

Social Burden or Social Resources:

Understanding Chinese Senior Immigrants' Contributions in Canada

SOCIAL BURDEN OR SOCIAL RESOURCES:
UNDERSTANDING CHINESE SENIOR IMMIGRANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS IN CANADA

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore how Chinese senior immigrants perceive individual strengths and how they use these strengths to help their adult immigrant children's families and participate in community activities. I also examine how they understand their contributions in Canada and the barriers to their active participation in the Canadian society. The study was carried out through conducting two focus groups in Toronto with Mandarin-speaking Chinese senior immigrants aged 55-80 who came to Canada 2-15 years ago. Informed by the anti-oppressive practice (AOP) approach in social work, findings suggest that those these Chinese seniors play a critical role in stabilizing the immigrant family economy and in subsidizing Chinese newcomer families in the process of early settlement. Chinese senior immigrants actively take part in community works and volunteer in helping others, which have direct and indirect benefits to Canadian economic development. The thesis stresses these non-economic contributions by senior immigrants should be considered and incorporated in policy making process, including policies relating to the criteria of immigration. This study shows that immigrant sponsorship policy and senior immigrants' service programs play a large role in deterring or assisting senior immigrants to play a role in Canadian society.

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I. Introduction

In February 2014, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) announced the re-opening of the Parent and Grandparent (PGP) program for new applications. In order to ensure sponsors meet the financial needs of their sponsored parents and grandparents, In February, 2014, the CIC increased a family's minimum necessary income (MNI) for sponsoring parents and grandparents equivalent to 30 percent (as compared with the MNI criteria that was set before February 2014). Individuals who are preparing to sponsor their parents and grandparents, or other accompanying family members, are being asked to demonstrate that they meet this new income standard for three consecutive tax years prior to submitting the sponsorship application. Individuals who seek to sponsor their parents and grandparents and accompanying family members will be required to commit to a lengthened sponsorship undertaking period of 20 years as compared to the required 10 year undertaking period in place before February 2014 (CIC News, 2013).

The new policy regarding immigration sponsorship suggests an embedded assumption where seniors are viewed as a burden on the social welfare and health care systems in Canada. The increasingly restrictive sponsorship requirements may also generate further inequality experienced by immigrant families given that they it potentially disadvantages low-income families, making it difficult for immigrants with lower incomes to unite with their family members. The research also suggests that

immigrant seniors have actively contributed to their adult children's settlement in Canada through care giving for their grandchildren (Zhou, 2013a). Yet so far most studies on senior immigrants (Lai, 2011; Lunt, 2009 and Durst, 2005) focus on the barriers and difficulties that senior immigrants experience in Canadian society. We know little about the social integration of senior immigrants and how they voluntarily involve in their community work and Canadian social life.

The existing literature has often presented Chinese senior immigrants as dependent, and vulnerable. For instance, they are viewed as financially relying on relatives (Chow, 2010), unable to speak fluent English, and lacking involvement in Canadian society since they do not possess the social networks available to most other Canadians (Lai, 2011). For seniors with a visitor permit, the current government welfare policy restrict them access to the pension and healthcare system (Gorospe, 2006). If their families are not capable of financially supporting them in Canada, senior immigrants often find themselves in very difficult situations because of their lack of access to the support from the state (Gorospe, 2006). In addition to financial difficulties, Chinese senior immigrants also confront challenges in adapting to a new culture or way of living in Canada. It is reported that Chinese senior immigrants would face more difficulties in job searching if they are in need of a job because of their age, psychological challenges and cultural unfamiliarity (Lai, 2011).

Focusing on the Chinese seniors' constrained economic contributions ignores the fact that Chinese immigrant families often rely on seniors for childcare. It also disregards

immigrants' traditional cultural values as well as elder immigrants' non-economic contributions to their families, community, as well as Canadian society. However, my research illustrates how Chinese senior immigrants use their strengths, contributing to their communities and Canadian society, and their positive roles in contributing their younger immigrant family. Specifically, this thesis focuses on the following research questions: a) How do Chinese senior immigrants perceive their individual strengths after moving to Canada? b) How do they understand their contributions to their community and Canadian society? and c) What are the barriers to their active participation in the Canadian society? These research questions will also help me identify and understand both facilitators and inhibitors of their better participation in the community and the larger society. This study also attends to the relationship between current sponsorship immigrant policy and neoliberal ideology, as well as the limitations of current Canadian sponsorship immigration policy.

This research project was also stimulated by my own experience of volunteering in two agencies serving Chinese seniors in Toronto when I was pursuing my BSW at York University during 2012-2013. I, along with my coworkers, coordinated workshops for seniors' programs. In this capacity, I organized and facilitated community and healthcare knowledge workshops to share Canadian cultural information and to provide an environment for Chinese seniors to network among themselves. These workshops eventually acted as a tool to bridge the gap between two cultures and to assist seniors to adapt to the Canadian way of life while preserving their Chinese cultural heritage. During

this period, I made some good friends among Chinese senior immigrants aged between 60 to 80 years old. I learned that coming to Canada means that some seniors from mainland China had sacrificed superior living conditions and given up friends in China. Before they were eligible to move into the publically-funded residences for the elderly, they lived with their adult children to help with the care for their grandchildren. They also teach their grandchildren Chinese language and cultural knowledge. A grandmother from northern China told me that her 3-year-old granddaughter was unable to speak Chinese at all when she joined her son's family in Canada three years ago. But now this 6-year-old girl is able to speak Chinese very well and she also can write some Chinese. She said people always talk about keeping cultural heritage while in the process of being involved in Canadian society. She insisted the first thing to maintain Chinese culture is to let the children learn Chinese language.

I started this study with a strong interest in understanding how such a change is possible and how this grandmother, as well as other Chinese senior immigrants, could regain control over their lives in Canada. Oppressive conditions, such as isolation and self-consciousness, prevent them from realizing their hopes and dreams. As a social work student, I realize I have the responsibility to better understand Chinese senior immigrants' experiences Canadian in order to challenge the misconceptions and myths that exist in dominant discourses and public policies. Therefore, this study aims to break the silence, to challenge the stigma associated with the stereotypes, and to voice their concerns and feelings. The data collected through the focus groups I conducted with two

agencies serving Chinese seniors were rich and provocative. Their answers to the interview questions illustrate the complex intersections of the changes of their family relationships and the immigration policy as well as social policy in Canada.

However, the focus groups were even more animated when we started discussing the broader issues relating to how to live a successful life in Canada, how to make contributions to Canadian society and to tackle the barriers for Chinese seniors to contribute their skills in their own community. The dialogue led me to understand that Chinese seniors are a treasure for Canada, and they have great potential to make contributions to Canadian society.

This research project centres itself in addressing how Chinese senior immigrants make sense of their everyday lives and how they manage to make contributions to their multi-generational families and community in Canada. First, I reviewed the existing literature in the related areas, which also informs the construction of my theoretical framework—anti-oppressive social work approach—in the following section. Then I explain the methods of carrying out my research and the process of conducting two focus groups. Next, I delineate findings, discuss the results and implications of my findings, and make suggestions for future research. Participants’ discussion on the intersections between different challenges in their lives and the macrostructures has enabled me to situate immigrant seniors’ issue under study in broader social and political contexts.

II. Literature Review

My review of existing literature begins with the analysis of how the current restructured neoliberal-oriented immigrant Sponsorship Program affects seniors coming to Canada to unite with their families. Next I conducted a brief review of immigrant seniors' benefit in Canada to illustrate the limitation of these benefits to seniors from Asia and other less developed countries. In the last part of my literature review, I stress the important role that Chinese senior immigrants play in their transnational families, especially at the beginning stage when their adult children set up a new life in Canada.

The impacts of Canadian Sponsorship Program reform

For much years family class sponsorship (the Family Reunification Program) has played a key role in Canadian immigration recruitment policy. This program offers the chance for Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor family members to become permanent residents in Canada. History witnesses this policy as an important factor in helping immigrants to adapt to a new life and to become integrated in Canadian society (Wayland, 2006).

But from the mid-1990's there has been a gradually decline in the number of family class immigrants coming to Canada. Family class immigrants are currently less than one third of all landed immigrants coming to Canada (Neborak, 2013). In terms of the rationales of such policy changes, Alexandra Dobrowolsky (2012) argues that neoliberal immigration policy in Canada is aimed at the following goals:

(a) attract highly skilled immigrants; (b) expand low wage, temporary foreign worker programs; (c) diversify immigration entry doors and make some more flexible; (d) cut admission and settlement costs; (e) encourage settlement in less well-populated areas; (f) tighten border controls and crack down on undocumented migrants; (g) change citizenship rules to reduce risks of undesired costs and unrealized benefits to the state; and (h) sell immigration to the Canadian public through a policy rhetoric that emphasizes the hoped-for benefits of immigration while downplaying risks and disappointing outcomes (p.197).

In 2011, the Conservative government suddenly announced they were closing the Family Reunification Program. To replace it, the government launched a special visitor visa program for immigrants who intend to sponsor their family members, the Parent and Grandparent Super Visa. The Canadian Super Visa is valid for only two years, but it can be renewed for up to 10 years. Besides the costs associated with the Super Visa itself, its eligibility criteria also requires that immigrant families have a higher annual income (than previous required) and purchase Canadian medical insurance for people who plan to come to Canada to unite their families. In addition, a small quota was introduced: “The program reopened in January 1, 2014, accepted 5,000 applications and was closed again on February 3, 2014, with its application quota reached” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014a, b). This quota is especially small considering that

Canada has admitted approximately 250,000 immigrants on a yearly basis (IWC, 2013).

The Conservative government under Stephen Harper created the Super Visa under the Sponsorship of Parents and Grandparents (PGP) program. They also declared that the introduction of the new visa program would solve the problem of excess applications. In other words, this change permits immigrant family members to have only a short-term, temporary stay with their families but discourages them to apply for permanent residency. In February 2014, further tightening the application process, the government also made the PGP program even more difficult by making the criteria stricter than before by increasing 30% percent the money for sponsorship family relatives. As a result, even less immigrant families could financially bear the burden to sponsor their parents and grandparents come to Canada. Chen and Thorpe (2015) commented: “Under the new policy many have to shoulder large expenses if they seek temporary reunification under Super Visa program with their parents/grandparents, and many more cannot even have temporary reunification if they do meet the stringent financial and health status criteria of Super Visa. The result is a group of Canadians are hindered by immigration policy to reunite with their parents/grandparents because of the new sponsors’ policy” (p.3).

The new changes to the parent and grandparent sponsorship program clearly embody the influence of neoliberal ideology on immigration policy because the government further shift the financial burden onto individual sponsors. In order to minimize state expenditures, the neoliberal ideology adheres to the principle of the

economic self-sufficiency of sponsors and gives priority to those who are economically wealthy. Franklin (2015) further pointed out:

Beyond indicating that Neoliberals' has become a permanent ideology shaping immigration policy, the new reforms frame sponsored elderly immigrants as being in conflict with the 'Canadian taxpayer', assuming that all sponsored elderly immigrants are non-contributing, burdensome members of society, and suggesting that sponsors frequently fail to fulfill their obligations. The narrow emphasis on economic contribution only, and the connotations that sponsors, despite contributing to taxes, are outside the realm of the Canadian taxpayer, has significant consequences for the fulfillment of Canada's obligation to family reunification, and the way in which we value the family (p. 7).

The current neoliberal reforms to the parent and grandparent sponsorship program have built up prejudices in determining eligibility on the immigration application. Neoliberals stresses that the economic contributions of immigrants and potential immigrants are the only criteria to evaluate their contributions to the country. As a result, barriers are constructed for immigrants to sponsor their senior family members who have less chance to be employed in a new country. My research project aims to illustrate how immigrant seniors have made other valuable direct and indirect contributions to their immigrant families and their communities in Canada.

The new changes in the Sponsorship of Parents and Grandparents (PGP) program place much stress on individual economic contribution rather than family ties and family social connections, the latter of which has indeed functioned to facilitate immigrants and their families to contribute to and integrate in the new country. From this understanding, we can see the importance of conducting the research work to specify the seniors' contributions beyond economic-centric discourses. Non-economic contributions dedicated by immigrants' seniors should not be ignored; rather, it should be carefully considered and incorporated in the policy-making process, including policies relating to the criteria of immigration.

Immigrant seniors' Access to Income in Canada

Canada is a welfare state and governments play an important role in guaranteeing income security for seniors, including immigrant seniors (Lewin & Stier, 2003). Canadian social policies for income security for seniors, as Kaida and Boyd (2011) summarized, can be classified as three categories: (a) Universal pensions; (b) Social insurance; and (c) Social assistance.

First, universal pensions are available in the form of Old Age Security (OAS) – a non-contributory pension provided to any Canadian citizen or legal resident aged 65 and older who has lived in Canada for 10 years or more after age 18. As a supplement of the OAS, the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) may be provided to OAS recipients with limited or no other income. The second type of income maintenance policy is social insurance, which consists of two major

pension sources: (a) the Canada/Quebec Pension Plans (C/QPPs);(b) occupational pensions and the Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSP). Occupational pensions and RRSPs can be sponsored by employers, labour unions, and professional organizations by deferring wages to provide for the employees' retirement....The third type of income maintenance policy is social assistance, for which economically constrained seniors can be eligible as part of supplementary income provided by provincial governments (p. 85).

It should be noted that Canada has international social security agreements with some countries to assist people to get seniors benefits from either country. "An agreement may allow periods of contribution to the other country's social security system (or, in some cases, periods of residence abroad) to be added to periods of contribution to the Canada Pension Plan in order to meet minimum qualifying conditions. For example, these agreements would allow a citizen of Germany to access the Canada Pension Plan, including retirement, disability and survivor benefits in Canada. These agreements are with developed countries" (Durst, 2005, p.266). These agreements are based on the compatibility of the pension systems between Canada and the source country. Canada has a long immigration history with most America and European developed countries. Reviewing the Canada immigration history, only after 1967, Canada's immigrant policy changed into point system, did Canada begin to admit more immigrants from Asia, but still few Canadians migrant to some Asian undeveloped countries. It is obvious most

Asian developing countries like China and India have no such agreements with the Canadian government.

Before immigrant seniors came to Canada, they treasured a nice dream, and some of them sold their businesses and homes to come to the new country providing care for their grandchildren. However, the new arrangement may add to their stress, because they often lose economic independence and social support (e.g., friends and networks) that they used to have back home (Kaida and Boyd, 2011, Durst, 2005). It is a fact that immigrant families' financial support plays a key role in the economic well-being of elderly immigrants in Canada. At the beginning of applying to sponsor their parents or grandparents to come to Canada, the Canadian government had specified that immigrant families' financial support in Canada is a must, and prohibits the sponsored individuals from receiving government social assistance during their first 10 years of residence in Canada, which, in February 2014, was further increased to 20 years (CIC News, 2013). Under such a circumstance, unless immigrant seniors have access to income from their home country, their adult immigrant children become the main source of their economic survival in Canada (Kaida and Boyd, 2011, Durst, 2005). In the current retirement income system in Canada, the source of income that is most relevant to Chinese senior immigrants is OAS, although its 10-year residency requirement has inhibited many Chinese seniors from receiving this benefit. Yet such a source of economic support is not always reliable. As my research data reveals, seniors may have conflicts with their adult children's families or the latter may have financial problems or a

financial crisis. In extreme circumstances, they may not even be able to return to the home county despite the conflicts within intergenerational families, because some of them have spent all the resources back home to unite with their Canadian relatives.

The common misconception that senior immigrants are less likely to make contributions to the Canadian economy is in part because they do not belong to the category of “economic immigrant. Although some studies (Durst, 2005, Lai, 2011, Lai and Chau, 2007) have explored the external barriers that senior immigrants face, relatively limited attention is paid to seniors’ positive experiences and active contributions in Canadian society. My research project, however, aims to explore senior immigrants’ non-economic contributions in Canada.

Chinese Seniors’ Role in Transnational Care

To understand seniors’ non-economic contributions to the host society, it is imperative to explore the role of these seniors have played in their transnational families through, for example, childcare.

Traditional immigration theory focuses on the national needs for the labour force, but as the global economic integration, the transnational family that across the two nations becomes a common phenomenon. Older adults’ contributions in the immigrant family not only include keeping house, and taking care of grandchildren. They also play an important role in shaping the morality of youngsters as they taught their grandchildren in family values and their ethnic culture (Treas, 2008).

For most Chinese skilled immigrants, the immediate challenge after immigration is childcare. This is especially the case for well-educated Chinese immigrant women, because the goal of their immigration to Canada is development instead of survival. They tended to avoid a trap of poverty and desire to regain the social status that they once achieved in China (Zhou, 2013b). As a result, many skilled immigrant women with children make the choice to go back to school for Canadian credentials, and, in turn, seek assistance from grandparents in China for childcare (Zhou, 2013 a & b). In addition, another motivation for this care arrangement characteristic is related to Chinese cultural heritage. Based on my working experiences in agencies serving Chinese seniors, many Chinese seniors hold the idea that in order to retain Chinese heritage, it is important to let their children continue to write and learn Chinese though learning English is a new challenge to them. If the child cannot speak and write Chinese, they think their roots are cut off.

Care obligations in a transnational family, according to Baldassar et al. (2007), would not be constrained by various geographic or intuitional barriers, such as long distance, tightened immigrant sponsoring policies, and immigrants' employment status, income, and diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds. In fact, the social problems concerning the transnational family always suggest the connections between individuals and institutions across borders (Lunt, 2009). "The critical examination of aging in the context of transnational care giving helps us take into consideration those dimensions – place, space, time, and knowledge – that are changed by globalization processes, and rethink aging

from a broader perspective that links seniors' experiences with their relationship with their immigrant children's families and macro-structures outside national borders” (Zhou, 2012, p.241). The increasing numbers of people affected by transnational care—challenges social policy makers to make or adjust policy in order to better reflect the changing situations (Zhou, 2013b).

Transnational care arrangements play an important role in helping Chinese immigrant families adapt to Canadian society in the early stage of settlement. From a perceptive of transnational family, immigration is not only about Chinese skilled immigrants in Canada; it also has greatly affected these immigrants' elderly parents living in China. In this sense, immigration has changed the structure of a family and also created new meaning to the family. Grand parenting is part of traditional Chinese culture passed down from generation to generation, in the transnational family Chinese seniors transnational care also become part of the immigration processes of their adult children in Canada (Zhou, 2013a).

As a result of neoliberal welfare restructuring since the 1980s, in Canada public care resources have become limited and the childcare mainly relies on individual family's access to the privatized care (Matthews, et. al, 2012). Although immigrant women rely on their families, including older kin, for childcare, the government has largely ignored such kin-based contributions when considering policies on family reunification. Yet studies of Chinese immigrant families have suggested that, without childcare assistance

from grandparents, immigrant women would have to spend time on childcare and thus less time to participate in paid labour force (Zhou, 2013a; Neysmith & Zhou, 2013).

My working experiences in the Chinese community offer me the chance to witness the Chinese immigrant transnational families relying on grandparents for childcare and economic survival. This indicates that Chinese seniors play a critical role in stabilizing the immigrant family economy and in subsidizing new Chinese immigrants in the process of early settlement. Neoliberalism's immigrant policy for sponsoring seniors and welfare restructuring poses socio-economic and social structural factors that indisputably puts senior immigrants in a marginalized position and lacks critical analysis of the intergenerational and transnational effects of the current policy.

The literature review also reveals some gaps in current knowledge related to the role of Chinese senior immigrants in Canada against the background of the current Neoliberal immigration and sponsorship policy. First, there is a need to challenge the dominant discourses that Chinese seniors are largely dependent on their immigrant children and hardly contribute to Canadian economy. Second, the literature related to Chinese senior immigrants' contributions in transnational families usually focus on their assistance for child care. Chinese seniors' engagement as a group in community work and social involvement remain invisible. Third, we should not limit our studies to Chinese senior immigrants' adaptation in mainstream Canadian society; attention should also be paid to the intersections between their own cultural traditions and the changing environments, as

well as the effects of such intersections on the seniors' contributions to the Canadian society.

III. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of my research project is informed by the anti-oppressive practice (AOP) approach used in social work (e.g., Fook, 2012). In his book *Social Work: A critical approach to practice*, Fook (2012) indicates that AOP emphasizes the structural nature of social problems and focuses more on people's oppression in societies, economies, and cultures. AOP aims to empower clients in the context of existing oppression in society. Anti-oppressive social work emphasizes that the dominant group tries to control others in society. This not only means political and economic control, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world. This inevitably subordinates individuals as they accept it as "common sense" and "natural". Here the notion "common sense" and "natural" actually are false consciousness. Anti-oppressive social work admits that a process of false consciousness operates within the capitalist society so that people have difficulty to recognize that social relations are in fact historically constructed and that they are possibly transformable. Changes lie in changing the power relation and social structures. The AOP, according to Neuman (1997), aims to transform social relations and reveal the underlying hidden sources of social relations, and also seeks to enlighten people to make a change for themselves. This approach recognizes that social reality has multiple layers, and that the social facts on the

surface are rooted in the deeply embedded social structures. These structures can be realized and improved by people so as to make progress of the society.

Young (2008) argued that structural injustice happens as a result of many people and institutions acting to further their particular purpose and interests. All the people who take part in the processes that formed these structures are responsible for the outcomes in the sense that they have an involuntary role in the process. She further commented: People stand in systematically different social positions because of the way that different organizations work together. Rather than being a static condition, these factors that limit or enable individual possibilities are ongoing processes in which many people participate. These limitations or benefits happen not only according to institutional rules and norms carried by policies, but also by the structures that make some actions particularly attractive and carry little cost, or make other kinds of action costly for others. Social structure aims to facilitate some people and at the same time restrict some people (Young, 2008).

Structural injustice exists when social policy processes put large categories of persons under a systematic threat of domination and deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time as these processes enable others to dominate or have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising their capacities. Structural injustice is a kind of moral wrong distinct from the wilfully repressive policies of a state (p.114).

These theories are useful in examining the complex issues that influence Chinese senior immigrants' lives in Canada. If I only examine the issues from a cultural perspective, it will hinder our understanding of the influence of other important social and structural aspects—such as structural and class inequalities—on the experiences of Chinese senior individuals and families. A critical structural analysis, however, enables us take into consideration the historical and present structural inequalities of being a visible minority individual in the society (Maiter, 2009).

This theoretical framework also guides me to situate the data collected from Chinese senior immigrant family into the broader contexts of the community and the social systems. The AOP not only suggests the human being as the first priority to change the social force and social laws; it also views people as creative and adaptive and capable to makes changes. When being isolated from others, however, they may fail to see the possibility of social changes and to pursue their hopes. The purpose of my research, in part, is to examine the positive role that Chinese seniors play in Canadian society through an AOP lens, and to understand how existing power relations and social structures create barriers for them to contribute their skills.

This theoretical frame work presents two main strengths in conducting my research project. First, this approach enables me to understand that Chinese senior immigrants' problems are influenced by interaction at the structural level. Second, AOP emphasizes the importance of empowering people to make changes in their lives. As Gray(2011) specifies clearly, the conventional helping model “sees the person as the problem;

expresses a language of professional cynicism and doubt; distances the worker from the client in unequal, controlling, and manipulating relationships; strips problems of their context; and supposes a disease with a cause and a solution”(p.6). However, the anti-oppressive approach holds that structural forces influence the social conditions that put the individual into a disadvantaged situation. This approach requires that people create change based on empowerment and enhances clients’ critical awareness towards challenging a social system and arrangement that is oppressive.

Integrating the AOP into my research project also makes me aware of the power dynamics in the research process. I understand that I should make efforts to eliminate the power imbalance between me as the researcher and Chinese senior immigrants as clients. AOP requires me to investigate the facts of what is the root cause for barriers confront by Chinese senior immigrants and ask questions about who benefits and who loses from the current sponsorship immigrant policy. At the same time, I need to understand and overcome my own bias toward Chinese senior immigrants and respect their contributions, perspectives and dignity. The focus group should be a mutual learning process with trust established and false consciousness removed. As Baines (2007) further illustrates this mutual learning process in the context of social work practice: while the worker may possess more formal education and knowledge, the clients do have more knowledge of their own experiences. Exchanging on an equal and mutually beneficial basis is needed in order to get a full picture of the issues being discussed. The processes of sharing enable researchers to feel less alienated about their research work and to provide an

opportunity for clients and workers to adopt a joint action for the common goals. By applying the anti-oppressive approach, I especially tried to encourage Chinese senior immigrants to talk about their own experiences in ways that assist them to better understand their historical and present backgrounds of the systematic barriers to their full participation in Canadian society.

The anti-oppressive approach also influence my examination of the transcripts, I realized that, to some extent, AOP approach attempts to explain intersections of social structure and social relationships and helps me to make sense of the connections between the data and the broader social conditions on which Chinese senior immigrants live their daily lives. Although the anti-oppressive approach facilitates a fruitful research process, I also recognize that no single theory can explain everything and that there multiple theoretical perspectives to understand a certain social problem. I choose the anti-oppressive approach because Chinese senior immigrants' perspectives and their appeals for changing social conditions is a priority of my research purpose.

I understand that the anti-oppressive approach stresses the improvement of social systems. This does not mean it ignores the change work on Chinese senior immigrants nor does it suggest that Chinese senior immigrants do not possess the ability to make a change for themselves. AOP acknowledges that Chinese senior immigrants' life circumstances and the barriers are connected to their economic and social positions, and intervention at both levels of social structures and of individuals is required.

IV. Methods

In order to reach my research objectives, I conducted two focus groups in Toronto in two agencies serving Chinese senior immigrants. The focus groups allow the discussion being conducted within a group of Chinese senior immigrants and ensure the researcher's spontaneous follow-up questions and timely clarification.

As Onwuegbuzie (2009) suggests, using focus group method can enable the themes emergent from two or more focus groups to be mutually tested. As a researcher, I assess whether the themes emergent from one group also emerge from others. The constant comparisons of the emergent themes can also help me evaluate the saturation of the data in general and across focus groups. The method of focus groups is also efficient and effective to collect data from participants from diverse backgrounds and about the interactions between participants. My goal is to create an environment where Chinese senior immigrants would feel comfortable to share their experiences and perspectives. I realized that my responsibility was not only to help Chinese senior immigrants to fully understand the interview questionnaire (Appendix B), but also to provide them a chance to share their experiences, to voice their concerns, and to discuss the barriers to their participation in the society and the strategies to overcome these barriers.

By taking the research methods of focus group, it also allows me as the researcher to observe different forms of communication that Chinese seniors use in their daily lives, from which I could learn how they present their experience and interact with other

seniors with similar experiences. Through sharing their experiences with other seniors, their sense of isolation might be reduced and they might gain a sense of support and empowerment (Kitzinger, 1995).

Through the telephone and email contacts with workshop coordinators of the two agencies, I established my schedule of recruiting 8 to 10 Chinese seniors for each group. I put my posters at the two agencies, and also took the opportunities of their seniors' workshop to verbally explain the idea of recruiting two focus groups to the Chinese seniors (Appendix D and E). All participants in this study were recruited through the organization and community outreach of these two agencies, and I was responsible for each step of the recruitment process.

After developing the lists of Chinese seniors from the two agencies who were interested in joining the focus groups, I went to both agencies to work with program coordinators to determine the further recruitment details. Given that I had volunteer experiences in both agencies in the years of 2013 and 2014, to avoid any potential conflicts of interest, I did not enrol Chinese seniors I had known previously. Instead I sought and secured the involvement of Chinese seniors whom I did not know before.

Written informed consent (Appendix A) was secured from each participant before the focus groups. All the documents are translated into standard Mandarin by the researcher, a native Chinese writer and speaker. The focus groups are also conducted in Mandarin, an official language spoken by both the research and all participants.

Before signing the consent forms, I verbally reiterated the contents of the information letter and declared that this research project is part of my MSW degree requirement. I explained to them that they could directly contact me if they had any further questions in future or concerns about this research study. Then I introduced the current Canadian immigrant policy related to sponsoring seniors who wish to unite with their immigrant families. Following this I distributed consent forms to each Chinese senior who attended focus group interviews. Each participant who agreed to participate in this research study was asked to sign and date the consent form. After I had obtained consent from participants, I asked them to complete a demographic form (Appendix C) which contains six questions about, such as, name, gender, age, language spoken, immigrant status and educational background at home country. The consent form also included a note to get participants' permission to approach them for a short individual follow-up interview in the case of my need to clarify and expand on certain contents discussed at the focus group. I stressed that I would not disclose any content of their focus group discussion to others to ensure the confidentiality of any information the participant provided. Although the focus group method might not provide participant a guarantee in this matter, I reminded participants that they should keep this in mind when making comments and that they did not need to answer any questions that they did not want to answer or felt uncomfortable with.

Chinese senior immigrants' participation in this study was completely voluntary and their privacy was ensured throughout the research process of this project. Participants

were informed that if they could stop (withdraw) without any consequence either during or after the focus group by end of July 2015. In cases of withdrawal, any data participant had provided would be destroyed unless the participant indicated otherwise. If participants do not want to answer some of the questions of the focus group discussion, they do not have to and can still stay in the focus groups. I informed participants that I expected to have this study completed by approximately the end of September 2015. If participants would like a brief summary of the results, they were provided a chance to inform the researcher how they would like it sent to them and the researcher would provide a summary in due course.

Each focus group recruited 10 Chinese seniors from two different agencies, with a total of 20 participants. Eligible participants were those older male and female adults who were older than 55 years, who were from mainland China, or Chinese born, who have been sponsored by their adult children, who are Mandarin speaking, and who landed in Canada in the past 15 years.

Of the 20 Chinese immigrants, 16 were women and four were men. Their ages ranged from 55 to 81 years old. Six Chinese seniors had gained Canadian citizenship and the rest were permanent residents. Their educational backgrounds were diverse, including ‘College’ (4/20), ‘Bachelor degree’ (10/20), ‘Master’s degree’ (1/20), and ‘high school (5/20)’. They landed in Toronto two to 15 years ago.

I select Mandarin-speaking Chinese seniors as the research participants because P.

R. China has been one of top source countries of Canadian immigration since the 1990s. Following this trend, their parents or grandparents have arrived in Canada under the category of family reunification, that is, they were family class immigrants. Taking Vancouver as an example, Mandarin-speaking immigrants has increased 43 per cent in the last 10 years, while the Cantonese population still remains unchanged (Xiong and Tarannum, 2015). According to statistics from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, between 1999 and 2009 the largest number of immigrants to Canada came from the People's Republic of China (PRC), and in 2005 reached the highest with 42,295 (Clarkson, 2011).

Before conducting the focus group, I held community consultations with the social workers of two agencies to identify the most effective ways to conduct focus groups and to mitigate any stressors that Chinese seniors might experience. The consultations helped me decide on issues including the research participant eligibility criteria, prepare for the problems such as some unexpected questions that might arise for focus groups, and arrange refreshments, and so on. Specifically, I decided to divide each focus group into two parts. In the first part, the questions were answered by individual Chinese seniors, and in the second part the questions were answered through the discussion of a small group consisting of three to four people. A summary of the discussion was reported by a selected group leader at the end of group session. Two focus groups were held at two different community centers.

Each focus group took 120 minutes to complete. The focus group interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher after each session. The transcripts, along with the notes I had taken during the focus group interviews, were analysed, first, through creating categories or codes, then I compared the contents under each code to identify the common themes that were brought up by participants. I created my records based on comparisons (Ratcliff, n.d.). I paid special attention to data that could answer my questions, such as the positive role Chinese senior play in their homes and the community, and barriers preventing them from playing their role in community and Canadian social activity.

V. Findings

Several topics were discussed in the two focus groups, and some themes appeared during the process of data analysis. In this first section below, I presented themes relating to Chinese senior immigrants' perceptions about their strengths and use of such strengths in their families and in their community. In the second section, I discuss the themes regarding systematic barriers and inadequate services, both of which have hindered Chinese senior immigrants from making a contribution to their community. In the third section, I report the theme on Chinese senior immigrants' view about the current Canadian sponsorship immigrant policy and its impacts on their lives.

Applying Self- Identified Strengths in Community Work and Recognizing Existing

Obstacles

Chinese senior immigrants identified several major merits for themselves, such as abundant professional knowledge, rich life experiences, a strong sense of responsibility and high moral standards.

During the focus group discussion, Chinese senior immigrants recalled that many people in China have swarmed to the field of business for the sake of money and vanity since the China's economic reforms and open door policy in the 1980s. "The degradation of morality and loss of integrity is a result of the 'crisis of faith' in the past three decades of economic reform and opening up" (Zhong, 2011). A number of Chinese senior immigrants in the focus group perceive that many Chinese youth focus only on individualism and self-worth, and despise collectivism and social value. The current generation, including their own children puts too much value on material things and lack social responsibility despite the latter's immigration to Canada: They think that an utopian is so far away and elusive, and they are more concerned about their own life and development than about the others and the society as whole. Some Chinese seniors in the focus group insisted that they stick to the old Chinese morality because these values have been longstanding and represent thousands of years of China's civilization. They stick to Confucius' philosophy to help and care about others, which was taught to them since childhood. Mrs. Yao, in her late 70s, explained how she, as well as other senior immigrants, has contributed their knowledge to the growth of young people in the Chinese community:

Canada is a multicultural country, and we are the representatives of Chinese seniors. We could use our abundant life experiences and moral standards to influence our family and community. We don't have the bad habits of gambling and drug abuse. I encouraged many youths to join our programs, like dancing, singing, and reading clubs. They feel so happy and energetic when they connect with our seniors. From us they can learn the knowledge that they could not learn from the school, such as how to behave themselves in the community and in their families, how to respect seniors and care for people with disabilities. Through joining our programs, they become happier and more considerate to others. In my routine life, I pay attention to use my strengths to influence our younger generations. I am a teacher teaching Chinese previously in China. At the request of some parents, I volunteered to go to some community members' home to teach their children Chinese. I think I not only taught them the language but also Chinese traditional values and culture. The personality of the youth is always changing as they grow, and I use our Chinese traditional values of helping and caring each other to influence them.

Although half of the 20 seniors in this study have university degrees, they reported the obstacles for them to use their strengths, in particular, a lack of established mechanisms within the community for highly educated Chinese seniors. Several seniors heard that many immigrating Chinese senior scholars, scientists, professors and

specialists were eager to contribute their skills to Canadian society, but were unable to do so because of a lack of the related platforms in Canada. Based on their observations, however, the current community programs available for seniors are often limited in such areas as health care knowledge promotion and recreational activities. Mr. Chen, , a retired professor from a noted university in northern China, shares his strong wish to make use of his expertise, and he regrets the lack of opportunities to do so:

I came to Toronto to unite with my daughter five years ago. For the first three years, I helped my daughter to look after her child while the parents went to work. Now the child has grown up and had gone to school, and they no longer need my daily care. I taught mathematics in university for more than thirty years in China, and I am still healthy. Here nobody makes use of my knowledge. I notice that there are some Taiji and yoga programs in the community center, but I want to make use of my intelligence [i.e., knowledge about math]. I don't know where I could tap my potential, and I want to make my contribution to Canadian society.

Another Chinese senior, Mrs. Chen, in her 70s, previously worked as a manager on a provincial economic and trade committee in northern China. During her engagement with the focus group, she brought about a heated discussion about the low working efficiency of Canadian governmental organizations and how they should improve. She also expressed her unique view about how to help and

educate the next generations. She expressed her frustration about not being able to use her skills and knowledge in Canada:

I came to Canada six years ago and I have witnessed my daughter benefiting a lot from the Canadian educational system. She got a master's degree and now she has an excellent job in a hospital. But I sacrificed myself. I felt isolated and I lost the opportunities I had while I was in China. I don't know where I should seek help for employment and how to play my role in this society.

These comments reflect the facts that many Chinese seniors with professional skill and knowledge encounter difficulties in getting a paid job in particular. Such comments challenge the long-lasting stereotypes about senior immigrants being “dependent”, “non-productive” and “vulnerable”, which may have led to the status quo of their marginalized position as a group. The government failed to see their strengths and, accordingly, design a system for these senior to live up to their potential.

Perceived Successful Life in Canada

In defining what a successful life is for them in Canada, several Chinese seniors in the focus group considered that being able to help others or assisting others to solve problems would give them a sense of success and achievement in Canada. Their wiliness to help others and to contribute to the community appears to be even stronger for those who feel settled in Canada or have access to the Old Age Security (OAS), a minimum income provided by the government. Chinese senior immigrants expressed their

gratitude to Canadian government and society. They value Canada's good natural environment, fresh air and healthy food. Many seniors viewed Canada as their second home. Those who stayed in Canada for more than ten years and got OAS have a strong desire to make more contributions to their community. Mrs. Xie, a retired teacher from southern part of China, came to Toronto more than 10 years ago to first help take care of her grandchildren and to assist with the housework at her son's home. She attributed her successful life in Canada to her access to the OAS:

After staying in Canada for 10 years, I got OAS, and I basically finished my duty to my son's family. I feel I owe the Canadian government too much; I didn't take any job since I came to Canada, but I got OAS. Day and night, I think of how I can repay the society. Four years ago, I began to organize the Golden Maple Leave Senior Club (the current name as Golden Maple Leave Senior Association); we have no funding, no space to carry out our activities. At the beginning, I organized Chinese seniors' activities in the basement of my home. Later we got the support from the Toronto District School board (TDSB), and now we can use some space from the nearby elementary school to organize seniors' activities. Now our membership exceeds 300 people, and we have dancing, Taiji, yoga, Beijing opera, calligraphy, gymnastics groups and senior health care workshops. I deem that organizing these Baby Boomer seniors to have a meaningful life and to teach them the skills and knowledge to enable them play their role in the community is my contribution to Canadian society.

Mr. Feng, in his late 70s, has been in Toronto for more than ten years. He used to be a high school teacher in China and can speak good English. He observed that most Chinese seniors arriving in recent years have post-secondary education and have expertise in such diverse areas as management, English, math, physics and medical science. He said he has senior acquaintances and friends who were professors, scientists, researchers, management specialist, and government officials back in China. Besides their professional knowledge, they are also very good at hobbies as painting, calligraphy, and opera, singing songs and playing musical instruments. In his leisure time, he and several Chinese seniors go to the nearby community center to share their hobbies with seniors from other ethnics groups like Indian, Vietnamese and Pilipino; and on their way home, they voluntarily collect garbage to keep the community clean. He said that he has a strong responsibility to contribute to the community. One day, he noticed that in the yard of his apartment several garbage bins' covers were not closed during heavy rainfall, so he immediately braved the rain and ran down to the yard to close the covers. Viewing his life in Canada as successful, Mr. Feng also talked about his experiences to teach others Taiji and to cultural exchange with people from other cultural background:

I volunteered to teach Taiji at a small community park nearby my home for more than eight years. There are not only Chinese but also local Canadians, Iranian, Korean, Vietnamese and people from other countries in my Taiji group. I remembered that a Canadian couple, as well as their teenage daughter, learned Taiji from me for more than three years. We exchanged information about the

different cultures and customs of the two countries. For example, I taught them different styles of Taiji, and I explained what each action represents in Chinese culture and how Taiji could help improve health conditions. We also talked about the differences between Chinese festivals and Canadian festivals. I told them how we spent each day of our Spring Festival and about what ceremony we would have in the spring festival. Canadians in my Taiji group told me about Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Halloween and how they celebrate it. A Korean woman expressed to me several times that she would bring back different styles of Taiji to her country, and she would teach people in her home town.

As illustrated above, Mr. Feng identifies a way through which Chinese senior immigrants can contribute to the community and society. At the same time, he gets the chance to learn about Canadian. His action illustrates that Chinese seniors have the capability to initiate a meaningful life in Canada.

Community Participation and Community Building

One of the pressures for Chinese senior newcomers is that their social connections in China may be disconnected after immigrating Canada. This is difficult and requires a period of time for them to rebuild new networks. Feeling lonely is a common emotional problem for senior immigrants. Chinese community centers and Chinese seniors' clubs are places where they can speak their language and can express their common ideas. In the focus group discussion, one senior stated that the Maple Leaf Seniors Association plays a significant role in reconstructing the social networks given its mission of “seniors

help seniors group”. Mr. Yang, previously a visiting scholar from China and now he lives together with his son further described:

When a Chinese senior immigrant arrives in our community, four to five Chinese seniors would form a helping group and try our best to find a common topic to approach him/her. After knowing the place/region from which the senior newcomer comes and specific difficulties he/she may face, we will find another Chinese senior who came from a similar place/region to approach him/her. Our aim is to let him/her feel at home. Our helping group often discusses what the major challenges are for newly arrived seniors. We bring him/her to the community center, shopping center, and recreation center. More importantly, we help him/her to solve practical problems: we donate cookware and furniture to them; and emotionally, we provide counselling to give him/her a sense that Canada is his/her second home.

In the focus group, most Chinese senior immigrants expressed that they are frustrated by being isolated at home. Instead, they are eager to volunteer in the community in which they live. In the Chinese community center, they feel more at home and fewer barriers impede their contribution to the community. Mrs. Xie also shared her experience of expanding their community work beyond the Chinese community:

We also have another senior volunteer group regularly go to a nearby seniors’ home. We help them to do housework. We chat with them to share the happiness and unhappiness of the present happenings, the pleasurable and miserable of the

past stories. We not only help Chinese seniors, but we also help and connect with seniors coming from India, Vietnam, Korea, the Philippines and other countries.

We appreciate the common ground and the differences between our cultures and we are united as a big family. We can find our common language through helping each other.

In addition, earlier arrived Chinese seniors immigrants have perceived the need to help peer senior immigrants to access services and to make a successful transition between two countries and from their new home to a new community in Canada. The process of helping others and mutual support among seniors has become a medium of community building in and outside the ethno cultural Chinese community. Their actions enable senior immigrants to identify the complex physical, mental and social needs in the home and community and further facilitate them to use their skills to help other community members.

Participation in the Larger Society and New Learning in Canada

Chinese seniors were keen to identify the types of political activities they would like to get involved in within their community. Taking part in voting events is one of the most popular political volunteer activities for Chinese seniors, followed by inviting other community members to join in the event. They talked with CPP and MPP candidates, and helped distribute posters and persuade the neighbourhoods' seniors to work together. Mrs. Chen, an old women in her 70s, who is from south China and has lived in Toronto

for nearly 15 years, describes how she became involved in Canadian political and social life:

I, along with many other seniors in our community, joined the voting event. We specially promoted our community elites to enter the government. I also did lots of other things. Each year, I helped to organize seniors to take part in the July first Canada Day parade. For three consecutive years, I played my drum in the parade. Last year, in the Scarborough town center, there was a meeting to collect citizens' opinions about constructing a subway through Scarborough. I and several other Chinese seniors walked to the town center to voice our opinions about the subway construction. I and other Chinese seniors regularly joined the discussion forums held by CPP or MPP to express our ideas, and we took these opportunities to learn current social policy and think over how we could play our role in political activities. Moreover, I joined different political and social policy learning classes and I got several certificates as a result. For example, in one of my classes, I learned the role and responsibility of the three levels of Canadian government. I also learned how to do income tax returns. I teach what I learned to other immigrant seniors. I take the lead and bring them along to make progress together.

The discussion in the focus group demonstrated that the Chinese immigrant seniors are interested in learning about Canadian culture, values, and institutions to bridge the

gap in communication with the Canadian government and authorities. Through these efforts, they become involved in the mainstream society.

With respect to the question of how Canadian cultures affect Chinese immigrant seniors' lives, Mrs. Lai, who came to Canada around three years, brought about an interesting topic as to how Christianity changed their family life. She felt very supported and very much part of the Christian faith. She explained:

When I was in China, I believed in Buddhism and I thought Buddhism would bring me good fortune, but actually I did not have much knowledge about Buddhism. After I united with my son in Toronto three years ago, every Sunday, I went to the Chinese community Christian church to listen to the pastor's lectures about knowledge of Christianity. I think Christianity contains some of the world's most-beloved stories. It is widely known throughout the English-speaking world because it presents unique truth. The Bible teaches us to perform good deeds and helps others. Now I and several Chinese seniors have persuaded our other family members to believe in Christianity and this makes us love Western cultures more.

In the focus group, Chinese immigrant seniors offered mixed viewpoints about Chinese and Canadian cultures. Through the new religious affiliation and learning, they are exposed to Western culture, and they realize that their personal value in the society is to

help each other to make common progress. They all expressed their appreciation of the Canadian social environment of freely expressing opinions and freely practicing religions. They expressed that Christian values help foster people's relationships, help people to be patient with others and friendly with family members. They feel that doing so brings them closer to the Canadian society.

Contributions to Their Adult Immigrant Families

For many new Chinese skilled immigrants, the immediate problem is child care. This is especially the case for well-educated younger skilled Chinese immigrants. They understand that they are coming to Canada for better development, not just for survival. They hope to gain the social status that they once achieved in China. Before they immigrated to Canada, many of them did not know that their academic degrees or credentials received in China were not be recognized by employers in Canada. When Chinese immigrant seniors were asked about roles in their families after they united with their sons and daughters, the majority of the responses emphasized that they play double or triple roles in their families. Mr. Feng explained his role in his family:

Before my wife and I came to Toronto to unite with my son's family, my son and his wife usually got up at 6am and kept busy until 9:30pm. In the morning, they needed to cook food to bring it with them to the work site for lunch, and after work they needed to go to the supermarket to buy groceries for supper, prepare supper, and clean the kitchen and the whole

house. After 9:30pm, they still needed some time to learn English. After we arrived, we took over all the housework. Later we helped them to care for our granddaughter. My wife was a middle school English teacher in China, and she taught our granddaughter both Mandarin and English. What I want to stress in our role is not only that we helped our family take care of the child, but that we have fostered future talent for Canadian society.

Mr. Feng went on to note that the seniors' role in the family was not limited to household issues, but that they provided more supports to help family members to become involved in social events. He also encouraged family members to participate in community activities, and he set an example to his family members in this regard. He further noted: "the 'bridge' role I played in my family is encouraged my family members to step out the household to broaden their vision to seeing a larger social picture and getting family members to understand their roles in Canadian political events." In the following remarks, he described how he assisted his family members connect with Canadian social life:

Now our granddaughter is in elementary school, and we feel quite released from the heavy duty of taking care of a small child. However, we actively take part in all the community and social activities. One more point I want to add is that many Chinese senior immigrants act as a bridge between the government and family members. For example, my son and his wife go to work Monday to

Friday, and they have no time to pay attention to community political activities.

But we have time; for example, I joined the seminars held by TDSB Scarborough trustee and CPP, and we discussed the most recent policy regarding education, child welfare, and immigration. I pass all this information to my son and his wife, which enables them to catch up with the situation and to let them understand the most recent policy changes.

Besides the roles in the family stated above, with the aim of reducing financial pressures for new Chinese younger immigrants, many Chinese seniors use their pension or life savings to support their son or daughter to become financially functional in Canada. Mrs. Luo, in her late 60s, who have been in Toronto for more than ten years, commented on Chinese seniors' financial support for their adult children's families:

Before I moved to Canada to unite with my son, I had already taken out my savings for many years to help my son to pay the down payment of his house. After I arrived here, every month, I transferred my pension from China to support my son. Every time when I went back to China, I used my own money to buy the air ticket. One of my closest friends, who previously was a teacher in China, sold her own house in China to use that money to help her son to buy his new house in Canada. But later she had a conflict with his son, and now she has gone back to China where she has to live in a student's home. What I want say is that, as Chinese seniors, we

not only help our son or daughter physically through childcare or housework, but also financially. We help them without any reservation. Chinese senior immigrants treasure beautiful dreams coming from China to Canada, and they endeavour to help the next generation in Canada. But risk is still intertwined with their final choices to remain in Canada or go back to China. Most Chinese seniors in the focus groups considered Canada to be their second home. They had worked in China for many years and some of them now have a pension from China. They said they transferred money from China to Canada and spent money in Canada, which is another type of contribution to Canadian society.

Perceived Barriers to Making Social Contributions

When discussing the barriers to their further contributions to Canadian society, Chinese senior immigrants identified several major factors that inhibited them from participating in community activities and from making contributions. It is important to note that language and transportation barriers are considered the first two main barriers for Chinese senior immigrants. They also described other barriers such as having no adequate service programs for Mandarin-speaking Chinese seniors and no established platform for Chinese senior immigrants to use their skills and expertise. In addition, policy defects, such as the prolonged sponsoring period to get OAS, made Chinese senior immigrants feel like second-class citizens.

Language

In defining what the major barriers are for Chinese senior immigrants to making

contributions in the community, the majority of Chinese seniors in the focus group agreed that the English language was a major obstacle for them to adapt to Canadian life. Especially when shopping, seeing a doctor, or attending a community workshop beyond Chinese community, most Chinese seniors would encounter some problems if there were no proper interpreter available. Some Chinese seniors viewed learning English is one as one of their priorities in Canada. Mr. Liu, previously a middle school teacher in north China, described his problems in learning English in his community:

As matter of fact, I had learned English many years ago. But in China I seldom got the chance to speak English, and I can read some English. Here people speak too fast and use many slang and idiomatic usage we never heard of in the past. Besides my linguistic barriers, I also found it is difficult to find English learning class suitable to our seniors. LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers) is designed to help youths and adults. Class contents change too fast and there are fewer materials suitable for seniors to study. As you know, our memory is not as good as young people, but we are looking forward to have English class specially designed for our seniors.

As Ho (2014) suggests that “Chinese seniors need very practical activities to learn English, as the ESL adult methodology has proven not to be very helpful. The community could implement learning activities where seniors can learn new words and apply them, through songs, cooking classes, visits to the supermarket and round bus-

trips” (p. 20). Language barriers are not only reflected by a lack of proper English class for seniors at a community level; they also exist in health care systems and public services. Mr. Lei, came to Canada more than 10 years ago. He described the difficulty he encountered in the process of seeking government services:

I am very clear that Canada’s official language is English and French.

This should apply to the government official documentation, and it should not restrict public services. Two months ago, together with another Chinese senior, we went to the Scarborough Town Centre to replace our permanent residence card. We were happy to see a staff member that is Chinese who can speak Mandarin. We made our request in Mandarin, and we just spoke a few sentences. A lady beside him reminded him he should not speak Chinese. Then the staff member told us that he was sorry, but we must ask an interpreter to come with us. We were so disappointed and had to turn back. I couldn't understand why the government service still prohibits speaking Chinese because Chinese has already become the second largest population or visible minority in Canada.

Chinese senior immigrants also discussed their difficulties in seeking help from family doctors and dentists, as well as inadequate resources for senior immigrants, constrained choices that have implications for senior immigrant families. One of the Chinese seniors said that every time when he went to the walking clinic near his apartment building, he would look up proper medical terms in the Chinese-English

dictionary and he write down these words in English on a piece of paper before he sees the doctor. But the doctor usually does not accept that and appeared unhappy, insisting that he should go back to get an interpreter. Chinese senior immigrants feel that they are being discriminated against by doctors and services providers because they are not able to speak good English as service providers require.

Transportation

Chinese senior immigrants identified transportation as the second largest barrier inhibiting them from playing a more active role in Canadian society. Most Chinese senior immigrants in the focus group described the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) fares as too expensive to afford. One of the Chinese seniors as a newcomer was also puzzled by the sign posts at the bus stop and by what the bus number represented and where the bus would go. Another Chinese senior said in Toronto he seldom found a bicycle route on the road, while back home many people are accustomed to using a bicycle for shopping or visiting friends. Without proper means of transportation, Chinese senior immigrants are confined to their own area and lose chances to connect to the outside world. Mr. Li described how some barriers relating to TTC transportation had affected his life:

I want to go to other communities to do volunteer work and to become involved more in social activities. But the high cost of the TTC fare has limited my activities. In Canada, people call for equality on a daily basis, but for us the TTC actually generates inequality. How much money does a

driver who works at the TTC make compared to what a driver who works in a factory makes? ...Last year, the MPP came to our community to inquire our opinion of how to improve social services. We all reported that the TTC fare is too high for our seniors; we all hoped that the TTC fare for seniors could be reduced, and the MPP confirmed she would discuss this with a higher level of government. The fact is, this year (2015), the TTC fare for seniors still increased from \$1.85 to \$1.95/ ticket. Some of us have pensions from China ranging from 200 to 1000 Canadian dollars, but we could not afford to spend our limited pension on high priced TTC tokens. In China, seniors over the age of 65 are entitled to have a free metro pass. Why does no one here appeal for our seniors to have such a right?

Chinese senior immigrants reported that they spend a lot of time thinking over how to save money on transportation and very often they have to trouble someone who owns a car to take them to some place they intend to visit. Limited transportation prohibits them from spending time with friends in another community. It is obvious the current Toronto transportation systems are not meeting the needs of senior immigrants and their families.

A Lack of Services Targeting Mandarin-Speaking Seniors

As I indicated previously, in recent years, more and more Mandarin-speaking Chinese seniors have flooded into Canada. A number of Chinese senior immigrants in the focus groups expressed that they spend a lot of time looking for proper Mandarin-

speaking educational programs or senior health care workshops, but they observed that many workshops, especially workshops in some seniors' homes, are conducted in Cantonese. According to Chinese seniors in the focus group, this arrangement might be related to the fact that most Chinese residents in these senior homes in Toronto are Cantonese-speaking immigrants who came to Canada many years before the recent arrival of Mandarin-speaking seniors. One of the participants, Mrs. Xie, added that the existing problems are not only about the limited availability of Mandarin-speaking but also about the difficulties to get funding for newly established agencies serving Mandarin-speaking seniors. She explained:

Our Golden Maple Leave Senior Association established four years ago as a nonprofit organization and our services target Mandarin-speaking Chinese seniors. We have many programs to meet the senior needs, and we have more than 300 senior members. But we don't have specialized personnel to help us draft funding proposals. Only last year, we got \$25000 from the Toronto New Horizon Senior Program. I attended an orientation session for applying funding and I spoke about our difficulty to the officer. The officer just stressed her requirements for a funding proposal, and she didn't come down to our community.

Despite its provision of many programs to Chinese seniors, this organization could not get funding because its inability to prepare a well-written funding proposal. It is difficult for new agencies like this to be funded given their lack of familiarity with funding

application and of capacity to secure funding. The challenges relating to integration – in forms of familiarity with the institutional processes in Canada – also reflected at a community level when it comes to securing funding for the programs and services for Chinese seniors.

Other Challenges

Other challenges, such as inadequate resources such as long waiting lists for senior homes, can also contribute to the barrier for Chinese seniors play their role in the community. Mrs. Xu, an old woman from a city of southern China, told the focus group her story about how difficult it is to get into a senior home:

I was sponsored by my son to come to Toronto, and I came to Toronto more than ten years ago. Later I had conflicts with my son and his wife and I was looking to live independently. I went to the senior center to get assistance to apply to a senior home. At that time I had a pension from China equal to \$300. Usually they take one third of your income. I waited for more than eight years. I was told by friends that white local seniors usually wait only two to three years in their areas and their senior homes are not as crowded as the senior homes in the Chinese community. But then I got the Old Age Security (OAS), which is \$1200. Just after two months, the senior home told me the room was ready for me. I couldn't say

they delayed my application, but before I got the OAS, I waited for more than eight years.

To some extent, Chinese seniors are still isolated from the mainstream society, and they often encounter more difficulties than local Canadians in seeking help from society. Based on their stories shared at the focus group, it seems that the challenges in the lives of Chinese seniors are not solely relating to their “cultural shock” or cultural difference, but some systematic barriers (e.g., lack of opportunities, access to income, and availability of support) to participate in social life and social activities in Canada.

Another important issue arising from the focus group discussion is policy defects and glitches. When discussing the CIC’s re-opening the Parent and Grandparent (PGP) program for new applications in 2014 and more restrictive sponsorship eligibility criteria(CIC News, 2013), Chinese seniors expressed the view that government failed to see senior immigrants’ strengths and their many non-economic contributions to their community and their immigrant family. They were critical of the Conservative government’s views of senior immigrants as a burden to the society and as those who take advantage of public social health and benefits. To refute the stereotypes, Mr. Feng used his own experiences to illustrate that the parents have played an essential role to help skilled Chinese immigrants to settle in a new country. He stressed that the tremendous contributions of skilled immigrants’ parents to the growth and education of the latter since childhood. He perceived it as unfair for the current Canadian government to take advantage of the “useful” part (i.e., the skilled immigrants) and to abandon the

“useless” part (i.e., skilled immigrants’ elderly parents). On the country, he argued that Chinese seniors integral to the Chinese immigrant family and family wellbeing, which was not take into consideration for related policy making. He further elaborated on the notion of “family” from a Chinese perspective:

We are a big family and our blood and muscles are connected to each other. Some years ago, before I was united with my son, I was hospitalized in China; my son had to ask leave from his work for one month and went back to China to take care of me. We could not be separated as strangers. I can put it in another way: the skilled immigrant (my son) is a product of ours. Now we have the responsibility to help foster the next generation (my granddaughter) for Canadian society.

Another Chinese senior, Mrs. Luo, shared her own personal feelings and opinions about the change of policy related to sponsoring seniors coming to Canada:

The sponsorship undertaking period extended to 20 years is too long. This basically means there is no access for immigrated seniors to get OAS. If I were to come to Canada at the age of 70, I am not sure if I would be alive at 90 years old. As matter of fact, the new sponsorship immigrant policy put seniors and their immigrants’ families into a situation of financial insecurity.

Mrs. Luo also described the increased difficulty for seniors who plan to unite with their children and grandchildren in Canada. Again, the effects of the Parent and

Grandparent (PGP) program changes in 2014 are negative, and it does not validate their contributions to their family and community on a daily basis. Chinese seniors in the focus group are concerned about that the restrictive policy has less flexibility and it will create further inequality in Canadian society. The policy makers' focus on senior immigrants' inability to make economic contribution made senior immigrants feel devalued because the current policy does not acknowledge their non-economic contributions. In this sense, the current policy does not fairly reflect seniors' actual contributions to Canadian society.

VI. Discussions

Summary of the Findings

This research project focused on in understanding how Chinese senior immigrants make sense of their roles in their daily life and in their community in Canada. The aim of this research project is to make Chinese senior immigrants' multiple contributions visible to society.

In the first focus group with Chinese senior immigrants, themes emerged suggesting that Chinese community centers and senior immigrant serving agencies are ideal for their own cultural development and for sharing information. The participants voluntarily attend community activities, and they can functionally, independently and creatively design programs suitable for themselves. From the data collected, we can see that their regular attendance at the Chinese community center is helpful for them to strengthen

social interactions and social skills. “Traditional Chinese culture does not view old age as negative but rather one where historically seniors are valued as wise and contributing members of society” (Chappeel, 2005, p.70). Given that seniors are expected to play a much more positive role in traditional Chinese culture than in western society, according to Chappeel (2005), seniors’ involvement in their traditional cultural activities will lead them to have a more positive experience and enable them to be more confident to help others. Data indicates that Chinese senior immigrants play a vital role influencing children and youth in the community to adopt a healthy way of living and to remain active in and connected to the community. This can also have positive impacts on children’s social, physical and emotional well-being. Connecting with and helping people from other ethnic groups also demonstrates the expansion of Chinese immigrant seniors’ social networks and cultural exchange beyond the Chinese community, which may help improve and strengthen the social capital associated with the community.

The findings also indicate that Chinese senior immigrants play a significant role in strengthening family relationships. Their supportive roles within the family can be financial, emotional or/and physical through, for example childcare, doing housework emotional support for family members. Chinese senior immigrants frequently play a role to bridge their family members with outside information that could increase the former’s access to the resources available.

In the second focus group with Chinese senior immigrants, themes emerged showing that their role in the community was hindered by the inadequacy of the service programs

(e.g., language coaching, health care promotion and educational programs) for seniors, especially for Mandarin-speaking seniors. Systematic barriers, including the long waiting list for senior housing, the annually increased TTC fare for seniors, and bureaucratic rules of government organizations, constitute oppressions for senior immigrants and hinder them from being involved in Canadian society. Chinese senior immigrants also voiced their concerns about the changing government policies for sponsoring senior coming to Canada. The policies inhibit the reunification between elderly parents and their immigrant children and families. As well, it ignores the seniors' multiple contributions to the multicultural society and to their immigrant families' settlement in Canada.

From an anti-oppressive perspective, we should challenge the systematic lack of opportunities for immigrant seniors with various skills, expertise and abilities and to explore the possibilities to tap their potential in order to make them as valued members of society. This study also found that Chinese community centers and Chinese servicing agencies are usually separate from mainstream agencies or organizations. According to the participants in the focus groups, mainstream agencies seldom have service program exchanges with their self-organized groups or programs. The isolation of those community programs can negatively affect seniors' involvement in Canadian social life, especially for seniors who speak little English. The settlement programs should be better developed and tailored to facilitate the ethnic minority immigrants' integration in to the society and their mutual help and support within the community, and to avoid further marginalization of visible minority immigrants, particularly seniors, within the Canadian society.

Linking the Findings with the Literature

Findings of this study illustrate that those Chinese senior immigrants' desires and needs to live a meaningful life in Canada and their multiple contributions to their community in a transnational context. As pointed out Lunt (2009), the family relationships of immigrants are inevitably transnational in nature give various exchanges (financial, emotional, etc.) between generations and across two countries. In order to strengthen family relationships, these people need to carry out duties between family members and take care the next generation. Lunt (2009) further stressed that policy makers should change their mind set in a transnational environment to realize that the national focus no longer meets the needs of people due to worldwide economic, social and political changes. Previously, immigrant policy fit within a national framework, connecting with state legislation and domestic social policy. It should now be conceptualized in its interrelations with world changing trend. For example, the mobility of immigrants, the changing trend of international institutions and global social problems should be taken into consideration.

While discussing the topics relating to anti-oppression under the transnational circumstances, a number of Chinese seniors expressed that the agents of anti-oppression include both those who experience oppression and those who experience privilege, and that this could be relevant to all of us at certain points. On the one hand, if we were to look at the government departments and organizations or any major corporations, we would find that most powerful positions are occupied by white males. On the other hand,

internalized racism appear when some earlier Cantonese settlers believe that the stereotypes of recent arrived mandarin-speaking immigrants are true and may believe that mandarin-speaking immigrants are less inferior to their groups of people. A Chinese senior in the focus group talk about another challenge in Cantonese culturally dominant agency is there a potential for divide or conflict between Mandarin and Cantonese speaking staff. Most Chinese seniors in the focus groups agree basically there are certain groups in our community that hold power over others based on their identity in those groups. As Dominelli (2002) defines oppression as, “relations that divide people into dominant or superior groups and subordinate or inferior ones. These relations of domination consist of the systematic devaluing of the attributes and contributions of those deemed inferior, and their exclusion from the social resources available to those in the dominant group” (p. 8). Through discussions, Chinese seniors get an awareness of what internalized oppression is and how oppression is deeply socialized into each of us. They also express that policy makers should recognize the multiple layers oppressions that exist in Chinese communities and policy makers should attempts to take effect measures to equalize the power imbalance in their communities.

Moreover, Chinese senior immigrants in the focus group talked about how they applied Chinese culture, values, and institutions to shape and communicate with the younger generation in the community. The majority of respondents were keen about the development of their grandchildren in Canada. They needed to share their strengths and feelings with the younger generation of immigrants. My study also shows that Chinese

senior immigrants not only play a significant role in supporting Chinese families in Canada, but also in assisting immigrant families in interactions with their new community and with mainstream society. Family support is an essential element in the promotion of family members' involvement in social activity.

The current neoliberal government sticks to the notion that the state's responsibility is to increase the integration of national economies into expanding international markets and individuals are supposed to make their own rational choice based on their own interests. Introducing the concept of neo-liberalism multiculturalism, Griffith (2013) criticizes that the Conservative government has turned its focus away from accommodating the diverse needs of immigrants with multicultural backgrounds to emphasizing the need for immigrants to adapt, navigate and survive in the existing Western "pluralist" value system themselves. Kymlicka (2013) further illustrates that Canadian multiculturalism gives newcomers a civic voice by recognizing their "legitimate" claims for respect and by facilitating their children of diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds become an active member of democratic society. However, neoliberal multiculturalism is about turning the focus away from meeting multi-cultural immigrants' needs and stresses the newcomers' responsibility to adapt to Canadian society and become productive members of society. Neoliberal multiculturalism is narrow and should not be considered as a goal of current immigration reform in Canada.

Chinese senior immigrants were brought together in the focus group to discuss government policy, and this gave them a chance to raise concerns about how government

policy affects their lives. Chinese senior immigrants identified the barriers created by the recent policy changes and shared their criticisms and suggestions about the sponsored immigrant's policy. Several Chinese senior immigrants expressed that the government should see the senior immigrant issue from a different angle. Instead of raising the minimum necessary income (MNI) for sponsoring parents and grandparents and extending the length of sponsoring period again and again, the government should try to clearly specify the eligibility for seniors who intend to come to Canada. On the one hand, the government could consider, for example, within 3-5 years, what type of foreign seniors might make a good contribution to the Canadian society: the government could set up criteria for seniors, such as health standards, scope of knowledge and educational background etc. On the other hand, the government should analyze under the changing situation what type of families urgently needs to unite with their parents or grandparents and give them priority.

Last but not least, the policy makers should consider the senior immigrant issue and work out a solution not only from a monetary and national point of view, but also from multiple perspectives related to the needs of immigrants' transnational families. Policy makers should realize that "contemporary trans-nationalism is grounded in global processes of economic, social, demographic, political and technological change, and it is "trans-nationalism evokes a linkage or, to use the more common metaphor, a net work of relationships that span two or more nation-states" (Lunt, 2009, p.244). Based on this understanding, immigration policy related to sponsoring seniors should not be "one cut"

but carefully tailored to particular circumstances of immigrants to Canada. The objectives of sponsoring seniors' policy should effectively integrated into policies towards the globalized translational trend. This also requires policy makers to adopt an agenda oriented towards current immigrants' practical problems and direct the policy at the national level as well as towards forthcoming globalized transnational situations.

Implications for Services and Practice

Research findings also suggest that Chinese senior immigrants' roles in Canada were largely dependent upon the environment in which they live. Data indicate that Chinese senior immigrants who came to Canada to unite with their skilled immigrants in recent years were more likely to have higher levels of education and were mostly Mandarin-speaking. Thus, they are often not satisfied with the community programs that focus on seniors' recreational activities. They hope to find more Mandarin service programs to make use of their skills, knowledge and expertise. However, the social service development and delivery in Toronto has been shaped by the early migration waves in which Chinese immigrants were from other places than mainland China and primarily speak Cantonese. In Toronto, according to Wang and Lo (2004), many Chinese business, professional, and recreational associations were established or chartered before the 1990s and "were mostly organized around immigrants from Hong Kong" (P.2). Some large Chinese agencies serving Chinese seniors in Toronto, such as the Wood Green Community Services (75 years history), the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care (25 years history), the Mon Sheong Long-Term Care Centre (33 years history), the Cross-Cultural

Community Services Association (40 years history), and Centre for Information & Community Services (45 years history), primarily promote Cantonese living style and customs (including food menu and activities). Only after 2007, the Mon Sheong Long-Term Care Centre began providing Mandarin services to Chinese seniors (Info. 51. ca, 2012). However, Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrants from China have increased in recent years. Specifically, “the profile of immigrants has changed owing to changes in Canadian immigration policies, such as the adoption of the ‘immigration point system’ in 1967, the introduction of the business immigrant category in the 1980s, and the opening of the immigration division in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing in the 1990s” (Guo and Sork 2005, p.4). The findings of this study can assist policy makers to understand the internal diversity among Chinese immigrants in Canada and, thus, to develop more relevant service programs for Mandarin-speaking Chinese seniors. Suitable and timely Mandarin-speaking service programs will help mitigate the stressors that prevent them from living a meaningful life in Canada. Research has shown that social capital is important to foster Chinese seniors’ ability to overcome the isolation and to create a supportive community environment.

Accordingly, my recommendation is that service provisions in the Chinese community should recognize differences or diversity within this ethno cultural group and make changes at the organizational level so as to be more accommodating for Mandarin-speaking service users. At a management level, Mandarin-speaking managers and staff

should be recruited to improve the sensitivity and quality of the services targeting Chinese immigrant newcomers, including seniors.

Step-by-step research work of this project has not only helped me examine the intersections between different issues relating to Chinese seniors immigrants but also enabled me to become a social science researcher that is able to make connections between individual stories and the big macro-structural picture. In the current transnational context, social workers working with these seniors need to empower them to become aware of their rights in a transnational context and the multiple inequalities in their lives. It is also important for social workers to gain an understanding of the interconnected nature of the inequalities experienced by these seniors in order to explore effective and sustainable helping strategies. Moreover, social workers' responsibilities are not only to help senior immigrants to better adapt in their new lives in Canada but to understand the cultural and intuitional connections between Canada and China as their home country. Social workers can also help empower these seniors' families and community to establish supportive relationships and environments in which they can use their own skills at an individual level and collectively advocate social changes at a community level.

This study also gives me an opportunity to reflect on my previous work experiences with Chinese seniors from both social work practice and public policy perspectives.

In addition to identifying specific barriers described by Chinese senior immigrants in the focus group, this study situates such barriers in the broader context of structural or systematic exclusion. Structural barriers encountered by senior immigrants intensify the stresses associated with settlement process. Structural exclusion suffered by senior immigrants is detrimental to their ability to participate in Canadian social activity.

The discussions with Chinese senior immigrants also present a challenge for social workers and social science researchers: how to advocate for multiply disadvantaged people. Instead of understanding their experiences from a theoretical perspective, it is more important to advocate with them based on our first-hand understanding of their personal experiences, challenges, and needs. From the perspective of the anti-oppressive approach, working with disadvantaged people and with the grassroots community should also be our first step to pursue social justice. The social worker needs to continue to advocate for clients and stand up to a client-centered system that respects their experiences, strengths, perspectives and personal integrity. Social service programs should be organized around the will and thoughts of the clients.

VII. Conclusion

My study draws attention to the necessity to do more research on the influences of senior immigrants on the growth younger generations in Canada. For example, what are the changes in the lives of immigrant families before and after their reunion with seniors? How have grandparents influenced their grandchildren who grow up in Canada? How

have the services for senior immigrants responded to the issues relating to transnational families or immigrants' transnational connections? It would be beneficial to have more research that looks into how senior immigrants in transnational families make contributions to Canadian society and how government improve social services to meet the complex mental, social and cognitive needs of senior immigrants. Senior immigrants are valuable member of the society who needs comprehensive support so as to success fully settle and meaningfully live in a new country.

This research project has several merits for exploring the contributions of Chinese senior immigrants. First, it exemplifies the important role of Chinese senior immigrants in their families and communities. Barriers preventing Chinese senior immigrants from making a contribution mirror the need for government to reform the sponsorship immigrant policy and related service programs. Second, it shows that Chinese community centers are important sites for Chinese senior immigrants to expand their knowledge, to promote their culture, to build connections with other ethnic groups, and to take collective action. Third, it demonstrates that Chinese senior immigrants themselves possess the skills, knowledge, and potential to adapt to their new life in Canada and to contribute to their community and the larger Canadian society.

This research project focuses on the Chinese senior immigrants in the GTA who arrived in recent years (two to fifteen years ago) sponsored by younger skilled immigrants. Most of them are located in densely populated Chinese immigrant areas (for example, Scarborough or Richmond Hill). The needs of earlier (for example, arrived in

Canada thirty or forty years ago) Chinese immigrants or Chinese seniors (including refugees) and subsequent generations—most of whom are approaching 65 years of age-- differ from those of skilled or business immigrants arriving in recent years, and as a matter of fact, social services are often outside of their residential areas. How to help these senior immigrants function independently, remain cognitively intact and maintain and strengthen social interactions is beyond the scope of this research project.

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DATE: _____



APPENDIX: A

LETTER OF INFORMATION /CONSENT

A Study of/about:

Social Burden or Social Resources: Understanding Chinese Senior Immigrants' Contributions in Canada

Principal Investigator:

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Purpose of the Study:

I am completing my Master's degree in social work at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. I would like to talk to 15-20 Chinese seniors from mainland China, whose ages between 55 and 80, who speak Mandarin, and landed in Canada less than 15 years ago. I would like to learn your opinions about the Citizenship and Immigration Canada CIC's policy on sponsoring parents and grandparents of immigrants to Canada.

My research project aims to investigate the positive role of Chinese senior immigrants through understanding the contributions of Chinese senior immigrants in Canada from the existing facts and their own perspectives. In particular, I am going to explore how those Chinese seniors understand their individual strengths in the context of immigration, their contributions to families, communities, and Canadian society, and the barriers faced by them in order to gain a better life in the new country.

What will happen during the study?

In two small discussion groups (usually called "focus groups"), each made up of about 10 people, and I will ask you six questions to learn about this topic and to explore your perspectives about how Chinese seniors make a contribution to Canadian society. The discussions for each group should take about 90 minutes to complete.

My proposed research questions are these: What are the individual strengths of Chinese immigrant seniors? What are contributions they have made to their families, communities and society? My research also explores the limitations of current Canadian immigration policy and analyzes the neoliberal ideology embedded in the current immigrant policy. I am also interested in identifying and understanding both facilitators and inhibitors of their better participation in the community and the larger society.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:

The risks involved in participating in this project are minimal. You may feel uncomfortable with speaking your stressful experiences. I will take every effort to ensure the confidentiality of any information that you provide. It is necessary to mention that because I use the focus group method and cannot provide you a guarantee in this matter and you should keep this in mind in your comments. You do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

In terms of reporting the findings, I will try best to preserve your confidentiality. The information I collect about you (place of your of practice as well as

your identity) will be used only to describe the sample, and not linked to any quotes of yours that I may use.

You have the right to withdraw from the research project at anytime without consequence.

Potential Benefits:

The research will not benefit Chinese seniors directly, but may have some indirect

Influences:

- The research may help Chinese seniors to build a sense of community and add to what Chinese seniors require when trying to access resources to make contribution to Canadian society.
- The research findings will also assist researchers and community workers through various form of results dissemination, such as research summary reports and presentations;

Confidentiality:

I want to assure the participants of the importance of confidentiality. Every precaution will be made in this regard. The information that I find out about you that could identify you will not be published or inform to anyone else, unless I obtain your permission. Information that you provide will be presented in a manner that is non-identifying and only relates to this research project. I will ask other participants to respect your privacy, but cannot guarantee they will do so, and you should keep this in mind in your comments.

The information obtained by me will be kept in a locked file cabinet of my academic supervisor's office. The computer that I will be using is my personal property which is password protected. Upon successful defense of my thesis the information you provide will be shredded, and audio tapes will be destroyed.

Participation and Withdrawal:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw) from the focus group for whatever reason, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions, you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

Information about the Study Results:

I expect to have this study completed by approximately at the end of **August 2015**. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study:

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

Liguo Zhang - liguoz@mcmaster.ca

Telephone number: 289 925 2930

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

Research Office for Administrative Development and Support

E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

Reference:

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CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Liguo Zhang of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until approximately by August 1 **2015**.
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

... Yes.

... No.

2. ...Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

Please send them to me at this email address _____

Or to this mailing address: _____

... No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

3. I agree to be contacted about a follow-up interview, and understand that I can always decline the request.

... Yes. Please contact me at: _____

... No.

Appendix B

Focus group questions (小组讨论的话题):

1. From your own perspectives, what could be considered a contribution to Canadian society? What are the individual strengths of Chinese senior immigrants?

根据你的看法，怎样做才能算作对加拿大社会做贡献？中国老年移民的个人长处和优势是什么？

2. In Canada, what are some activities you are currently engaging at home and in the community? In your opinion, what kind of action could be considered to help you make contributions to Canadian society?

无论在家里还是在社区里，你日常都参加那些活动？你认为什么样的行为才算是对加拿大社会做贡献？

3a. What would make it easier for Chinese seniors to make contributions to Canadian society, and

3b. What are some barriers you encounter when trying to make contributions to Canadian society? Are there enough Mandarin speaking social service programs for Chinese seniors in your community?

社会上需要怎样的平台和条件便于中国老年移民为加拿大社会做贡献？社区里有足够的普通话服务的项目为中国老年人提供方便吗？

4. How does understanding Chinese culture assist you to make contributions to Canadian society?

你如何理解中国文化有助你对加拿大社会做贡献？

5. What do you think of the Citizen and Immigration Canada policy related to sponsoring seniors who come to Canada? What are its positive and negative aspects and how could it be improved? Why should it be improved? 如何理解加拿大老人团聚的移民政策优劣势。

Appendix: C

Demographic form - Participant's

参加讨论会的人员情况

1. Name:姓名: age: 年龄:
2. Gender:性别:
3. Language: 语言 (mandarin 普通话/English 英语)
4. Status: 移民情况 (citizen 公民/ permanent residence 永久居民)
5. How long have you been in Canada 您在加拿大居住多长时间了? (2-5 years, 5- 10 years. 10-15 years.)
6. Academic status 学历情况: (high school 高中 / college 大专/ university/ 大学 mastersdegree 研究生/ PhD 博士 others 其它)

Appendix: D

(Poster of focus group for Golden Maple Leaf Senior Association, translated version)

Invitation of Participation

Hello, everyone:

With the assistance of the Golden Maple Leaf Senior Association, Liguozhang, aMSW student of McMaster University will hold a focus group discussing how Chinese seniors make contributions to Canadian society.

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We plan to recruit about 8-10 Chinese seniors.

Criteria: The seniors come from mainland China, and are between the ages of 55 and 80, are female and male Mandarin speaking, and landed in Canada between 2-15 years ago. People who would like to join this focus group and also agree to be recorded during the discussion, please register with RuXie during Saturday senior activities.

The focus group will take 90 minutes to complete.

The focus group will explore Chinese seniors' perspectives about what could be considered to make contribution to Canadian society. What are some major activities they are currently engaging in at home and in the community? What are some barriers for Chinese seniors to play their role in society? What are the barriers that prevent them to make contributions to Canadian society?

Refreshments will be provided and a TTC token will be offered upon request.

Liguozhang, MSW student of McMaster University

Phone no: 289 925 2930

Email: liguo@mcmaster.ca

Appendix: E

Recruitment Script – Emails (translated version)

Mennonite New Life Center

Dear Miss Zhu:

Sorry about my belated reply and I have been busy with my essay.

Attached please find my draft invitation of participation. As I talked to you over the phone, the focus group may include 8-10 Chinese seniors and it will take about 90 minutes. I will put this invitation at Mennonite New Life center and I will take a chance of your workshop to explain my recruitment criteria and my ideas about how to hold this focus group to Chinese seniors.

Thank you.

Liguo Zhang

Attachment: Invitation of Participation

(Poster of focus group for Mennonite New Life Center, translated version)

Invitation of Participation

Hello, everyone:

With the assistance of the Mennonite New Life Center, Liguo Zhang, a MSW student of McMaster University will hold a focus group discussing how Chinese seniors make contribution to Canadian society.

.

We plan to recruit about 8-10 Chinese seniors.

Criteria: The seniors come from mainland China, and are between the ages of 55 and 80, are female and male Mandarin speaking, and landed in Canada between 2-15 years ago. People, who would like to join this focus group and also agree to be recorded during the discussion, please register with Miss Zhu during next Tuesdays workshop session..

The focus group will take 90 minutes to complete.

The focus group will explore Chinese seniors' perspectives about what could be considered to make contribution to Canadian society. What are some major activities they are currently engaging in at home and in the community, what are some barriers for Chinese seniors to play their role in society, and what are some barriers for them to make contributions to Canadian society?

Refreshments will be provided and TTC token will be offered upon request.

Liguo Zhang, MSW student of McMaster University

Phone no: 289 925 2930

Email: liguoz@mcmaster.ca



