poverty), one or more guarantors will be presented to borrow money. In the latter case, it is unnecessary for the snake person and his family to know the lenders because all the deals are made between guarantors and usurers. The usurers give cash to the guarantors, and the guarantors collect monthly payment from the snake person's family and then pay the usurers. If snake people suspend payment (usually for health reasons), usurers can demand the balance from the guarantors. Because of the high risk, the vast majority of guarantors are the close relatives of snake people. Meanwhile, although some underground financial institutions offer usurious loans, most usurers are individuals with overseas relatives in the villages. According to *En*, his father paid as much interest as the transportation fee itself.

I am from Langqi Town of Mawei County, a famous oversea Chinese village. Twelve years ago, my father decided to venture in the United States when he saw many villagers made a fortune through going abroad. My parents borrowed the smuggling fee from the loan sharks. Consequently, we paid two or three percent of interests each month. We could not get any help from relatives and friends because they were as poor as us at that time. And some of them went for the same trip as my father.

My father was arrested while landing on the United States He was imprisoned for ten months and could not make a phone call. Meanwhile, there was a rumor that someone on the smuggling ship had died. My mother cried and prayed for father all day long. Finally we got a message from father after he was released. Since then my father worked in the restaurant. The first job he got was doing odds and ends in the kitchen and the salary was eight hundred dollars a month. Four months later, my father got promoted and his wage rose to one thousand and two hundred dollars. It took four years for him to repay the balance, which included the thirty thousand dollar smuggling fee and thirty thousand dollars interests.

The situation changed when *En* decided to follow his father's steps:

My family did not plan for my deportation. Before I left, father had sent tens of

thousand dollars home to buy a new house. Therefore, he had no money to afford my transportation. My mother went out to borrow money from relatives and friends. Because people trust her, they were willing to lend money and even waive the interests. I borrowed little money from the loan sharks for one percent of interest.

Ideals such as cooperation, commitment, and support are believed to characterize the Chinese nuclear and extended families, the neighborhoods, and the communities. A community orientation is preferred to an individual orientation. The individual is taught that the family has priority over other social ties. The independence within the nuclear and extended families consists of economic and social support. Thus, Fujianese snake people rely on a snowball model to transport other family members. That is, the family member who came earlier is responsible for the smuggling fee for other members as soon as he/she pays off his/her own debts. If the snake person has a big family in America, he or she has little to worry about. Some people may not have enough money to redeem their relatives, but they do have connections for borrowing money at low interest. A respondent in this study has helped his two nieces by pooling money from friends. He said,

When my first niece arrived, the smuggler called me and asked how I would handle it. I told him that I would take the responsibility. Then I had spent my savings on buying a restaurant, so actually I did not have much money. I raised loans from various sources and pooled the balance in a short time. When my second niece came, I was paying for more shares of the restaurant. I did the same to collect sixty thousand dollars. I never give my nieces any pressure. They pay me back month by month. Once when I was in urgent need, I would ask several thousand dollars. Later I helped them to lower the interests from three percent to two percent, then to one percent.

All the respondents in this study paid the smuggling fee in China through their families. After they arrived at their destination, they called their families to inform them of their entry. Because of terrible accidents that once happened to potential illegal immigrants (some snake people were abducted by the smugglers to another city in China



and forced to falsely notify their families of arrival in America. Their parents paid the balances but later found the murdered corpses of their children), most respondents used code words designed in advance to talk with their parents. However, sometimes the snake people did not know where they were and provided the wrong information to their families. A great number of illegal immigrants are villagers who have no opportunities to travel around China, and some even never visit a city except for their hometowns. When they are surrounded by signs written in a foreign language and people of a different color, they think they have come to America. This is why some families paid the balance shortly after their children went into Thailand: the snake people believed they were in China Town.

After landing in the United States, people coming via the sea or land routes may be transferred between cities. In theory, they may escape to avoid payment. In practice, such incidents rarely happen for the following reasons. First, it is more dangerous for a foreigner to hang around, especially when he or she cannot speak English. Second, the smugglers have invented a variety of methods for tracing the snake people, including with the help of American law-enforcement agencies. When the illegals run away, the snakeheads inform the authorities by telling them that they are dangerous criminals, such as terrorists or spies. Third, it puts extraordinary risks on the snake people and their families in China. The family members will be physically or mentally threatened; the fugitive will be severely tortured and usually killed if captured by gang members hired by the smugglers. Chen described the experience of a fellow villager who could not pay off the balances:

I know a man who traveled with me was beaten almost to death by the gang members. He is my villager. His family was so poor that nobody was willing to lend

them money. He held the idea of leaving thing to chance, so he boarded the boat with us. When we arrived America, each of us was required to pay the balance. Of course he had no money. The gang members who guarded us took him to the beach and beaten him by hammers covered by cloth. They thought he was dead and then left him alone there. He survived but lost his ability to work. He is good-for-nothing and loiters about New York China Town all the time.

## CHAPTER 6: LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

### *Working Conditions*

*Introduction of major Fujianese-American industries.* The majority of Fujianese immigrants take occupations in the food or garment business. With the overdevelopment of Chinese restaurants, construction companies are booming and attract a number of males who prefer flexible schedules and higher pay and who have fewer English communication skills.

The garment industry experienced unprecedented prosperity in the 1990s but has been on the decline for a decade. Legal workers face competition from the continuing influx of undocumented aliens, who are driven to undercut the wages formerly paid for sweatshop jobs. “Contractors in New York who asked \$3.75 for one piece of sewing in the 1980s offer to do the same job plus cutting the garment before sewing for \$1.75 in the 1990s,” and roughly one dollar in the 2000s (Kwong, 1997, p. 190).

Parallel with the decline in wages was the reduction of working hours. During the 1990s, many garment factories opened early in the morning and closed far into the night. Employees were encouraged to work more than sixteen hours per day; their children worked on the weekends to help parents; doing some tailoring at home was allowed for people who wanted extra money or who could not withstand the factory’s suffocating working rhythm. Workers ate by the sewing machines and drank little water to avoid going to the restrooms so that they could work most efficiently. Today in New York City, to the contrary, the garment industry is in a prevailingly depressed state. Workers have fixed workloads and flexible schedules. They can choose either to come later or to leave earlier. Accordingly, monthly income for professional sweatshop labor is about \$1,500, in

contrast with \$3,000 in the late 1990s. The young people thus turn to service trades, such as restaurants; middle-aged or older people mostly choose to stay because of lack of language skills and courage to shift to a new career. *Yun*, however, left the garment industry while it was booming. She explained her choice:

I had working experience at a grove factory in Mainland China, so I thought it would be easier to make money in the garment industry. However, it turned out that my products could not comfort to standards. Consequently, I had to unravel the threads and re-knit them. When I did this, I could not help crying. I felt sorry for myself and kept think of the large amount of debts. I did not know how long I was able to repay it if I continue to make waste products. One month later, I called my uncle for help I said, "Please help me. I could not earn enough money to pay off my smuggling fee." My uncle felt sympathetic to me. He said he was going to open a new Buffet restaurant and I could work there.

Unlike the situation in the 1990s, when Fujianese took control of the food business through defeating early immigrants of Guangdong origin, present competition is between restaurants owned by people of Fujianese origin. There are three types of Chinese restaurants in America: carry-out, eat-in, and buffet restaurants. The take-out restaurant is Chinese-style MacDonald's (fast food) that features a smaller scale and less capital to start. "More than a thousand Chinese take-out restaurants were in operation in the New York metropolitan area in the early 1990s, almost 90 percent of them owned by Fujianese" (Chin, 1999, p. 116). The key for business success is to find reliable cashiers and dexterous chefs. The customers either walk in or call to place an order, so cashiers should be familiar with the menu and understand some customers' special requirements for food. Generally, carry-out restaurants have few tables for customers to eat in. Cashiers are also waiters or waitresses who provide basic service. In some areas, such as New York City, cashiers are responsible for some cooking (like making fried rice and frying chicken wings).

Chefs of a carry-out restaurant are less skilled but must be quick workers. Most materials (for example, vegetables, meats, and sauces) are prepared earlier in the week. What they need to do for cooking is to put raw food in, shake the pot, and add sauces. It takes just a few minutes to make a common dish so that the customers waiting in the line will not be impatient. Chefs in the carry-out restaurants are males mostly under forty years old so that they can put up with an intense working rhythm. To attract customers, most carry-out restaurants provide free delivery service within fifteen miles. Such a service is actually a double-edged sword: it can promote sales, but on the other hand, the restaurant would lose customers if delivery cannot be made on time. *Yun's* brother-in-law does delivery, and customers have been less satisfied with his restaurant.

The sales in the winter were much worse than usual. To attract customers, we sent menus to the households and began to deliver. My brother-in-law is the delivery boy because he is the only one in the restaurant who can drive. But he does not speak English. And he cannot read maps and signs of streets. Each time I had to get very detailed information about how to get to customers' houses from our restaurant, instead of solely inquiring their addresses. The delivery was always delayed by my brother-in-law. Some people were so impatient that they would call in to ask where their food was. One time I received a call after my brother-in-law left about half an hour. The customer was so angry that he said our restaurant was a "\*\*\*" place and he would never order again.

The eat-in restaurant was originated by Cantonese who served home-made food for villagers employed in the mines. Since the first day they appeared in the United States, Chinese cuisines have held an important position in American food industry. The early restaurants retained the spirit of Chinese cuisine by serving authentic Chinese food, which required time-consuming and complicated cooking. Up-to-date dine-in restaurants combined Chinese and American styles to meet the various needs of customers. One example is the introduction of many fried foods. Therefore, chefs in the eat-in restaurant should have knowledge of traditional Chinese cooking and American flavor. Furthermore,

dine-in restaurants have higher standards for waiters or waitress in such matters as appearance and English fluency. The waiters and waitresses should not only understand the orders, but also communicate well with customers.

The buffet restaurants were originally started in Japan. Chinese businessmen soon borrowed the idea and made it flourish in the United States. Buffets become popular because customers can eat whatever they want by paying a fixed, usually low, price. The size of the buffet restaurants varies dramatically, as do the number of dishes and workers. The restaurant can be as small as a carry-out restaurant, able to accommodate no more than forty people with a bar serving twenty kinds of food. The buffet restaurant merges the features of carry-out and eat-in restaurants: the customers can order a single dish to dine in, take out food chosen from the buffet bars or menu, and even call for delivery. To take orders or make deliveries can bring profits that only account for a small portion of sales. The major purpose for doing this is to attract customers with convenience. Admittedly, the operation of buffet restaurants has put dine-in and carry-out restaurants at a disadvantage.

The weak link of buffet restaurants is that the quality of food cannot be guaranteed. Food quality refers to the taste and freshness rather than the quality of materials. Unlike dine-in and carry-out restaurants, which cook according to order, buffet restaurants rely on rough estimation in preparing food. If fewer customers come than estimated, dishes heated by steam will change color and turn harder. The restaurants, however, do not want to change food before the plates are almost empty. Less fresh and delicious food, on the other hand, discourages customers from returning. The cooking arrangements and disposal of food have become the dilemmas faced by restaurants whose slack business

slows food preparation and whose finances are too weak to stand wastes. On the other hand, a newly opened restaurant should be resolute in getting rid of undesirable food. Particular attention is paid to appearance and palatability of dishes. The new owners know the importance of their first clients: they will have to satisfy the most hypercritical customer.

The present buffet restaurants tend to be more spacious and luxurious, encompassing international food (including American, Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolian styles), fruits and salad, desserts, and ice creams. A medium-size restaurant has difficulty keeping its business because it cannot provide as many foods as its large competitors do. It is no doubt that customers would choose the latter when the prices are the same or only slightly higher.

Waiters and waitresses in the buffet restaurants are mostly new arrivals who speak little English. Unlike those in the take-out and dine-in restaurants, customers in the buffet restaurants seldom order from the menu. Accordingly, the waiters and waitresses have few chances to hear orders. If they do, many customers point to the menu so that they can understand. But they have to be familiar with drinks and understand clients' simple requests for service. In addition, they must be fast because the buffet restaurant is typically the busiest among the three types. One of the fundamental requirements for recruitment is to hold four or five glasses filled with soda at one time. The full-time waiters and waitresses are customarily in charge of the salad and fruit bars, which require basic knowledge about American cuisine.

The top priority for a brand-new buffet is to compete for customers with its peers around the area. Assurance of long-term interest rather than the amount of beginning

profits is the central issue in the early stage. Fujianese with strong monetary backups charge surprisingly low prices for food in the first year, forcing their competitors simultaneously either to lower their prices or to improve their menus. When the latter cannot survive huge economic losses and close their businesses, the former will start raising prices and making profits. It is the law of the jungle--the weak are the prey of the strong--in the food industry. In Michigan, a once-popular buffet restaurant has increased its discount rate from 10% to 15% on weekdays and weekends since September 2005, when a giant buffet enterprise opened its chain restaurant in a bordering city.

Pessimism as a result of malignant competition has spread among Fujianese. They grumble about the sudden opening of another Chinese restaurant in their neighborhood by their own villagers. Few people are optimistic about their financial future. Today they may be winners, but tomorrow they can become losers. Nevertheless, not many Fujianese dare to set foot in other businesses because of lack of knowledge, skills, and information. Running a restaurant is probably all they know.

Still, many Fujianese join the race despite the fact that the market has reached the saturation point. After working in the kitchen for a period of time, employees become familiar with restaurant operations, which are not complex. Fujianese prefer being self-employed to working for others. Owning a restaurant in the United States is a symbol of financial success and social status in the sending villages. It brings pride and joy to the family and clan. Parents are proud to tell their neighbors that their children have become an American boss.

What is equally important for Fujianese immigrants is that some assets are the spiritual sustenance for the family, making it possible for husband and wife to be together.



Young couples often unite with their relatives or friends to buy a restaurant if they cannot afford it alone. Even though what they earn after becoming owners might only be equal to their previous wages, the couple feels more unity and no longer takes orders from a boss. After they have children, they could settle down for their children to have a good education as long as the business is stable. On the other hand, if the business fails, they have to find new opportunities somewhere else. Children thus may not receive continuous education. They sometimes have to stay in the same grade longer than the average student. Moving frequently makes some children lose interest in studying. They do not care about their performance in class because they believe that sooner or later the whole family will leave. *Yun* sees the problems her friends have, which makes her realize the importance of running a successful business:

If the business runs well (I mean my husband and I can have a surplus of six thousand dollars per month), I will no longer work. I have been tired of restaurant jobs. I would like to be a full-time housewife, taking care of my babies. I had a low level of education, so I want my children better than me. My husband said if we have one daughter and one son, he would like the girl to be a doctor and the boy to be a lawyer (when she says this, she laughs). It is not easy, but having a dream is better than nothing. I want to be a good mother with a close relationship with my kids. Some of my friends gain a fortune, but could not get along with their children. These kids had been spoiled in China by their grandparents. One of my friends told me that her recently returning baby girl scratched and bit her. Although she is wealthy, she is not happy. I believe that nothing is more precious than my children. They are my future and hope. This is why I encourage my husband to look for a good location for business. But it is much harder today. Nearly everywhere in the United States you can find Chinese restaurants. The competition is crazy. You see my exhausted brothers-in-law, who are struggling for the economic survival. But without money, I am not able to bring my daughter back. It is costly to raise a child here.

*Slavery in a free society.* The employment relationship in the food industry is fairly subtle. The influx of undocumented aliens contributes to an abundance of cheap labor. The employers find workers by calling the employment agencies, and they bear no

expense. Based on conversations on the phone, an employee is chosen and will arrive in the restaurant within a few days. If the employer is not content with the employee, he will pay him a few days wages and give him a one-way ticket back to New York City.

Because the restaurant owners have exclusive power over employment, some of them use it as leverage to control workers. On the other hand, the employees are concerned about financial stability, so they tolerate exploitation rather than recklessly quit their jobs. Once unemployed, it takes about a week to find a new job, during which time they have to pay for living and food. After arrival in a new workplace, they may find that the real situation is not the same as what was promised by the employment agents. Five out of nine respondents in this study had the experience of being driven from pillar to post searching for a job. *Yun* is one of them. She said,

I cherished the chance working in my uncle's restaurant. In the first two years, I work twelve hours a day and seven days a week. I always vied for the hardest work. If I did not serve for the customers, I would help chefs to serve the food. Unless I was too tired, I would not go home and take few hours rest. Because of my diligence, my uncle trained me to be the waitress. I was excited and nervous at the first day. Since then, I could earn about three thousand dollars a month. I paid off the balance in two years.

I was happy with my job until my little uncle came from Canada. He liked me from the start but changed his attitudes since I kept good relationship with a coworker he hated. After that, he often ridiculed me before others. I was angry and talked back. Our relationship thus got worse and worse. I decided to leave as soon as the balance was paid off.

I jumped from one restaurant to the other because of the poor tips or harsh employers. For a while I passed through different places carrying with my luggage. At times, I tended to cry.

*Yun* is the oldest child in her family. She has a brother and sister. The former has been in the United States for four years. *Yun* wants to discipline him for his own good.

However, things have turned out contrary to her wishes.

My younger brother was a waiter and then became a chef because he could not stand any bully by customers. But after working in the kitchen, he had conflicts

with his employers. He quit the jobs quite frequently and transferred between cities. He had to afford all losses related to unemployment, which made him often short of money. Recently he got married and paid \$33,000 to his bride's family. I worry about him since he has not paid off the balance, and now he has new debts.

I agreed with his marriage because I wish his wife to keep him in a position longer. Unexpectedly, my sister-in-law is as lazy as my brother. I just talked with them and heard that they both left the restaurant where they worked because their boss did not treat them well. I really feel disappointed. How come my brother is so irresponsible? Doesn't he know how difficult it is to find a job now?

Maybe I am the one to blame. When my brother just came, I had paid off most of the balance. I wished my brother had a better life than me, so I encouraged him to study English and gave him two thousand dollars for tuition. He went to a learning program for few days and dropped out. He said the course was too difficult for him. I respected his choice although it made my heart ache to see such a waste.

My brother soon found a job in the restaurant, but he could not settle down. At the same time, he began to ask for money with various excuses. He would tell me his wallet was stolen and he was penniless. Since he is my only brother, I always helped out. I asked friends in New York City to give him money, and then I paid my friends back through money order in a few days.

I heard that my brother used to boast to his friends by saying that "my sister is very rich. I do not need to worry about anything. I can rely on her." I talked with my brother many times about the importance of holding a stable job, but he never listened. After I was married, I could not take care of him as much as before. Thus, he said, "My sister is a penny pincher. It is very hard to get money from her."

Another respondent, *En*, suffered from depression that was associated with enormous work pressure.

The owners of restaurants keep eyes on everyone. They make money through hiring as few workers as possible. If you work slowly, they would immediately fire you and find someone more qualified; if you have idleness, they would accuse you of laziness and assign you more work. They kicked out workers for various reasons or even no reason. For a period of time, I was so anxious about being fired. My roommates (co-workers) changed frequently. I did not know who would be the one sleeping next to me tomorrow.

Newcomers experience a period of discomfort and frustration. Some people adjust to the new environment quickly, while others do not. It is understandable because most young snake people did not work either inside or outside their homes in Fujian. Though the older ones had had work and social experiences, they would work leisurely. Chin (1999) argued that "illegal immigrants who had government jobs in China were the least

likely to adjust to the capitalist labor market in the United States. Accustomed to the work habits of Chinese government agencies, they were ill-equipped to adapt and often lost their new jobs in Chinatown. Many yearned for the lax working atmosphere that prevails in Chinese bureaucracies” (p. 123). Many respondents in this study maintained that their newly arrived friends could not stand American life. They could not get used to the restaurant food, they were too tired to have any desire to eat, and they were overwhelmed by the workload. Some people could not quit crying when they talked with parents and friends. A respondent cried sadly on the phone with her family for half a year.

On the other hand, employers do their best to retain capable employees. They value each hired laborer. Those who are competent will receive special treatment as a stimulus for consistently working hard. But when the business fails, most employers are unable to hold onto those docile Fujianese. People who leave, however, have their own explanations regarding betrayal. As *En* said,

Staying in the service trades cannot be a lifetime career. Few Chinese restaurants are hiring waiters and waitresses over thirty-five years old. Some former chief chefs now are doing odds and ends in the kitchens. The employers who showed respect to them now scold them for slow reactions. Accordingly, their wages decrease by fifty percent from \$2,500 to \$1,300 per month. They are in deep depression for the drops of both economic and social status. So do not be fooled by the benign behaviors of employers, who are the most ruthless when you are useless.”

Many Fujianese laborers consider their relationship with their boss to be only monetary, which is temporary and fragile. They talk about the continuous struggle between employers and employees. This is why they have to take personal interests into account and leave a low-paying job.

After working hard for many years, many Fujianese develop work-related physical ailments.

Restaurant workers complain of pinched nerves, back and shoulder pains, swollen feet, stomach cramps, and insomnia. Kitchen help can be temporarily blinded by the sudden rush of steam to the eyes from pots or dishwashers. Seamstresses complain of sore arms, headaches, dizzy spells, and heart palpitations. Bronchial asthma is common, caused by exposure to the chemicals used in treating fabrics. The worst problems develop from working with polyester, whose shredded fibers, if inhaled over a long period of time in the dry, unswept conditions of most workplaces, can cause nosebleeds and asthma. The most dangerous job, however, is sewing on buttons, because the needle can easily injure their fingers. Other times, snapped-off needle fragments inflict wounds in the eyes of seamstresses. (Kwong, 1997, p. 105)

Since most Fujianese illegal immigrants are young and strong, they do not pay attention to the early symptoms of illnesses or do not realize the seriousness of their health problems. Partly because of their illegal status and lack of English communication skills, few Fujianese seek help from the local hospitals when they are sick. Usually, they consult with family members, relatives, and colleagues who may not be experts in the medical field. Moreover, Fujianese generally do not purchase medicines from pharmacies even though their diagnosis is confirmed and corresponding drugs are recommended because they cannot read the instructions of various medicines and tell the differences among them. Most Fujianese have a supply of common Chinese medicines either sent by their family from China or bought in the Chinatowns.

When *Qing* entered the United States in the June 2002, she was an eighteen-year-old, naïve girl who had never seriously labored in China. To repay the sixty-thousand-dollar smuggling fee, *Qing* worked six days a week in a buffet restaurant owned by her relatives.

One day she suddenly coughed a lot and had a fever. *Qing* simply thought that she caught a cold and took some medicine. Her temperature came down afterwards, but she could not stop coughing after that. Although the employer was her relative, *Qing* hesitated to ask for sick leave until everyone felt that there must be something wrong with her. Several months after her first burst of coughing, *Qing* finally saw a doctor and was diagnosed with pneumonia. The doctor was sympathetic toward *Qing* and referred her to a public hospital so that she could get medical care and medicine for free. Recently *Qing* moved to another state, where she ran out of medicine. She called her former doctor and asked how she could obtain free prescription medicine. She was told to go to the local hospital and ask the nurses to contact her former clinic. Her situation would be explained on the phone, and relevant documents would be transferred after that. However, *Qing* kept deferring her visit because she did not know how to explain the whole situation to the nurses in the hospital. *Qing*'s friends later found some drug stores in New York's Chinatown selling the same medicines and requiring no prescriptions from doctors. They bought the medicine for *Qing* and mailed it to her. Even though she is able to continue her treatment, *Qing* decided to return to New York City, where she has easier access to both medical care and medicine.

Like *Qing*, unless their conditions have grown serious, many Fujianese will not ask for leave to see a doctor because it means continuous work without a day off for several weeks for other workers and, on the other hand, because they may face the misfortune of being fired if the employers feel they cannot work as well as usual. Most Chinese physicians in Chinatown prescribe some medicine rather than suggest a few-day rest without any work because they realize the difficulty of stopping Fujianese burdened with

heavy debts from working. Sometimes the patients even criticize physicians who do not prescribe medicines as quacks (Kwong, 1997). *En* described the experiences of his father, who has been in the United States for over thirteen years.

My father lost all his teeth in his early forties. He also has other kinds of diseases which inflict him from time to time. What destroyed his health are the extremely hard work and limited access to medical care. Since my father did not have legal status at that time, he was not qualified for low-cost medical care. If he went to an American dentist, he was unable to understand what the dentist said. He had to see Chinese doctors in the New York Chinatown, but that might take several days, and his employers could not allow for his leaves because my father was the chief chef in the restaurant. My father thus faced two choices: losing his job or tolerate physical pains. He always chose the latter for the debts he had to pay back and the aspiration to create a better life for us. Eight years after father left home, I saw him again at the airport in America. He looked much older than expected. I felt extremely sorrow for him. I hugged him tightly and cried out as if there were no one else present.

Most of the time, employers will provide living accommodations for their workers, particularly for those in the food business. But there are some exceptions; for instance, restaurant owners in New York City feel no responsibility to do so. In an effort to economize, employers will cramp as many workers as possible in a cheap place, usually on the ground floor without ventilation and enough sunshine. Poor-quality mattresses lay on the floor or “bunk beds are set up not only in bedrooms but also in living rooms and kitchens. In some apartment buildings one bathroom serves all the tenants on a given floor. Some apartments have makeshift showers constructed in the tiny kitchen area” (Chin, 1999, p. 122). Fujianese prefer purchasing a house to renting an apartment and then crowd workers into it if they are able to afford the down payment because they would rather pay a mortgage than rent, and the house will finally become personal property.

Restaurant workers usually return home after ten o'clock in the evening. All the people wait until it is their turn to take a shower. As they are waiting, they generally make

phone calls to friends or watch TV or DVDs in Chinese. Some persons like chatting with their coworkers about family, marriage, and children. Some have the habit of drinking beer every night. And gambling paraphernalia, such as mah-jongg and poker, is used mostly by male employees.

*Victimization.* In addition to diligence, Fujianese gain their wealth by working in fields that involve danger or that other ethnic groups are reluctant to try. Food delivery is an example. It assumes risks to property and life. Many delivering persons have had experiences of being victimized: food and money were taken away, and people were beaten or even killed. In 2004, at least five Fujianese were brutally murdered during their deliveries in New York City alone. *Wang* is the owner, chef, and sometimes delivery person of the restaurant when delivery boys are not available. *Wang* tries very hard to please the customers: he does delivery far beyond fifteen miles and outside of regular hours. Although *Wang* did not deliver unless the delivery boys were not available, he has been robbed twice. He described his unpleasant confrontation with criminals as follows:

I have been robbed twice during the few times I did delivery by myself since I opened this restaurant. For the first time, a young man called in for delivering food. He left the address, which was an empty apartment. Police said he entered the apartment through the window and waited for my coming. After I arrived there, he answered the door, grabbed food and money, and ran away. The second robbery happened after I had finished delivery. A black man out of the building approached me and demanded money. I struggled with him and was wounded on the face. (Are you afraid?) It was the conditioned reflex to fight. The purpose is to escape from the danger as soon as possible. The delivering boys I hired have similar experiences. One of them was beaten badly and hospitalized for a period of time. I paid for his hospital bills. Recently I got a phone call for delivery around eleven o'clock at night. I told the customer that it was too late to deliver, but he threatened to break all the windows of my restaurant if I refused to deliver. I finally gave in, but I was afraid of encountering another robbery.

It is estimated that ninety-nine percent of illegal immigrant crime victims do not file a report. Though some Fujianese are lawful residents, they hesitate to deal with the



authorities on legal issues. The gangs in China Town and some individual criminals take advantage of the Fujianese's attitudes and target undocumented immigrants. *Feng*, a tailor in New York City, described his fear when many Fujianese became targets of theft and robbery a few years ago. He said,

When I got out of work, it was about ten or eleven o'clock. I walked to my apartment alone. I saw some people wandering around the building. I was afraid because I recently heard some cases about Fujianese being robbed and beaten. So I did not go home directly. I kept walking on the streets with lights. When I returned to my apartment again, they had left. Then I felt safer and got into the building.

Undocumented immigrants are more likely to become the immediate victims of intense commercial competition. They share the misfortune of a failing business with their bosses: the former worry about unemployment, and the latter fear bankruptcy. When business is slow, the employers always wonder whether customers are dissatisfied with the service or food. Thus, the employees have to work harder to keep their positions and must endure unfair criticism from angry employers. In extreme instances, some restaurant owners report to law-enforcement agencies that some illegal immigrants are working for their competitors. The authorities pay attention to their information and take legal action, which results in the closure of restaurants and high fines. In addition, the undocumented workers are arrested and mostly deported. It is terrible if the returnees have not yet paid off their smuggling fees. Some have to retry illegal entry because their earnings in China are too low to pay even the interest.

### *Spiritual Hollowness vs. Material Prosperity*

One issue of high concern by undocumented immigrants are the debts resulting from transportation fees and interest. A respondent made use of metaphors that grasp certain realities to illustrate the fear among illegal Fujianese. He said that the reactions of illegal

immigrants to the authorities are similar to those of Americans to terrorists. This metaphor is not a proper one, but it somewhat represents their fear about being arrested and deported. If the illegals were sent back before they could pay off their smuggling fees, it would be a miserable situation for the detainees and their families. Because of this, some people have committed suicide in the Canton province jail in China before returning to their hometowns in Fujian province. Some returnees have disappeared and cut off any connections with their friends and families. Some returnees who have good credit in their communities borrow money to continue their journeys to America, which puts them into a state of high physical and economic risk.

Because many parties were involved in human smuggling (for example, snake people, their family, guarantors, and creditors), deportation has ramifications far beyond the deportees and their families. To protect themselves to the greatest extent, some undocumented immigrants live like rats in covered drains. As human beings, it is too early to lose their hope in life. During their day off once a week, they often hide in apartments rented by employers, feeling too insecure to leave their rooms. They are very nervous when someone approaches them and tries to have a conversation. What they deeply fear is not inability of communication but that these people may be undercover agents from law-enforcement agencies. Although the situation they imagine probably could never happen in most cities around the United States, such suspicions control their minds and prevent them from engaging in social activities.

Although not everyone is fearful all the time, the brave persons find it difficult to fill their spare time. During their day off, they will sleep until noon to rest up. They have to do some cleaning and laundry because their work clothes have been worn all week and

are dirty and smelly. They also have to cook for themselves. This is the only day during the week they avoid eating restaurant food. If the worker does not have transportation, it will be impossible for him to have any entertainment. If he stays at home instead of going out, he will feel how fast time goes by--he will hear the talking of his coworkers returning from work shortly after sitting down, relaxing, and watching TV.

To become a normal person, the vast majority of Fujianese apply for legal status by identifying themselves as asylum seekers. As the saying goes, Fujianese work hard to pay for the three *ous*: *shetou* (smugglers), *lushilou* (law firms), and *yidonglou* (wedding banquets). The married claim that they were persecuted by forced abortion resulting from China's one-child policy; the young, unmarried ones list events of religious persecution they underwent in sending villages. It would be hard to tell the extent to which the stories provided by Fujianese immigrants are true because everyone seeking asylum status has a similar story. Professional attorneys sometimes help their clientele to add details to make their stories more sensational.

Like patients selecting physicians, Fujianese immigrants feel more comfortable if they can communicate, even in awkward Mandarin, directly with their lawyers. So they like to choose Chinese lawyers, particularly those who can speak the Fujianese dialect. But some immigrants hold different point of views regarding attorney selection. They believe that American lawyers have stronger connections with the judges, which make them more likely to gain legal status. Therefore, the latter turn to an American law firm with Chinese assistants or hire a translator. It has been eight years since *Liang* filed his first asylum application, but he is still involved in the legal process, waiting for a final judgment. *Liang* has hired American and Chinese immigration lawyers at different times, which has

cost him over ten thousand dollars. He described his experience as follows:

My wife endured forced abortion and I was threatened to have a birth control surgery. The village cadres came to my house to arrest me for the surgery. Since they could not find me, they were so angry that they took the roof off, smashed a set of furniture made for our wedding, and broke the door by axes. Because of my experiences, I applied for asylum status in 1997 in New York City. Being unfamiliar with the legal process, I found a Chinese travel agency rather than a law firm to help me with filling in forms and translating. My first judge was a tough female. The possibility of winning a case under her jurisdiction, according to many lawyers, was no more than ten percent. So as I opened a restaurant in Philadelphia, I transferred my case locally. My second judge was obviously in a dilemma. He refused to grant a legal status based on evidences that he thought were not convinced enough, but, on the other hand, he said he was sorry for denying my application because he personally believed what I said. The prosecutor was also sympathetic about my experiences, but he stated that his duty was to stop me from gaining asylum status. My case was dragging on for a few years without a definite decision. Later I sold my restaurant and got a job as a chef in a restaurant called “Szechuan Garden” in Michigan. The owner of the restaurant sponsored me for working immigration. As a consequence, I submitted a new application and dropped the old one because they could not apply simultaneously. However, I worked too hard in “Szechuan Garden” that I was down with an illness. I had to leave and thus lost the opportunity of gaining immigrant status. Now I am re-applying for the asylum status.

Honestly, I prefer Chinese lawyers who I can communicate with (*Liang's* Mandarin is good). I hired only one American lawyer during eight years when my application is on the process. We could not understand each other. The lawyer later employed a student from Taiwan as a translator. But the student just came from Taiwan, and his English was not very good. He could not well express what I wanted to say. The American lawyer charged me two thousand dollars but did nothing for me. It was completely a waste of money. So far, I have spent more than ten thousand dollars on different lawyers. If the court is not located at the city I live, I should pay for transportation, living, and food. In addition, I have to leave my work several days without any income. Thus, the financial loss is huge.

Among all the respondents, *Wang*, the owner and chef of a Szechuan-style Chinese restaurant, had spent the most on the application process. Since 1991, *Wang* has hired five different lawyers, all Chinese, which has cost him over forty thousand dollars. Because of mistakes made by one of attorneys, *Wang's* application for asylum status was completely denied. He had to apply for worker immigration with his status as a chef. To avoid the same mistake made by unprofessional legal practitioners, *Wang* turned to a

renowned female lawyer who charged him over thirty thousand dollars from the beginning to the end. The following is *Wang's* story:

I flew from the former Soviet Union to the United States. America is not the destination listed on the airplane ticket, but a transfer point. When the airplane stopped at an American airport, I walked out the lounge and told the authority that I was an asylum seeker. Since the first day I landed on this country, I have started my application by the name of political prosecution resulting from China's birth control policy. As a father of two sons, I did suffer from physical and mental threats of forced surgery.

Because my jobs were not stable, I repeatedly changed the locations of courts and attorneys. After I moved to Michigan, I hired a Chinese lawyer, but he was too careless to deal with my case. He failed to submit required documents by the due day, which led to denial of my asylum status forever. Because his dereliction of duty, I wasted three years and some money. In 2002, when I received the denial and deportation judgment from the court, I had no choice but to get a working immigrant status. I was willing to pay more to ensure the success of my application. I was referred to a female lawyer in Ohio. She was very famous, but her price was much higher than the average. Since I became her client, she has kept asking for extra money for various reasons. I talked with another immigration lawyer attending our church and was told her exorbitant price was senseless. I would need to pay only four thousand dollars if I transferred my case to his firm. I contacted with the female lawyer (actually with her assistants), complaining about the slow processing and bargaining for the price. They agreed to expedite my application if I paid another three thousand dollars. If I refused to pay and withdrew the appointment, I was not able to get any refund because I was the person who broke the contract. The terms were too harsh to accept, but I had to. I had paid more than fifteen thousand dollars by that time. If I quitted, I gained nothing; if I stayed, even though I should pay more, I had hope. And I had no knowledge, time, and energy to deal with disputations with a law firm even if I knew they were wrong. I lost for the first hearing. My lawyer was quite sure she could win the case if I lodged an appeal. For the appealing, I paid another ten thousand dollars. Finally I gained legal status at the cost of thirty thousand dollars. It is a kind of worthy.

In general, the younger generation has less access to legal status than the older one.

Their application for asylum status is unlikely to be approved by the authorities. In this study, four out of six respondents under thirty years old were legalized through family immigration, marriage, or adoption; the other two respondents are exceptions because they gained legal status through claiming they had experienced religious prosecution.

Because of diverse economic, educational, and marital backgrounds, prospects for the

future vary with respect to the age of the respondents and the length of time they have stayed in the United States. The young people prefer education, whereas those over age forty prefer business as the way to improve their social status. Among the respondents under thirty years old, four are receiving regular education or attending training programs and one is considering going to school. Among the six respondents over thirty, only two of them receive regular education or participate in educational programs. The respondents over forty study English with the help of Americans but do not have the intent of pursuing regular education. Conversely, they link success to commercial success and encourage their children to achieve academic success. *Zhen*, a respondent who attended college in his late twenties, stated,

I open a restaurant in a small town in Indiana, where I got to know a girl from Dalian City, China. She was a student studying MBA. We fell in love with each other. But later we had a big fight. She thought I was less self-possessed because of low education. I felt insulted and thus decided to attend schools. I went to a language school first. Because I did not have good educational foundation, it took me five years to pass the TOEFL test (an English test for students whose native language is not English), wherein I failed countless times. Then I was accepted by a community college. I just finished my degree last year. In 1996, my parents immigrated into the United States. My father said I had wasted my youth in America. I disagree. I told him that the greatest reward during this year was education which I was unable to achieve in China.

### *Love and Marriage*

New York's Chinatown was a bachelor society because of the skewed gender proportions. The immigration of relatives since the late 1980s has brought females to the United States, so the number and percentage of females are rising, but it is still far from enough. It is estimated by some nongovernmental accounts that there were two men for each woman at the end of 2003.

A large number of young males old enough to get married are still single without

girlfriends. They try every resource to get to know a female villager, either through the introduction of family members, relatives, and friends or based on work associations. If two young people are not in the same city, they first talk on the phone; if they have a good impression of each other, telephone conversations go on for several months for a deeper understanding; then the youth arranges a date, most likely in New York City, to check whether the other is consistent with the conversations and photos; telephone conversations continue after they return to their work places, and based on mutual agreement, the two young people may start talking about marriage.

As soon as the female consents to the proposal, the Fujianese man tells his parents to send a considerable amount for the bride's price to his fiancé's family. After the payment is made, the betrothed have a religious ceremony in a church or a legitimate ceremony in a law firm with the notarization of attorneys and American residents. Although they have come illegally, the legitimacy of marriage is acknowledged and protected by U.S. law. A marriage certificate later is essential for the couple to declare their American-born babies' citizenship. Although the wedding is a significant affair, few couples have a whole week to prepare for it. A grand banquet held in New York Chinatown for friends and relatives is indispensable, but some respondents who work in restaurants cannot even have a rehearsal until their wedding date.

Telecommunication helped to bring about the union of *Yun* and her husband. The following is their story:

I was fastidious when I was young. I required for economic well-being, elegant appearance, and legal status. After I turned into twenty-five years old, I had a sense of urgency of being married (girls from my village often get married in their early twenties).

I worked at the same restaurant as my husband's cousin. His cousin asked me whether I would like to make friends with him. I thought his cousin was kidding, so

I said “ok.” One day, his cousin took a picture of mine and sent it to him. I soon received phone calls from him.

We talked on the phone for several months and then arranged a date at New York Chinatown. Honestly, I felt disappointed when I first saw him. He looked like a farmer, wearing a funny hat. But I did not really cold-shoulder him because I had felt close to him after phone communication each night for few months. During our association, I tried to sound him out about his personality. Because I heard that he was stingy, I pretended to be interested in something expensive but could not pay for it. He bought it for me without hesitation. Additionally, he paid the tips generously when we ate out. Through my own observation, I did not believe the gossips about him any more. My marriage has strengthened my judgment.

Before getting married, I had no one to depend on. Now at least I can consult with my husband if something happens to me.

In some villages of Fujian province that have a large number of illegal immigrants, introductions are made among the parents of young people. The matchmakers may or may not work for money. Usually they will approach a parent whose daughter is in the United States and ask whether she is married or not. If the matchmakers get a negative answer, they will provide some information about a young man who is also in the United States and ask for the daughter’s telephone number. Having concerns about their daughter who struggles alone in a foreign country, the parents feel that it would help the daughter if she finds a reliable spouse and it would not hurt to talk on the phone. Therefore, the parents are willing to offer the phone number. *Qing* is a 21-year-old girl from Lianjiang County. She is still young but has felt strong pressure from her parents to be married as soon as possible.

In my village, girls get into marriage early. Some friends of mine have become mother of several children. My parents worry about me and wish I get married soon. Last week when I called back home, my mother told me a matchmaker came to her for my telephone number. My mother said within few days there would be someone from another state calling me. I felt grieving and angry. I asked mom not to arrange my marriage any more. In fact, I understand why my parents did this to me: they love me and want me to have reliance. I also understand that as a restaurant employee, I will end up with marrying a male who is also working in the food industry. What I want is an owner of restaurant with stable income; what he wants is a girl who can speak English and be a cashier. The life is realistic, but I do not want



this kind of routine. I still have anger now, but I am afraid that I will finally get used to it.

The betrothal money in the Fujianese culture averages \$33,000 and soars up to \$72,000. The amount an old bachelor over thirty years old pays may be much higher than the average; if the potential bride is young and beautiful, the betrothal money could be as high as her smuggling fee. The thirty-three thousand dollars means toiling and living frugally for years for a male with a \$2,000 monthly wage. Though some Fujianese illegal immigrants have repaid their own debts, they have to borrow money for the betrothal money and related wedding expenses.

For a restaurant owner, getting married is a profitable investment. On the one hand, the groom can gain a fortune from the wedding guests, each of whom gives \$100 to \$300 as a gift. On the other hand, the bride will be free labor for his business after marriage. If the groom is paying \$2,000 per month for a worker, he can save this money after training his wife and putting her in the position. Consequently, the bridal gift equals a two-year wage and for the rest of her life, the labor of his bride is a net profit.

There is no doubt that both male and female immigrants are under enormous financial pressure to repay their debts as soon as they can to avoid exorbitant interest. But unlike Fujianese men, who are subject to the betrothal money, women can relieve their financial burdens through marriage. If they become overwhelmed by debt, they will consider finding a husband who can share their smuggling fee. If it turns out to be an unhappy marriage, they are able to get out through divorce. A few women even disappeared after the betrothal money had been paid to their families in China. On the one hand, they broke communication with friends and relatives and moved to a place where nobody knew them. On the other hand, their families in China disappeared or denied receiving any money

from the groom's family. There were some cases in which the males who could not stand the psychological distress and monetary loss became mentally ill.

A large amount of money can buy a bride but not a happy marriage. Many Fujianese are in bondage to what they have paid: money deprives them of freedom, pride, and self-control. The fear of a failed marriage, which will result in huge financial loss and probably the fate of being lonely again because of the inability to pay another betrothal fee, has continued to perplex Fujianese males. It is hard for them to afford another thirty-three thousand dollars, and the difficulty of remarrying for a divorced man is much greater than for his counterpart without a history of marriage. Therefore, some Fujianese men surrender family dominance to their wives, though this is in contrast to the custom in China. When a disagreement erupts, they are more likely to choose silence rather than wrangling or to adopt their wives' opinions regardless of genuine agreement, in order to avoid an expanding family rift.

Outsiders hardly understand Fujianese males' forbearance and often deride their powerlessness in private. *Qiang* is the top chef in a Chinese restaurant near a famous university. He is the typical henpecked husband, worn down by his wife's capricious behaviors. His weakness is well known among friends and acquaintances. According to one of his coworkers,

Qiang has come to the United States for over ten years and become a permanent resident. His wife is pretty but has bad temper. They have a big fight twice a week. His wife curses Qiang by the most offensive words. She would drive her husband out of the door. Sometimes Qiang was angry and complained before us. But after a while, he would try to please his wife. If his efforts did not work and his wife would not let him in, Qiang had to sleep in his car. I thus said to Qiang's wife, "You shouldn't treat your husband so harshly. The winter is so cold, and the car is frozen at night. How can you have the heart to leave him there overnight?"

Qiang takes on all household chores. He cooks and does the laundry and cleaning. His wife watches TV all the time. Before Qiang got married, I suggested

that he could find a nice girl in mainland China. But Qiang replied that since he only had the Green Card, it would take several years to bring his wife here. He would rather pay the betrothal money. If they work hard together, it only takes few years to earn the money back. I thought his analysis was reasonable, so I did not insist my opinion.

Qiang got to know his wife through the introduction of friends. Qiang is free with his money, which leaves an impression on his wife's family that he is wealthy. To get married, Qiang paid off his wife's smuggling fee (when she just came from China and owed a large amount of balance) by borrowing money. After marriage, his wife realized that Qiang was not as rich as he seemed to be. And the creditors began demanding for money payback. They thus started serious conflicts.

The betrothal money is a prerequisite for marriage, but it does not guarantee that a marriage will take place. A series of factors are taken into account by an illegal immigrant during the process of spouse selection, such as economic strength, legal status, moral standing, personal capacity, and appearance. Some illegal immigrants declare that economy and nationality have become the critical, or even sole, elements of importance to women. Working-class males without legal status are thus very disadvantaged in the fight for wives. To draw the attention of single women, they buy a small business or enter into a business partnership to gain a *boss* title.

If both members of the couple belong to the working class, they prefer working together after marriage. Or they will choose work places as close to each other as possible. They will ask for the same day off so that they can spend some time together. Still, a number of couples are separated by a long distance, like *Yun* and her husband.

My husband is in New York and I am in another state. I used to work in a buffet restaurant in the South, but my husband worried that the youth might chase me, so he persuaded me to work in his brother's restaurant in the North. Actually, I dislike working for my brother-in-law, because it might affect their brothers' relationship if I have any disagreement with him. But my husband consistently insisted, and finally I agreed.

It is a small restaurant with a total of four workers, including my brother-in-law and me. The restaurant would be dysfunctional if anyone leaves. So I could not visit my husband. Although he came to see me sometimes, we only met three times last year, and he probably stayed no more than one month totally. Recently I was sick

and found an opportunity to have physical examination in New York Chinatown. I spent a week with my husband. At the day when I left, he saw me off at the bus station. He did not leave until he could not see the bus anymore. I saw him stand there fixedly. I became bitter.

Premarriage sexual behaviors that are in conflict with Chinese traditional morality are not uncommon among the youth, who regard them as a natural response to loneliness and a way of searching for relational security. According to one respondent, it is roughly anticipated that in New York City more than eighty percent of young people around twenty-five years old who are living together are not lawful couples. In many cases, marriage is the product of pregnancy. It is not surprising to see a pregnant bride at a wedding. Despite its prevalence and public understanding, some women have paid for their imprudence. For example, *Yun* stated,

I used to work with Juan in a buffet restaurant. Juan is the most beautiful Chinese girl I have seen. Although she is little bit short, she is just like a movie star or angel. Additionally, she is a very competent waitress. The business of the restaurant we worked is booming and one of the employers, Jin, was still single. Jin fell love with Juan, and Juan also considered him as a right person for marriage. Everything was going smoothly until one of our coworkers spread the secret that Juan had cohabited with her ex-boyfriend. Jin and Juan's relationship suddenly turned into cold because Jin did expect for a virgin wife. Juan was in deep sorrow. On a Valentine's Day when Juan received nothing from Jin, she drank a lot of wine and acted like a crazy woman.

*Yun* learned a lesson from Juan's experience. She feels that it is vital to keep her virginity until she gets married. She holds that she was tempted several times. Once, her boyfriend called her and said he had a serious cold. She went to take care of him. Later he asked her to stay overnight, but *Yun* refused. She said, "If you sleep with him, he would think you are an indecent girl and disrespect you; if you don't, he may be disappointed, but he would admire you."

As a society shifts from an agrarian to an industrial economy, traditional values tend

to decline. However, traditions may persist and counteract changing environments (Inglehart & Baker, 2001). It is true that many men cohabit with their girlfriends prior to forming a family, but it does not mean that they completely reject traditional values and accept the whole western culture. A voluminous body of research and observation indicates that a large portion of Fujianese men take virginity into consideration when choosing a partner. According to *Liang*,

Qiang had a girlfriend named May. They were classmates in Mainland China. May is a sweet lady, complying with Qiang's all whims. They lived together for a while. But May got divorced and has a child in China, which Qiang could not dispel from his bosom. He is really feudal-minded.

Cohabiting is also found among people who are married but have left their families in China. Similar to that of the early immigrants from Guangdong province, the average separation duration for Fujianese couples is about eight years. Three respondents in this study who got married and had children in China have been separated from their families over ten years.

Given psychological and sexual needs, people who come alone tend to look for a partner who can share their loneliness and help them with a sense of belonging. The temporary couples in general do not abandon their existing spouses in China and have a tacit understanding that their relationship is only temporary. In other words, they resolutely break up before the legal spouse of either partner arrives in the United States. Nevertheless, a smooth breakup does not mean little psychological distress. One respondent suffered deep sorrow when separating from his girlfriends.

The majority of cohabitants consider extramarital adventures to be immoral but blame their immorality on the difficulty of family reunion. In the meantime, they act as responsible husbands/wives and fathers/mothers by means of regular remittance and

financial support for relatives to the best of their abilities. They rarely plan to divorce their legal spouses and abandon their children. Most respondents eagerly long for family reunion and consider it the happiest thing in the world. *Liang* is a middle-aged, handsome man from Lianjiang County. He stated his attitudes toward extramarital behaviors.

The life in America is so boring: working, watching TV, and then sleeping. I do not have many amusements because I could not speak English and because I do not want to go alone. My friends are mostly working in the restaurants. They have different working schedules, and, thus, we are not off at the same day. When I am lonely, I think maybe I should have a girlfriend here. We are able to take care of each other and will separate smoothly. But I love my wife. She is content with her lot and acts her part. She will be heartbroken once she knows I have an affair with another woman.

I was a fisherman in Fujian. Every evening when I came from fishing, my wife had prepared for the midnight snack and hot bath. Sometimes I was so tired that I fell asleep, and she would use a warm towel to clean my body that gave off an unbearable stink.

My wife has tried (smuggling) three times, but all failed. Last year, she had a surgery in Fuzhou City. I told her that it would be impossible to repay the smuggling fee if she could not work. And we cannot afford medical care if she feels sick again in the United States. After hearing this, my wife gives up the plan of smuggling. If my application for asylum status is rejected, I will return to China after working few years and saving some U.S. dollars.

Finding a partner is not only a sexual or psychological behavior, but also a decision based on financial consideration. Usually female Fujianese immigrants speak English better than their male counterparts because the former mainly work as waitresses and have more opportunities for communication with native speakers, while the latter mostly work in the kitchen, where Fujianese, Cantonese, or Mandarin is the official language. Nevertheless, the majority of restaurant owners are males. When they start their businesses, they need someone whom they trust and who has the ability to handle various matters. The Fujianese who finds a helper and starts his business early generally makes a lot of money.

In the meantime, some Fujianese immigrants are aware of the extramarital affairs

their spouses back in China have. For instance, their spouses may repeatedly demand a large amount of money, supposedly for house redecoration or for their children's education. Fujianese immigrants assume that their spouses are trying to prevent them from having an affair by reducing the amount they could spend on another person.

Because the price for smuggling to the United States was originally \$18,000, the early snake people were called eighteen-thousand-dollar customers, and their wives were called eighteen-thousand-dollar ladies (Hifumi, 1995). The title Eighteen-Thousand-Dollar Lady has been expanded to include all women whose husbands have sneaked into America. These women are mentally lonely and physically vulnerable to harassment. The village punks take advantage of their husbands' being away to trap or force them into extramarital relationships. Some eighteen-thousand-dollar-ladies search for young and handsome lovers and support them with money earned by their husbands. Some women do not develop immoral relationships but are fond of frequent contacts with males, such as through playing mahjong and dancing. "They say they want to play mahjong, but they really just want to spend some time together with a man. Although they lose and you win, they still give you a gift like a cellular phone or something" (Hifumi<sup>e</sup>, 1995, p. 74). *Yun's* cousin is a determined seamstress who has earned three thousand dollars per month for seven years. She regularly sent money back to repay her smuggling fee with interest, but it took much longer than it should have to pay off the balance because her mother kept misappropriating the money for lovers. Knowing that her mother was having affairs with other men infuriated *Yun's* cousin, who threatened not to support the family anymore.

Fujianese immigrants do not accept the fact that their spouses have betrayed them while they are taking painstaking efforts to financially support the family. It is even

harder for males to face the reality because extramarital affairs of their wives are very shameful to men, according to traditional culture. *Xin* told the miserable story of her cousin, an owner of a Chinese restaurant.

My cousin is from Changle City. He smuggled into America in 1993, when he was 25-year-old. At that time he had got married and had a one-year-old son. As most Fujianese snake people, my cousin tried to reunite with his wife by illegal means. Knowing that bogus marriage is safe for females and his wife can thus gain permanent residency, he decided to pay more for smuggling fee. Unexpectedly, his wife fell in love with her fake husband and planned to divorce my cousin. What has happened really upsets my cousin: he was getting drunk and fell off from the bed while sleeping. He was sent to the emergency room and was diagnosed as cerebral bleeding. My cousin stayed in the coma for several days. When he woke up, he could not recognize anyone, even his siblings. He tended to commit suicide. He kept saying that he would like jumping from the World Trade Center, which had collapsed. We felt that sending him back to China may help him to recover because he might remember something when surrounded by familiar people and buildings. We talked with his wife (they have not formally been divorce) first, but she won't let him go home until he sold the restaurant and collects the payment. The negotiation reached deadlock. Finally we decided to take my cousin home without his wife's permission. Since I have legal status and have more free time (as a student), his sister asked me whether I can fly to China with him. After the airplane landed on the Shanghai Airport, I called his wife and informed of our returning, hoping her to pick up at the Changle Airport the next day. At the Changle Airport, I met my cousin's son, who looked at his father like an alien.

### *Parent-Child Relationship*

Before coming, some snake people have been married and become parents. Physical separation for years disables them from sharing parental responsibility with their spouses. The role they play in a family is mainly that of breadwinner rather than that of a spiritual supporter. The effects of their leaving on their children depend on several factors: the age of the children when their parents leave, who is leaving (father, mother or both), the characteristics of the sending villages (the more outgoing the people are, the fewer are the effects), and so on. *En* is the eldest son of his family. He deeply felt the changes around him after his father went on a *long journey*.



When my father left, I was twelve. I felt sad for his leaving because he was such a good father. I did not know exactly where he was going. I was told he would travel far away from home to make money. After he earned money, we could live a better life. We did not hear from father for up to nine months. The boat he traveled struck a rock, and the passengers were rescued by the American Coast Guard and then put into prisons. Father could not find a guarantor, so was detained a longer time. During the nine months, there were different rumors about the trip. Someone said most passengers in the boat had died. Mother did not believe the rumors. She kept praying for father's peace until one day we received a phone call from father and were told he had been set free.

I was like growing in a single-parent home. In the school, classmates would deliberately provoke me; in the neighborhood, boys would bully me. There was little communication between father and me from 1992 to 2000. It was expensive to make an international call, so we had to talk very briefly. Usually I asked father, "How are you?" or "How is your work?" He quickly answered, and the time was over. Little by little, I forgot about father. I only saw him in the dreams or by looking at his pictures. But deep in my heart, I love him very much. Since I was sixteen, I have become the backbone of the family. I handled all family affairs, no matter important or not.

Father and mother are an affectionate couple. Father ran a small business, selling vegetables and seafood. We were not wealthy, but we were happy. Since father left for America, mother changed a lot. She became hot-tempered and sometimes hysterical.

*Liang* was the father of a two-year-old girl when he smuggled out. Wherever he had gone, his little girl used to follow. Nowadays, the conversations between father and daughter have become like reading an actor's lines.

My daughter was closer to me than to her mother. She was like my shadow, following me all the time. She might have forgotten this because she was too little when I left her. Now she is on intimate terms with her mother, for she is raised by her alone. She does not want to come here. She said she would stay and take care of her mother. I do not know how to talk with her. She is growing. She is a fourteen-year-old teenager. I do not know what she thinks and what kinds of problems she might have. I keep telling her to study hard and to be filial obedient. But what is the else I can teach her? Both of us felt embarrassed when nobody said a word. Sometimes she would break a deadlock by saying "Dad, I have to do my homework now."

A lot of Fujianese immigrants attribute their difficulties in the United States to their inability to communicate and low educational level. They feel no choice but to stay in their food service, construction, or garment-making careers, which feature heavy work

loads and long hours. As parents, all the respondents in this study were reluctant to see their children go through the same experiences if they could find a way out. Traditionally, education is the main channel through which young people from middle or low classes can move upward in society. All the married respondents with children wanted their children to receive a high-level education and then find decent jobs. *Wang* has two sons, and he has always instilled in them the importance of education. Each week he calls back home at least once and never forgets to ask them to study hard. He sent his oldest son to Australia to pursue his bachelor's degree, and his younger son is attending high school. Another respondent, *Chen*, was pleased when his daughter refused to work in his restaurant after she immigrated to America.

I have a son and a daughter. My son was used to be an excellent student. Now he has poor academic performance because he is given to video games. I told my children they either work in the restaurant or go to the college. Recently I take over the restaurant through purchasing half of shares from a lady from Taiwan. If my wife and children come, they can help in the kitchen so that I do not need to hire so many people and will thus pay less salary. When I told my daughter that she has to help during the weekends when there is no school, she said, "No way. I will devote to studying so that I can attend the college." She has showed great promise.

Still, numerous Fujianese immigrants get married and have children in the United States. No matter what status the parents hold, children are born with America citizenship. The status of American-born children prevents their undocumented parents, particularly their mothers, from being deported. Because of economic factors, however, few Fujianese are able to raise their children in the United States. If they do, typically the female quits her job to become a full-time homemaker. The male thus becomes the only breadwinner for the whole family. When the child is old enough to go to kindergarten, the mother probably works part-time to increase the household income. If the mother is a legal resident and has relatives in the United States helping to take care of her children, she is

willing to become a carrier who takes newly born babies to China and brings groceries back to America.

If the parents are undocumented or too busy to escort their children back to China, they will pay one thousand dollars per head to hire an escort. Escorts are easily found on East Broadway in Manhattan and Eighth Avenue in Brooklyn of New York City, but parents feel a high risk in handing over their children to strangers. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence about children being kidnapped for ransom and being fed dissolved sleeping pills to keep them quiet during the journey. Many parents therefore rely on referrals from family members or friends to find a reliable carrier. On average, an escort will take three babies each time and bring back to the United States milk powders that are believed to be more nutritious than those sold here. After the carriers arrive in Fuzhou, it is the grandparents' responsibility to pick up the babies, along with their personal belongings.

The fixed expenses for a Fujianese family consist of payments for their housing, food, and cell phone bills. If they have a car, they must pay for a parking space, a car payment, and auto insurance with a total cost of many hundreds of dollars per month. Although the government provides such necessities as milk for children under five years old and children can receive day care for free or at a very low price if they are from a low-income family, other child-related costs are high. After all the payments, a family has little money left. They have to pray for their health because hospitalization is very expensive in the United States, and they usually do not have any medical insurance.

The vast majority of babies being sent back home are as young as six months old. According to Chinese culture, children carry on the ancestral line. They will be educated

by grandparents--usually the father's parents--who typically have received limited education. According to American law, these American-born children must be brought back to the United States before they turn five years old.

To be separated from their newly born babies is, however, a difficult decision for the couple to make. *Yun* sent her baby girl back to China when she was six months old. She described her experience as follows:

My daughter is lucky because she was fed by my milk for half a year; most babies are sent home much earlier or never drink their moms' milk. During my feeding, my parents-in-law gave us a lot of pressure. They kept calling, saying that they would take care of my daughter and I should go to work. But this girl is our first baby. My husband and I wanted to keep her longer with us. My parents-in-law thus thought I was lazy, not as diligent as my sister-in-law. I understood that my daughter would eventually leave for China because raising a baby here is difficult solely by my husband's income. If she stays with us, I have to quit my job or find one nearby. The only thing I can do is probably to take some jobs from the garment factories and do it at home, but the salary is low. In the meanwhile, we have to pay for the expenses for my daughter. Although she is little, everything related to her is expensive. When the moment came (my daughter was taken away from us), I felt extraordinarily painful because she had become a part of me. I could not help thinking of her, and in the first several months I was almost driven to crazy. Fortunately her grandparents often mailed her pictures to us. If you visit my room, you will see her pictures all around the wall.

Because children are raised by their grandparents alone, they feel like strangers when they first reunite with their parents. Additionally, used to being the center of the family, they cannot stand the neglect by their parents, who are busy at work. Children from an open community in which they have many childhood pals are more likely to experience loneliness when they cannot communicate with American children and have difficulty in finding new friends.

A substantial number of children grow up in their parents' workplaces. For instance, restaurant owners assign their children to a corner of serving tables. Children do their homework and talk with their siblings but are not allowed to make noise and run when

customers are present. Like their parents, these children leave the restaurant at ten or eleven o'clock at night and have to get up early in the morning to attend school. They do not have TV hours like other kids do or spend vacations with family members even though their parents have become quite wealthy. Some children attempt to get attention from their parents through their behavior. They often are disappointed because their parents are too busy to pay attention to them. If their parents are struggling for business, poor behavior may even bring about punishment, such as being blamed and spanked.

On the other hand, parents working hard to make a living may not realize how their responses negatively affect their children. They feel they are sacrificing for the next generation, so children should understand and appreciate them. In accordance with the family education they received from their parents, they consider punishment to be the parents' responsibility and right. Even though they make mistakes, they rarely apologize for what they have done because of the patriarchal family system. They also seldom make up with their children after conflicts occur. Children living in an environment of neglect tend to become estranged from their parents and even develop deviant behavior.

### *Countryless Orphans*

When I was riding on a bus from Brooklyn to Manhattan in New York in 2005, the driver from Guangdong province said he was a man without a country. Before having obtained legal status, he had been eager to visit his family in China but dared not do so. After he obtained legal residence in America, he could not return to his hometown for five years because he was not able to afford gifts of money for relatives and friends.

Fujian and Guangdong provinces are not only geographically adjacent, but also have many similarities in culture. People go in for ostentation and extravagance. A person

owning a business in the United States is considered very wealthy despite the size of his business. When returning to his hometown, business owners should visit and give money to close and distant relatives according to the local customs. It is improper to miss anyone who is supposed to receive a gift. In some villages of Lianjiang County, where people share the same surname, it costs visitors a lot of money to satisfy the clan.

One respondent maintained that one of his Fujianese coworkers from Changle City could not visit his parents because he could not afford the gifts. As a result, he had to secretly meet with his family in Fuzhou city. Similarly, *Zhu's* aunt has resided in America for more than ten years, but she went back only when she worked as a baby carrier. *Zhu* lived with her aunt's family for more than two years. She told her aunt's story in the following way:

My aunt's husband was a close friend of a local smuggler. He completely trusted his friend and even allowed the payment in his house. Later the smugglers absconded with all the down payment. People thought my uncle was a part of it and forced him to pay back. My uncle had not received one cent and had no money to satisfy the angry masses. He escaped from Fuzhou to America. After he left, people became angrier. They went to my aunt's home and frequently beat her. Thankfully, my uncle got the legal status and the whole family was able to immigrate, which saved my aunt and her children from long-term discrimination and abuse.

Since I came to America, my aunt has taken the greatest care of me. Her home was not spacious and she had no income, but she still let me live with them without paying the rent. My aunt does not have a stable job because she is old. And her daughter and daughter-in-law also are unemployed since they have to take care of their children. My uncle works for the garment factory, and my cousin and brother-in-law work in and out of the food industry. Frankly, they live in a strained circumstance because three men have to feed three women and three children with their meager incomes. However, people in China think my aunt is very rich. The relatives have high expectations for them and show evident disappointment when not receiving generous gifts. They said something on the back, which makes my aunt embarrassed and stressed. Therefore, my aunt would not return to Fuzhou unless carrying American-born babies for thousand dollar fees.

A lot of Fujianese call themselves deaf and dumb men although they can hear and speak. The reason they regard themselves this way is because they cannot speak English.

Without English, they are not able to live a quality life. Whatever they do, they need a translator. For instance, many immigrants have someone speak for them when applying for driver's licenses; telephone services provided by public and private sectors are not usable unless Chinese representatives are available; some business owners keep paying late fees not because they are avoiding certain responsibilities but because they cannot read the letters. Lack of communication skills has prevented Fujianese from exploring new opportunities. *Chen* has ambitious aspirations for his career, but he is frustrated because he has to depend on friends for commercial opportunities.

I believe Chinese food industry is about to die. Can't you see many existing Chinese restaurants and more soon opening? The restaurant I own runs all right, but the sales have been in a gradual decline. When I held one quarter of shares, I was very happy because I did not worry about businesses that much. A total of dividends and my salary (as a chef) amounted to six thousand dollars. Now I am the only owner, and my income does not increase much. I continue to look for commercial opportunities around this city. After staying in this career for years, I have become an expert at finding ideal locations for businesses. My problem is I cannot speak English. I may be able to deal with restaurant issues, but it is not enough to talk with a real estate agent. What I can do is write down their phone numbers and ask someone else to call for further information. When my friends found a time to call in, the store had been sold or rented. Few months ago, I saw a commodity section--which was located in a shopping center with Wal-Mart and near apartment complexes--for rent. I immediately inquired about information but was told a Chinese restaurant called "Oriental" had signed the contract. Recently I am interested in operating an American-style chain restaurant. I buy the managerial authority and will receive some training. I plan to open the restaurant near the campus where students will become my major customers. The costs of American food are low and, thus, profits would be high. My former partner showed an interest in it, but now his interest has waned. Without him, I cannot succeed since I am unable to understand the training courses.

Most Fujianese immigrants live in a Chinese world within America. Such a world still maintains some traditional ideas and the old lifestyle because of its self-closure to mainstream society. Though Fujianese workers rarely have opportunities to feel the

essence of American life, some of them have experienced cultural shock during their work. According to *Qing*:

I firstly work in a buffet restaurant with my cousin. She was thirty-year-old and I was only nineteen. She took care of me like mom and elder sister. We had really good relationship. We walked to the restaurant together, always holding our hands. Since it was a big restaurant, there were many waitresses. Some of them built up friendship and treated each other like sisters. One day a customer complained to our boss. He said our restaurant was so dirty that some waitresses were lesbians. He said this because he saw the girls held hands and gently stroke each other. We were shocked by his reactions. Since then my cousin and I dare not show intimations in public.

*Qing's* description depicts the considerable discrepancies in ideas regarding the genders between the American and Chinese cultures. It is natural to show interest and attraction to people of the opposite sex in America, but it would be shameful to do this in public in China. Conversely, women are grouped with women, and men are grouped with men. It is polite for a woman to show her friendship and care for another woman by holding hands, hugging, and gently stroking. However, these acts can be construed as symbols of homosexual behavior in western countries.



## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Despite the short history of Fujianese illegal immigration in the modern era (an exodus did not emerge until the late 1980s), the smuggling models have changed from time to time. For most illegal immigrants who are around forty years old, emigration can be understood from the economic point of view; for the younger generation, who are around thirty or under, the influence of social culture accounts for their ventures.

However, illegal immigration is a complex system in which a series of factors have been taken into account. One can see the law of cost and benefit operating when Fujianese make the choice to smuggle. The costs related to illegal emigration include a significant smuggling fee and penalty as well as physical suffering and mental distress. In the early stage of emigration, the smuggling was unaffordable for the immigrant's family alone, and the balance was borrowed from all possible sources, including relatives, friends, neighbors, and loan sharks. After the seed populations settled in America, they took financial responsibility for smuggling other family members. Fujianese thus had to rely less on the usury system, although it had been historically available to them. The snakeheads in the meantime reduced the risks of smuggling in order to attract potential snake people. They waived the down payment, shared part of the monetary responsibility with their customers (such as paying for an attorney), and developed speedy air routes to prevent torture and other threats to life. The establishment of an international smuggling

network and involvement of corrupt officials worldwide facilitated the efficient human flow.

The early human smuggling enlisted the unemployed, those working in low-paying jobs, and those burdened with financial or political insecurity. These people did not take emigration to America seriously until information was spread by overseas Fujianese who visited their hometowns after the repeal of international communication prohibition in the 1970s. Overseas Fujianese informed their neighborhoods of the great demand for laborers and the ease of making money in the west. A luxurious lifestyle they demonstrated by means of hosting fancy banquets and giving away gifts further strengthened the desire for emigration among their fellow villagers.

Fujianese first tried legal immigration to reach their dream destination. In the early 1980s, it was easy for people with American relatives (not necessarily direct relatives) to obtain a visiting visa or immigrant status. The door was gradually closed, and only a portion of Fujianese were qualified for lawful immigration. The law of supply and demand operated and resulted in the mom-and-pop operation as an embryonic form of human smuggling.

An average Fujianese illegal immigrant can pay off the smuggling fee and interest within four years. They accumulate wealth to start a business and to obtain legal status. They provide strong financial support for their family, whose social status improves in accordance with an increase of fortune. If the application for legal status is approved, Fujianese immigrants can bring back their spouses, children, and parents, who will become the seeds for their own relatives once they themselves become permanent American residents or citizens. Though some Fujianese are not lucky enough to win their

cases, they could get married in the United States and place hope in their American-born children. The stories of Fujianese illegal immigrants seem to contrast between short-term suffering and life-long benefits, based on which society concludes that the gains of smuggling outweigh the costs.

Smuggling has become a family enterprise in some areas in Fujian Province. Poverty cannot explain the cause of illegal immigration among the youth who live on remittance sent from abroad. Although unemployment is not uncommon and they would blame this on a low level of education, few young immigrants have finished high school and fewer have gone to college because many young people place their future on America. They feel it is useless to get a diploma if they will emigrate sooner or later. A social culture that strongly encourages success and emigration pushes the youth out. If they do not make a decision on their own, their parents will make a decision for them.

In the first few years after landing in the United States, illegal immigrants are pressured to repay the smuggling fee with interest. To ensure that they can pay, they must find a job that can bring them a stable income. Newly arriving immigrants go and seek refuge with their relatives or friends. If a person lacks connections and work experience, the likelihood of being fired can double and redouble. Even if he can retain a job, employers keep watching him and may replace him with someone else depending on his performance. In practice, the employers have been using unemployment as leverage to push their employees to work harder. They are able to take advantage of them because of a sufficient supply of labor in the market. Burdened with debts and the responsibility of feeding their families, Fujianese immigrants will swallow insults and humiliation in order to keep a job and get possible free housing and food.

Different from male immigrants, females are able to release their financial burdens by marrying; they can get \$33,000 from the groom. An understanding between two people is mainly established during work or through telecommunication. Nevertheless, the betrothal gifts can bring two aliens together but cannot buy respect and happiness. Being afraid of a fleeing bride and the failure of his marriage, a husband is likely to give in or choose silence when family conflicts erupt. The typical, male-headed family model of Chinese culture has been displaced in American-Fujianese society.

The majority of Fujianese immigrants have careers in the food industry; their next largest employers are the garment factories and construction corporations. If they make their living in a restaurant, they work an average of seventy-four hours a week for a lower-than-average salary. Under the harsh working conditions, many restaurant workers have developed work-related ailments or even mental disease. Unless they are too sick to work, illegal immigrants will not ask for a leave to see a doctor. On the one hand, they fear the employers will use their health as an excuse to fire them; on the other hand, they are hesitant because of their inability to communicate with American doctors and nurses. Even if someone close to them (for example, a coworker) can help, that person is not always available if he/she also holds a job.

Because of fear of being caught and deported by the authorities, Fujianese illegal immigrants limit their entertainment after work to watching TV (mostly Chinese programs or movies), drinking, gambling, or chatting. Although they are in the United States, the Fujianese live in a world surrounded by their villagers, who have a similar difficulty in breaking through language barriers. The personal development of Fujianese immigrants has been confined to a few fields because all the information and skills they

have are obtained through limited social intercourse. This is why Fujianese are competing with each other in the food industry but hesitate to step into a new career.

Loneliness has contributed to an increase in both cohabitation among unmarried people and adultery. Women are more affected than men in their selection of spouses if they have had any of these behaviors prior to marriage. However, cohabitation and the commission of adultery are not only responses to physical or psychological needs, but also responses to the need for survival or self-development. Although a number of Fujianese illegal immigrants have affairs when they separate from their spouses, most of them are responsible for the family financially and emotionally. They still consider family reunion to be their purpose in life.

The desire to pursue a better life has forced many Fujianese to leave their children behind. The average length of separation from their parents is about eight years for Chinese-born children and four years for American-born ones. The former usually grow up in a female-headed family without necessary discipline and protection. The latter live with their grandparents, who spoil them or have no ability to educate them. After these children come to the United States, they experience difficulty getting along with parents who center on their work. They get less attention and, at the same time, struggle to adjust to a new environment. An already fragile parent-children relationship may break up if neither party makes an effort to cope with the conflicts.

The experience of Fujianese illegal immigrants to a great extent has reflected the failure of U.S. immigration policy. A limited amount of legal status does not discourage illegal immigrants from choosing the United States as their destination but causes a variety of social problems related to individuals and their families. I also witness a

developing cynicism in which failed applicants turn to resting their hopes on the next generation while simultaneously attempting to stay as long as they can if they are not forcibly deported.

Similarly to the reasons for emigrating, the strategies used by the smugglers to transport their human cargo differ from time to time. The sea route was once popular because of its ability to carry a large number of snake people at one time. The Golden Venture incident in 1993, in which eight illegal immigrants died, announced the decline of sea smuggling as a result of tighter control of U.S. waters. Afterwards, the snakeheads greatly depended on the air route to transport people from China or other transit countries to America. Air smuggling generally involves few snake people (so it is less likely to be detected) but relies on complex coordination between smugglers all around the world. If the smugglers cannot send their human cargo directly into the United States, they will choose the land routes (usually the Mexican- or Canadian-American itinerary) for continuing their mission. The land routes, however, play a relatively minor role in Fujianese smuggling because they have always been an auxiliary strategy.

Because the U.S. authorities have strengthened control of U.S. borders and airports, the frequency of successful transportation of snake people via the aforementioned methods has been reduced in recent years. This has led to more frequent use of bogus marriages and governmental projects as smuggling strategies. It has long been a tough task to prevent bogus marriages for two reasons: (a) a large pool of American-Chinese makes it impossible for prevention and control; and (b) the rights of family reunion (the theme of American immigration laws) theoretically override the rights of rational suspicions. As for the abuse of governmental visas, the United States authorities could

check its spread through proactively cooperating with China's central government. If Beijing would agree to pressure the officials in Fujian Province by adding the control of human smuggling to the standards for promotion, there may be hope that illegal emigration from Fujian Province can be brought under control.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Informed Consent Form for Interview

Please read each of the following elements of informed consent. If you agree to participate in this research after reading each of the elements and having them presented to you orally, please indicate so by signing on the line below.

- I have been informed that my participation in this research is voluntary. I have been informed that voluntary participation includes the right to refuse to consent to participate in the interview, the right to refuse to answer particular questions, and the right to terminate my participation at any time without consequences of any kind. I have been informed that I will not need to provide an explanation for my refusal. I have been informed that participation in this research constitutes granting an interview, which may last about one and a half hours.
- I have been informed that my participation should not cost me any expense, nor will I be compensated in any ways for my participation.
- I have been informed that this research is being conducted to more fully understand the reasons for Fujianese illegal immigration, and my experiences during the smuggling trip and after arriving in the United States
- I have been informed that the results of this research will be used as data for a thesis.
- I have been informed that my participation will be strictly confidential. No identifying information, such as names, addresses or phone numbers, will be

included in the field notes and the thesis; and a list with my identification will be separate from field notes and consent agreements and stored with specific cautions.

- I have been informed that I have the right to request an interview report, a research summary, and a copy of thesis. I have the right to question the interviewer's interpretation and ask for a correction.
- If I have any further issues with this study, I can contact Dr. Paul Leighton, principal investigator, or Dr. Liquan Cao, co-investigator, at (734) 487-0012. If I have any questions regarding my rights as a human research subject, I can contact Dr. Patrick Melia, the co-chair of the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee, at (734) 487-0379.
- This study may cause psychological stresses when I recall the past experiences. If I feel any kind of discomfort, I have the right to stop the interview at any time and seek assistance. The interviewer and her investigators are available for me to discuss my feelings, and I will be referred to the counseling services with the presence of the interviewer as a translator if I request. Additionally, I will be asked to provide information about criminal behaviors, such as the method I used to smuggle into the United States. However, it will not raise legal concerns because the authority has been informed of my smuggling experiences. Also, the potential risks are reduced because this study is completely anonymous and confidential.
- I have been informed that tape-recording will be used in this study. If I agree with the use of tape-recording, my interview will be transcribed as soon as possible and the tape will be destroyed two days after transcription is completed; if I disagree, the interviewer only take notes during the interview.
- This form will be invalid after September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005.

I have read each of the elements of informed consent. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate by giving an interview.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

I agree to have the interview tape-recorded. I understand that each of the above conditions of informed consent apply to this process.

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Printed Name  
(Translation)

Signature

Date

### 访谈同意书

请通读以下各条款。在访谈者对同意书内容作出口头说明之后，如果您愿意接受访谈，请在最后一栏签名。

我已被告知我的参与是完全自愿的。我有权拒绝接受访谈；拒绝回答有关问题；并且有权随时中止访谈而不承担任何后果。我不需要对我的决定作出任何解释。如果我同意参加这项研究，我将接受大约一个半小时的访谈。

我已被告知我的参与不需要本人承担任何费用，但也没有任何报酬。

我已被告知这项研究旨在更深入地了解福建人偷渡的原因，以及我在偷渡途中和到达美国后的生活经历。

我已被告知访谈内容将会成为访谈者毕业论文的素材。

我已被告知我的参与是完全保密的。我的真实姓名，地址，电话号码等个人信

息将不会出现在访谈笔记和毕业论文中。一份记载我个人信息的清单 ( 内含我真, 假名之间的关联关系 ) 将会和访谈笔记及本同意书分别, 妥善存放。

我已被告知我有权索取一份访谈报告, 研究总结, 和论文的复印件。我有权对访谈者的解释提出质疑并要求她予以更正。

如果我对这项研究有其他问题, 可以联系 Paul Leighton 或 Liqun Cao, 他们的电话是: ( 734)487-0012.

如果我对自已作为一个研究主体所享有的权利有任何疑问, 可以联系东密西根大学人文研究委员会的 Dr. Patrick Melia.他的电话是: (734) 487-0379。

访谈可能会让我回忆起以往的痛苦经历。如果我有任何不适, 可以随时终止访谈并寻求心理帮助。访谈者和她的导师愿意倾听我的述说并分享我的感受。我也可以在有访谈者陪同的情况下, 前往专业的心理咨询机构就医。另外我将被要求提供与偷渡行为有关的信息, 比如我是如何偷渡到美国的。但是由于美国政府已经事先知道我是偷渡来的, 我所提供的材料不会给我带来法律方面的争议。同时, 这项研究的绝对匿名性和保密性降低了我参与的分险。

我已被告知访谈内容将会被录音, 但我有权拒绝录音 ( 只允许笔记 )。如果我

同意录音，文字转录必须在访谈结束后尽快进行；并且在转录工作结束两天之内，音带必须被销毁。

本同意书的有效期限至 2005 年 9 月 1 日。

我已经通读了以上各条款。我的签名表示我同意接受访谈。

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姓名 ( 正楷 )	签名	日期
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我同意接受录音。

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姓名 ( 正楷 )	签名	日期
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## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

Thank you for participating in this interview. Please answer some questions. If you feel uncomfortable about any question, you can refuse to answer it.

1. Which city (county) of Fujian are you from? What was your occupation in China?

How much was your monthly income?



2. When did you leave China? How old were you then?

How did you enter America? How long did you spend on the trip? How was the trip?

3. Why did you leave China? And why you choose the United States as your receiving country?

4. If you were smuggled into America, were you worried about being arrested by the United States authority? Were you in reality arrested by the legal departments? What was happened to you? When you were in prison, did you worry that you might be imprisoned for a long time or deported? How could you finally get released? Before you obtain legal status, did you have the pressure of being arrested by INS and later deported? How many times did you really experience such threats?

5. How much is your smuggling fee? How could your family gather such a great amount of money? How long did you repay the smuggling fee? At that moment, what did you feel? Before you paid off the smuggling fee, how did you spend your money?

6. What was your first job in the United States? How could you find it? How could you get used to it? You must have a lot of stories about your first job, please tell me the most significant one.

What is your occupation now? Do you like your job?

7. What do you do after work? When you have a day off each week, do your have any entertainments? If you can use a word to describe the life in the United States, what will you choose?

8. How is the dorm that you are living?

9. If something happened to you, who can help you?

10. How do you get the legal status? How much do you pay for it? How long did it take

from you summiting your application to the court granting you the refugee status? Any difficulties during this process?

Have your family come here? How long did it take since you were granted the refugee status? If they have not come, how long have you waited for it?

If you cannot get legal status, what will you do with your family? Will you return to China? Will you forsake your spouse and children in China?

11. Have you got married? Where? If you got married in America, how could you get to know your wife/husband? Why do you choose him/her? How much did you pay for the betrothal money ?

12. If your family is in China, how can you keep contact with each other? How can you let them know you love them? How old were your children when you left China? How is your relationship with children?

If your family has come to the United States, how are your relationships? Were you very excited when your family got the visas? Could you get along with each other in the first a couple of weeks, especially between you and your kids, was it difficult?

13. If someone is thinking about entering the United States illegally, what will you say to him?

(Translation)

**访谈问题:**

首先谢谢您接受我的访谈。请回答以下问题。如果有些问题太尖锐,您可以拒绝回答。

1. 您从福建什么地方来? 在国内从事什么职业? 每个月的收入大约是有多少?

2. 您是什么时候离开中国大陆的? 当时多大年纪?

您是怎么来到美国的? 途中花了多长时间? 一路上还好吗?

3. 为什么离开中国? 又为什么选择来美国?

4. 如果你是偷渡来的, 当时你害怕被美国政府发现吗? 你入境时的实际情况如何? 当你被关在监狱里的时候, 害怕会被关很长时间或是遣送回中国吗? 你是怎么被释放的? 当你没有身份的时候, 担心被警察或是移民局抓吗? 有几次你切实感受到这样的威胁?

5. 你的偷渡费是多少? 你的家人是怎么筹到这么一大笔钱的? 你花了多长时间还完这笔钱? 在那一刻, 你有什么感觉? 在这之前, 你是不是舍不得花钱?

6. 你在美国的第一份工作是什么? 你怎么找到这份工作的? 你怎么能适应得? 你一定有很多故事关于你的第一份工作, 告诉我一些你最难忘的。

你现在做什么? 你喜欢现在的工作吗?

7. 工作之余你做些什么? 休假的时候你有娱乐活动吗? 如果能有一个词来形容在美国的生活, 你会选什么词?

8. 你的住宿条件怎么样？

9. 如果你在美国出了事，谁能帮你？

10. 你怎么拿到身份的？一共花了多少钱？花了多长时间？程序麻烦吗？

如果没拿到身份，你会回大陆吗？如果不回，你的家人怎么办？

11. 你结婚了吗？如果是在美国结的婚，你是怎么认识你先生（太太）的？为

什么选择他（她）？聘金花了多少？

12. 如果你的家人还在大陆，你们怎么保持联系？你怎么让他们知道你很爱他

们？当你离开中国时，你的孩子有多大？现在你们的关系还好吗？

如果你的家人都在美国，你与他们的关系融洽吗？当你得知你的家人拿到签证

的那一刻，你的心情是不是很激动？在他们刚来的那几个礼拜，你们（特别是你和

你的孩子）在沟通上有问题吗？

13. 如果你有亲戚，朋友，或熟人正在考虑偷渡，你有话跟他们说吗？

## Appendix C

### Approval of Research Involving Human Subjects

February 25, 2005

Dear Miao Lin:

The CAS-Human Subjects Committee has considered your application, #2187, “From the Lucky Land to the Beautiful Country: Fujianese illegal ...” and we consider it EXEMPT. This means that the proposal does not need further consideration by the University Human Subjects Committee and you may proceed with your research.

This letter should be presented with your thesis draft to the Graduate School as proof that you met the guidelines for research involving human subjects in the College of Arts and Sciences. Good luck with your endeavors, and your career.

Sincerely,  
Michael J. Brabec, Chair  
CAS-HSC