CHANGING CHINESE FAMILY AND ELDER CARE

THE PRACTICE OF FILIAL PIETY AMONG ETHNIC IMMIGRANT FAMILIES IN VANCOUVER

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Abstract

Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in 2017 with Mandarin-Speaking Chinese senior migrants in Vancouver's downtown Chinatown, this thesis examines how the notion of filial piety and forms of intergenerational reciprocity are reconfigured and understood in the context of the shift of social support for the elderly shifting from the family to the state. Specifically, through income assistance and subsidized housing provided by the government, and assisted by a broad network built through friends, neighbours, and churches, the paper describes how welfare resources and social support provide a means for Chinese seniors to act strategically to deal with changes and family tensions for the sake of their families as well as for their own. My study of Chinese seniors however, suggests that it is possible for a sense of family value to coexist with a sense of individualistic values such as personal independence and lifelong productivity that are appreciated in a modern society. The forms of different values that emerged are not a reflection of dualism between the East and the West; rather, I argue these different forms of values are intertwined in overlapping process of modernism and traditionalism in immigrants to Canada. This thesis examines how intergenerational family relationships are affected by the availability of government-sponsored senior support programs, which are a resource that enables families to resolve tensions through the negotiation of coexisting values.

Lay summary

In this thesis, I aim to understand how filial piety was reconfigured in the presence of government subsidized low-rent apartments for Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrants. I also examine the impact on family relations and kinship practices in a changing cultural context in which support of the elderly is transferred from the family to the state. I argue that aged Chinese parents, rather than being passive care receivers, are active agents who mobilize welfare resources in Vancouver to deal with changes and family tensions for the sake of their families as well as for their own.

Preface

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, Xueping Zeng. The fieldwork that underwrites it was approved by the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board, under Certificate Number H16-01541.

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List of Abbreviations

GIS	Guaranteed Income Supplement
OAS	Old Age Security

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Dedication

To Chinese grandparents in Vancouver

Chapter 1 Introduction

Traditionally, multigenerational family co-residence is the ideal form of care for aged Chinese parents. The family and adult children are considered primary caregivers of their older parents. Filial piety (*xiao*) is associated with Confucian core values of reverent care, youth obedience, and filial sacrifice (Chan & Tan 2004). Living apart from one's children is generally thought of as morally bad, indicating "unfilial children" (*zinv buxiao*) or "poor parents abandoned by their children." Public images usually depict these older parents as helpless, desperate, or powerless, with no one to rely on. Despite the continuity of filial piety in Chinese families, modernization in China has altered filial obligations to parents.

Massive socio-economic transformations and demographical changes in China have sparked discussions about proper elderly care at home in China. Increasingly, Chinese seniors can rely on neither the state nor their family for support in their old age (Yan 2010; Newendorp 2017; Zhang 2016; Santos & Harrell 2017). The ageing population, decreased fertility due to the one-child policy, and mass migration have created challenges to traditional elderly care provided by the family. At the same time, unlike Western welfare sources that support the senior population, the Chinese government has reduced support for seniors.

The Chinese state's withdrawal of welfare services such as healthcare, pensions, housing, and career opportunities leaves many of the care responsibilities in the hands of Chinese families. At the same time, China's new open-door policy loosened restrictions on transnational migration, which introduces a new avenue for upward social mobility associated with wealth and power (Liu 1997). This policy allows a Chinese family to pursue success and prosperity beyond state borders, including access to the West. In this context, sharing prosperity with aged parents, such as my participants, by supporting their emigration is seen as integral to the calculus of intergenerational reciprocity and filial devotion received from adult children. With this changing cultural and social transformation in China in mind, Chinese seniors and migrant families may use transnational migration as an alternative strategy to mobilize welfare resources in countries like Canada that are otherwise relatively lacking in China to support themselves in their old age.

Nonetheless, this claim may run the risk of oversimplifying and homogenizing the variation of the ageing population in different groups and regions in China. In my research, I will show that as urban retirees at the age of 55 for women and 60 and over for men, Mandarin-Speaking Chinese seniors who are able to emigrate are distinct from the average Chinese urban elderly because of their elite status in China. In China, they are dependent on their affluent family for support. Their decision

to migrate to Canada sponsored by their children is less concerned with gaining access to aged support systems for the elderly in Canada, than a commitment to their children in support of the value of the family. Moreover, this paper focuses on a group of Mandarin-speaking Chinese seniors who, by the time I interviewed them, have already qualified to receive financial assistance such as Old Age Security[1] from the government and who have moved into subsidized low-rent housing provided by the British Columbian (BC) government.

Driven by a desire to understand how Chinese senior migrants experience ageing life in Canada, I focused on Mandarin-speaking Chinese senior migrants in a subsidized apartment complex provided by the government. In the following thesis, I examine a series of ethnographic encounters to reflect upon how the changing landscape of family values of reciprocity and kinship between generations influences and is influenced by Chinese senior migrants' experience in Canada. With insight gained through Newendorp's (2017) research on care work performed by Chinese seniors in the United States, I examine how family values and intergenerational reciprocity have been reworked and experienced by my participants. I will examine how Chinese seniors mitigate their declining parental power and authority through their care work to secure their support at their initial years of co-residing with their adult children in Canada.

Once they have resided in Canada for 10 years and are eligible for government programs, these seniors use these programs, which make them less dependent on their children, to increase their independence. Thus, these seniors are not passive participants, but active agents who mobilize welfare resources in Vancouver to deal with conflicts and family tensions for the sake of their families as well as for their own. In the process, they are able to reconfigure the practices of filial piety due to the existence of government-provided elderly care.

In responses to some of orientalist and nostalgic arguments towards familial care of non-western societies before modernism in previous studies of ageing and immigration, I would like to extend my argument that immigration and urbanization in Canadian society is not necessary a sharp break with cultural values of family traditions for Chinese senior migrants. Specifically, immigration for my participants blends family values of sharing reciprocity and parental devotion to the family with personal pursuit of individuality. Thus, migration and the changing face of family values and kinship should not be portrayed as a sharp dualism between Eastern tradition and Western modernity.

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1. OAS: The OAS program is funded through Canadian general government revenues. It includes but is not limited to the OAS pension and the Guaranteed Income Supplement. All my participants meet the requirements either of the OAS Pension or GIS. The OAS pension provides monthly benefits to seniors aged 65 or older who meet the Canadian legal status and residence requirements. The GSI are monthly benefits for low-income OAS pension recipients living in Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp/old-age-security.html

Chapter 2 The evolving practice of filial piety in China and Canada

2.1 Filial piety in Chinese tradition

In the *Xiao Jing* (The *Classic of Filial Piety*), the Confucian conception of filial piety is the cultivation of gratitude, reverence, and love towards one's parents and ancestors. When discussing filial piety, it would be simplistic to think merely of intergenerational family relations such as those between father and son, young and old. Gendered intergenerational relations are also included, though they tend to be less emphasized in traditional Chinese society. More importantly, filial piety underscores the superiority and authority of age, enforcing deference, and obedience by the junior towards the senior.

Reinforced by imperial state laws and the Confucian ethical system, Chinese families, especially sons, are considered the primary caregivers for their elderly parents. The respect and care for the elderly is called reverent care, which is structured by intergenerational reciprocity (Knapp 2004). Five meanings are entailed in order to understand intergenerational reciprocity. First, nurturance is sustained and intimate, made possible by the parental sacrifice of personal interests. In this context, the traditional Chinese person should not be confused with a western one. An individual is always the biological extension of his or her parents and carries a duty to continue the family by producing descendants, connecting ancestors and decedents. As Barker (1979) argues, the family does not exist to support the individual, but rather the individual exists to support the family. Thus the welfare of the family or the clan (*zongzu*) in large part requires the subordination of individual interests.

Second, the kindness of parents towards their children does not take the form of equal power relations, such as in the reciprocity of a friendship (Nuyen 2004; Ivanhoe 2004; Knapp 2004; Yan 2016). Parental care is based on superiority of powerful fathers and mothers and weak and helpless children. Mothers and fathers would offer their children kindness and support, staying attentive to their needs and growth. Third, what distinguishes childcare and care for aged parents lies not in the range of care activities, as both are expected to obtain material support, affection, and love. Rather, caring for seniors requires genuine filial feelings that involve deference, respect, and obedience to the parents. This involves extreme cases in which a father has to decide whether to care for his child or his parents, and in order to be a truly filial son the priority of care would be and must be directed to the parents (Knapp 2004). Therefore, it is not hard to understand why, according to Confucian

ethics, filial piety is the fundamental virtue and a source for other virtues, such as loyalty and righteousness in a hierarchical and authoritative manner in traditional Chinese society (Nuyen 2004; Ivanhoe 2004; Knapp 2004; Chan & Tan 2004). The fourth point, the sustained care and support from the parents to the young children is reciprocated in the same way through adult children's gratitude and respect toward their aged parents. Nonetheless, no matter how much attention and care is given by children to elderly parents, it is incomparable to that shown by parents towards children and therefore cannot be paid back. The fifth point is that the reciprocity does not end when parents die, but continues in ancestor worship. Notably, mourning and death rites in ancestor worship are filial duties that a son is expected to perform.

The prestigious position Chinese seniors hold is based on their power and their control of resources, such as inheritance over junior generations (Santos & Harrell 2017). Reverent care for elderly parents is embedded in a formula of generational dependent relations in which Chinese seniors are entirely dependent on children to take care of their needs. However, the Cultural Revolution led to a radical destruction of the Chinese family and Confucian ethics, creating a filial crisis.

2.2 Modernizing China and the modified filial piety

My study concerns seniors who, before they emigrated, lived through the Cultural Revolution and their retirement was shaped by the ensuing filial crisis. The filial crisis—a decline of parental authority and a weakened sense of filial obligations to care for elderly parents as China modernized. Whether aged parents had or lack old-age support in China is a question that would be better understood by contextualizing the discussion within broader social, economic, and historical processes. Chinese families were intertwined with the changing state and the country's pathway to modernity. China's pursuit of modernity was marked by the Chinese Enlightenment, the May Fourth Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. They were characterized by anti-imperialism, anti-Confucianism, and a communist approach to social revolution (Schwarcz 1986; Dirlik 1989).

Socialism in China prioritized the individual's loyalty and devotion to the state over the family (Whyte 1997). Family, which once was the core value and welfare institution for the well-being of the individuals, was gradually nationalized by liberating individuals from their families and directing their loyalty from the family to the building of a modern nation and later to the Chinese socialist state (Leung 1997; Yan 2010). Rather than existing to continue the family line, connecting the past

and future, and ancestors and descendants, the individual exists as a citizen of the party-state to continue the revolutionary goal of socialism (Yan 2010). In radical circumstances, youth were encouraged by the Chinese socialist state to denounce and rebel against their parents and elders to show their loyalty to the state and smash feudalistic patriarchy (Whyte 1997; Yan 2010).

Changes brought by Mao's China on family and kinship dramatically weaken the authority and power of the senior members of the family through a comprehensive attack on partrilocally arranged marriages, family and ancestor worship. This campaign included the destruction of parental control over land, family property, and their children's marriage, education and careers. Parental authority was thus institutionalized and transferred from Chinese parents and elderly to the state (Yan 2010). Under this context, with better education, free choice of marriage partners and earning power, youth power and autonomy greatly increased. As the parent to Chinese citizens, the Chinese state, under the name of building an egalitarian society, aimed to provide comprehensive welfare services to urban employees with lifelong career opportunities and social benefits ranging from healthcare, pensions to housing, and education. In rural areas, the state provided the elderly with a safety network through rural communes. Nonetheless, the family was still at the center of care as adult children stayed close to families and communities due to strictly regulated rural-to-urban mobility (Davis 1991; Yan 2010).

Following the economic reform towards a market economy and privatization after 1978, the state withdrew from welfare services for urban citizens, and rural decollectivization weakened the role of the state and communes in family care, thereby leaving the responsibility for the elderly largely or entirely with the family, especially in rural areas (Leung 1994 1997; Yan 2010). The urban population was impacted by a downsizing of unproductive labour and a reduction or elimination of welfare benefits such as permanent career employment and other benefits. However, pensions for urban retirees remain (Davis 1991). The rural elderly have no such resources to support themselves, and rural decollectivization dismantled the healthcare system such as barefoot doctors[2] (*chijiao yisheng*), placing the burden of healthcare and financial support entirely on rural families. As a result, the rural elderly were completely dependent on their families in the first two decades of economic reform after1978. Combining with other aspects of the one-child policy, rural-to-urban mass migration, and increased life expectancy, this made life hard for both adult children and their elderly parents.

[2] Rural healthcare system was staffed by "barefoot doctors" who were farmers with basic medical training.

Thus, old-age support became a problem for many Chinese families. Filial piety, which was once regarded as feudalistic and hostile to Chinese socialism and therefore attacked, destroyed, and devalued, now was partially revitalized and reasserted by the post-socialist state as an invaluable aspect of Chinese tradition and culture. It served the state's agenda to cope with the growing ageing population (Yan 2010 2016; Whyte 1997; Leung 1994 1997; Zhang 2016). Institutionalized intergenerational reciprocity was implemented through legislation to enhance family support for aged parents. In the revised Marriage Law of 1981, the Inheritance Law in 1985, the law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly in 1996, and the amended Elderly Law in 2012, the state emphasized adult children's legal obligation to support aged parents by punishing children who failed to fulfill their filial duties by mistreating or abandoning them. A reform in family planning policy, moving from the one-child policy to the two-child policy, was implemented by China in 2015 to cope with a growing ageing population and decreased fertility. Other state-promoted national educational campaigns that advocated for public attention and care to the older parents emerged. The emphasis of filial piety is now instilled through the educational system via textbooks and curriculum (Li Weiwei 2005; Obendiek 2016), through the advent of a national Elderly Day to show respect (Zhang 2016), and through the modified guidelines of the New Twenty-Four Filial Piety (*Xin Ershisi Xiao*) in 2012, based on the traditional classics of filial piety (Zhang 2016).

With an emphasis on individual responsibility and self-reliance posed by modern conditions in China, the commodification of filial piety and privatized residential care have grown as a means for busy families to care for their older parents (Zhang 2016). Commercialized filial insurance is not only a response to the public debate on the filial piety crisis but also a response to criticism regarding the state's failure to provide a safety net for the elderly (Zhang 2009 2016). Nonetheless, residential care facilities are still undeveloped in China, and unlikely to meet the needs of the much more rapidly ageing population. However even these limited beds are still underutilized partly because of the cultural stigma around the narrative of elder abandonment (Leung 2001; 穆光宗 Mu 2012).

In China's move toward modernity, intergenerational relationships are deeply influenced by a changing political economy and family policy. In general, more egalitarian, intergenerational relations emerged (Santos & Harrell 2017). The decline of parental dominance and an increase in youth power changed the traditional norm of filial piety that emphasized age-based hierarchy, control, and discipline (Yan 2016). The older generations were no longer able to require submission from children, and their weakening power could thus bring about an adaptive change, with parents respecting their children's autonomy and offering childcare and domestic chores at home in an

exchange for late-life security and respect from their children (Whyte 1997 1995; Davis 1991; Yan 2016; Obendiek 2016; Santos 2016).

Aiming to improve the quality of the population in boosting the nation's economy, the Chinese state also instilled an obligation for parents to commit to their children's educational success under the policy of "quality for education" (*suzhi jiaoyu*) (Kipnis 2011; Kuan 2015). The prioritization of the future generation has led to what Yan (2016) identifies as descending familism, where the family resources are shifted downward from ancestor to the third generation (p.245). In addition, emerging intensive parenting, combined with other state-engineered family planning programs reinforces a new element of intergenerational reciprocity that emphasizes affection and intimacy. The affective bond is one of the few sources with which parents can earn respect and secure their support through dutiful help such as unpaid childcare (Brown 2016; Newendorp 2017; Obendiek 2016).

Parents, especially in rural areas, are portrayed as greedy agents inasmuch as they intentionally invest in education in order to cultivate indebtedness and gratitude in exchange for support as they age (Obendiek 2016). This intergenerational reciprocity degrades into an intergenerational contract through which parental sacrifices become assets with an expectation of a return from the children. In this way descending familism in state policy and social practice are replacing the hierarchy and discipline of traditional Chinese families.

Historically, within China success or prosperity is associated with mobility and has social meanings such as power and prestige (Ong 1997; Liu 1997; Woronov 2006). Mobility in late imperial and Maoist China was strictly structured by separating urban and rural areas. In late imperial China, scholarship and the national examination system provided a means for the rural population to move upwards into the urban world (Liu 1997; Woronov 2006). The higher one climbed up to the center, the more social power and prestige one and one's family would have. In Mao's China, mobility was tightly controlled due to a highly planned economy, making it extremely difficult for the population to move from rural to urban. Ironically, under the communist political ideology, economically disadvantaged rural areas were considered politically advanced as they represented the masses and thereby proletariats. Thus, the flow was reversed; that is, urban youth were sent to rural and mountain areas (Liu 1997). Through the opening and reform policy after 1978, China was integrated into the global market, thus creating new meanings for social hierarchy and mobility (Ong 1997; Liu 1997; Woronov 2006). The new open-door policy allowed family to pursue success and prosperity beyond state borders, extending access to the advanced west.

2.3 Locating Chinese families in the immigration context

Transnational studies have shed new light on the study of family and kinship. Some work has been done to address how immigration can shape the practices and experience of migrant families. Many studies offer insights into the experiences of cultural encounters, often describing them as a confrontation, a transformation and/or overlapping worlds of experiences of "East and West", "modernity and tradition" or "local and global" (Lamb 2009; Martin-Matthews et al. 2013; Woronov 2006). During this process, transnational mobility and a difference of cultural arrangements are generally credited with the changes of family practices. Families could be westernized or gradually modernized, though transnational migration, however these family adjustments can come with bittersweet sentiments, ambivalence, and struggles. Scholars have examined how families maintain traditional values and transform themselves in the changing dynamics of family life in Western societies. One of the most notable observations made by aging studies on changing families in transnational contexts is that exposure to western culture, e.g., an individualistic way of living and the valorization of personal independence, has brought a new element to migrant families (Lamb 2009; Martin-Matthews et al. 2013; Lai & Wendy L. 2007; Lai 2005).

These changes, however, are not simply a result from dualities presupposed by these studies, such as the binary oppositions between "East and West", "tradition or culture and modernity", and "local and global" (Lamb 2009; Martin-Matthews et al. 2013; Woronov 2006). For example, many social scientists equate modernization with westernization in transnational studies of the immigration experience and migrant families (Lamb 2009; Martin-Matthews et al.2013; Woronov 2006). They frame modernization within the "local" and western framework rather than treating it as a phenomenon of global modernization (see, for example, Martin-Matthews et al. 2013). This vision of binary thinking about the experience of migrant families living in unfamiliar cultural and social settings arises partly from their anthropological or sociological training that tends to be nostalgic for non-western societies before modernity, capitalism and globalization. Their image of these societies is characterized as having collective-oriented traditional beliefs and cultural practices. These authors also see kinship in the west as individualistic and nuclear family-oriented in contrast to non-western societies, which are collective-oriented and fundamentally different from the modernized western families. Under this East-West dichotomy, transnational families are often seen as leaving authentic cultural practices that are radically transformed by their move into the highly individualistic relationships of western society. As Lamb (2009) notes, ethnographic accounts of the Indian diaspora in the United States describe a culture and tradition of care and aging in the non-western

societies that is presented as uncritically good compared to western individualistic and alienated care relationships; Indian care is gradually transformed in a confrontation with the West. This issue was also raised in a collaborative study of Chinese widows in Canada (Martin-Matthews et al. 2013).

Transnational mobility is increasingly feasible for families from non-western countries, however migration is shaped by the demands of the labour force and immigration policies at destination countries, preferring one category of people while constraining or impeding the entry of others (Chu 2011; Constable 2014; Lamb 2009; Wong 2006). However, human agency is also an element in taking advantage of the process of economic globalization (Chu 2011; Constable 2014; Lamb 2009; Newendorp 2017; Wong 2006; Trémon 2017). Globalization's impact on transnational families is evident when one family member migrates for work leaving family members behind. This creates flexible family forms designed to maximize economic capital and career opportunities (Chu 2011; Constable 2014; Hoang & Brenda 2015; Lamb 2009; Newendorp 2017; Wong 2006; Trémon 2017). With respect to family relationships between older parents and adult children, studies have demonstrated that aged persons are actively engaged in coping with migration and their changing status, although it comes with social costs (Lamb 2009; Newendorp 2017).

Even in the immigrant context, the filial principle is still very important to Chinese families. Despite the apparent loss of power in this age-based hierarchy, there are only subtle changes in seniors' status and much of their prestige remains (Santos & Harrell 2017; Chi & Chappell & Lubben 2001; Newendorp 2017; Obendiek 2016; Santos 2016). Rather than being passive participants managed by the family due to their declined status, Chinese seniors perform unpaid and paid care work to “earn” filial respect. Through intentional self-sacrifice and cultivating indebtedness such as making education investments in grandchildren and providing unpaid care work for their families, they mitigate their declined status in the family and utilize this strategy to secure support in their later years (Newendorp 2017; Obendiek 2016; Santos 2016).

Studies of transnational care work or domestic labour performed by migrant young women in societies such as North America, Hong Kong or Taiwan have concentrated on the family members left-behind apart from their daughters or mothers living abroad, and the issues of childcare (Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2002; Constable 1999 2014; Hoang & Brenda 2015). Considerably less attention in studies of migration and care work has been given to senior migrants and the paid and unpaid care work they provide (Newendorp 2017). Care work performed by Chinese senior migrants sheds light on the economic and sentimental values of the family in transnational studies of ageing and family (Newendorp 2017). The affective bond developed by seniors with their grandchildren

provides meaning and purpose, helping rationalizing hardship Chinese seniors initially face in immigration context (Newendorp 2017).

Scholarly work on immigrant families from China and other countries to North America also focuses on institutional resources in North American that might help relieve the economic strain on the migrating family by transferring the care of elderly parents from the family to the state (Chi & Chappell & Lubben 2001; Lamb 2009; Martin-Matthews et al. 2013; Lai 2005; Lai &Wendy L. 2007).

Family arrangements and intergenerational intimacy are influenced by transnational mobility among migrants from many countries (Chu 2011; Constable 2014; Lamb 2009; Wong 2006). The power and prestige associated with the West has symbolic and practical value for the poor rural families in China who share prosperity and success in intergenerational and community levels (see, for example, Chu 2011). Overseas migration strategies for immigrant families are cultural extensions of family values of intergenerational reciprocity that are transformed through the process of transnational immigration. Initially seniors use family resources to support the education and emigration of their children, followed by the children supporting the seniors' emigration. The overseas success of the children is regarded as accomplishments that were only made possible with parental devotion (see, for example, Lamb 2009). Mobility is often associated with responses to social-spatial hierarchies. Increasing mobility enables people to strategically obtain and secure resources, prosperity, and social power across spaces (Chu 2011; Constable 2014; Lamb 2009; Liu 1997; Wong 2006).

In this context of research on immigration to North America and the experiences of elderly immigrants from many countries, the goal of my research is to examine the experiences of Chinese immigrants to Canada and to problematize the binary oppositions of traditional concepts of filial relationships with emerging modernity, and stereotypical collective families and individualism, which I argue is deeply seated in Chinese historical specificity and migration history. The rise of Chinese modernity through economic, if not political neoliberalism has dramatically changed the cultural expressions and practice of filial piety in China. The filial crisis—a decline, or transformation of parental authority and a weakened sense of filial obligations to care for elderly parents – has been underway in China on its path to modernity. As I will demonstrate, these changes have altered the stereotypical family values of intergenerational reciprocity in China and are perceived by some transnational studies of ageing and families as attributes of migration.

Chapter 3 Research situation and methodology

The research for this study, which lasted approximately one year, primarily took place in a subsidized apartment building funded by the BC government located in Vancouver's Chinatown.

The residents of this apartment building are predominantly elderly Chinese immigrants, originally from both Mandarin-speaking and Cantonese-speaking regions in Mainland China and from Hong Kong. Due to urban development, many neighbourhoods in Chinatown have recently undergone demolition, which led to a relocation of lower-income residents, including many Chinese senior immigrants. At the end of 2017, many of these residents were moved elsewhere, with many of them relocated to newer and modern rental units in Downtown South.

The study focuses mainly on a selected group of Mandarin-speaking Chinese senior residents of this particular apartment who migrated to Canada as retirees, at the age of 60 or older. My research involved participant observation and interviews with seniors and family members,[3] and took place primarily in participants' homes (with one exception a grandmother I interviewed at the Vancouver Chinese Library). The interviews lasted between one and two hours. The interviews were semi-structured and supplemented with extensive field notes and observations.

In this study, I will identify my participants as Grandma or Grandpa to show my respect towards these Chinese seniors. Being the youngest volunteer, at the age of 25 compared to those volunteers who are senior to me, the Chinese seniors in this study often spoke to me as if I were one of their own granddaughters. For some Chinese seniors, I was even younger than their grandchildren. Also, knowing that I was a student studying in Canada all by myself, they acted as if they were my own grandparents, by caring for me and giving me food.

My first contact with senior Chinese immigrants living in this apartment started in August 2016, when I began to work as a volunteer at a Christian church-based organization active in the local community. The organization offered activities for Chinese senior migrants twice a week and organised Saturday events at different state-subsidized apartments in Chinatown. The schedule was packed, first with body exercises, then singing Christian songs, then Bible storytelling, followed by karaoke and lastly food distribution. For most of the time, my job was limited to singing and preparing sandwiches for lunch on Saturday mornings. My relationship with the residents remained formal and professional for the first eight months. I rarely spoke privately with them or was asked for help. Usually they would turn to the more experienced volunteers they had known for years.

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[3] All participants' last names that show up in the analysis of the thesis are anonymized.

The first person I got to know was Grandpa Lin at the community centre where I volunteered. I was helping him apply for a senior bus sticker (a golden sticker attached to a bus pass so that the holder may use transit system across BC for free) because of my ability to speak Mandarin, which is my first language and I also read and speak English. It was through him that I was introduced to other seniors, acquaintances, and his family as a UBC graduate student who is linguistically (English) capable. I received many invitations to their homes to read their bills, mail, or anything else written in English. I was also asked to make phone calls consulting with governmental agencies and community-based organizations about services. Their reasons for asking for help were many, but one thing was unchanging: there was no one else, especially family members, to help because of busy work schedules or geographic distance. It was through my constant help that my participants constantly responded to my help with thanks and most importantly, their appreciation and revelations of their hope and helplessness, hardship, pride, and loneliness, and complaints about family and immigrant life.

3.1 Chinese seniors and overseas migration

Despite difficulties recruiting participants at the beginning of my research I, thankfully, was able to interview eight seniors including two couples and one family (an adult son and daughter-in-law were interviewed). Among the eight Chinese senior immigrants, two are male seniors and six female seniors. Of the six female seniors, two are widowed women. I use the term Chinese seniors as shorthand for the old and the elderly. Commonly, they migrated almost at or just beyond retirement age, which in China is sixty for men and fifty-five for women. Their ages range from seventy-four years old to eighty-four years old. Half of the seniors are beyond eighty years old while the other half are under eighty.

Born in 1930s and 1940s, the Mandarin Chinese seniors who participated in this study spent most of their lives in urban China before migrating to Canada. Prior to coming to Canada, they were affected by the individualizing process that occurred in China as nuclear family structures became predominate in urban China. My participants were less likely to live with their adult children before migration except one grandma. Also, with modest pension money, limited medical care and more than one adult child, my participants were satisfied with their life in China in the early1990s, before the neo-liberal privatization of senior care in the late 1990s and in the 2000s. Considering their affluent status in China, either highly educated or politically privileged, they were more

economically independent than the average urban elderly. As I will show in the following chapter, their decision to migrate to Canada is out of familial devotion and love.

My participants' children are immigrants from Mainland China who came to Canada after 1978. Many of these children either quit their decent jobs and came to North America for more economic prosperity at the beginning of the open-door policy, or supported by their parents they received an overseas education and preferred to stay in the "advanced" capitalist west.

They arrived in British Columbia, which has a long history of Chinese immigration dating back to the 1850s, when the first wave of single men from rural Guangdong province migrated to Victoria to work as miners (Guo & D. DeVoretz 2005). Subsequent waves of immigrants were mainly from Hong Kong, followed by Taiwanese. Since the early 1990s, a substantial number of immigrants have come from Mandarin-speaking regions of Mainland China. All families that I interviewed left China during the 1990s or in the early 2000s. Some of my participants refer to themselves as the earliest Chinese immigrants from post-war Mainland China with a sense of pride and honour. After all, in the 1990s only a few people in China could afford moving abroad to the West.

All of the seniors came to Canada under the Family Class category, sponsored by their children. Since they have lived here for over ten years, all of them are eligible for Old Age Security (OAS) and may be able to receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)[4]. They are eligible for subsidized housing provided by BC government as they all are over the age of 55.

The Mandarin-speaking Chinese seniors interviewed in my study are all connected through the senior service for Chinese senior immigrants provided by a local Christian church. Therefore, the majority of seniors I have contacted live in subsidized housing and often participate in activities and services provided by the church. However, not all of them are Christian as some of them were introduced to me by the neighbours of those who are Christians. Thus, the seniors in the study are not representative of the Mandarin Chinese seniors in Vancouver.

Inspired by Constable's (2014) ethnographic writing, in this chapter and the following chapters, I aim to focus on the individual stories and experiences of grandmas and grandpas, hoping to present the complexities embedded in each story. To maintain the confidentiality of individuals' identities, all names are pseudonyms and some personal and geographical information has been altered to protect the Chinese seniors' identities and those of their families.

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[4] The Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) is governmental-funded financial assistance to Old Age Security (OAS) pension recipients who have a low income and are living in Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp/old-age-security/guaranteed-income-supplement.html

3.2 A reflection on the difficulty of studying family relations

Studying family relations is difficult. The sharing and not sharing of stories, experiences, and comments always co-exists. Family relations, specifically intergenerational relations, are often considered too private to talk about with an outsider; while at the same time talking with an outsider is an easy way to vent issues that cannot be easily discussed with family members. This happened frequently, especially in my initial interviews.

Interviewing family members presents more problems. First, all of my relationships were initially with seniors and it is through them that I had the opportunity to meet other family members. The only family I could get close to was one man whom I helped and visited at the hospital. The gratitude the family felt towards me was a major factor in structuring our relationship and making the interview possible. As for the other participants, their children live either far away or are fully occupied by work, or unavailable due to family disharmony, making the parents unwilling or afraid to bother their children. All of these factors make it more difficult to integrate the children's perspectives on intergenerational relations. In addition, contacting seniors is itself a difficult process. Many of them moved out of the area before I had a chance to interview them.

Some of the seniors felt uncomfortable being interviewed by a Chinese student, about whose ideological stance (*yishi xingtai lichang*) they have no idea. It was important to them and their trust whether I was nationalistic, anti-party or anti-nationalistic, as all of them were born in the 1930s or 40s, when political upheavals predominated. More importantly, their position as elites with education and privileges from 1940 to 1978 made them easy targets for revolutionary attention, not all of it positive. Some of them experienced political repercussions during the Cultural Revolution. According to one man, he still has trust issues even after moving to Vancouver. He emphasized that his past was full of memories of thought control and personal struggles, so he is used to being suspicious of an agenda behind things and people, such as me and my interviews. Also, Grandma Zhu told me she was traumatized by recalling her past in China where trusting people or disclosing private thoughts was dangerous in revolutionary times. Gaining their trust is not easy. Following the recommendation of my volunteer director, whom the seniors have known for many years, and my constant willingness to help them and explain my family background and research purpose, some seniors agreed to an interview.

Family relations were often glossed over, partially mentioned and briefly disclosed with caution. For example, when I asked Grandpa Yue to describe his son's recent visit, he briefly stated, “He [the son] is very busy but he often comes to see me. He came yesterday.” I followed that up

with, “How did you spend the day?” Showing no interest in answering my question, he smiled and replied, “We had food together,” and then suddenly changing the topic, he asked me how long I have lived in Canada. In other situations, complaints and immediate supplemental praise came paired together. More often this was more in a tone of understanding than outright complaining. When I visited Grandma Zhu immediately after she moved into the new building in the downtown I was surprised to see a large number of boxes in the living room, and I asked her if the packing was a lot of work. “It was. And I did all by myself. All my neighbours' children came to help [their parents] pack and move except mine, but my situation is different. My daughter [a doctor] is too busy and she is in another city. If she came to help me, patients who rely on her would have had no one to help them,” she continued. “You see, I am old, right? But I tell you, I am an independent old lady and capable of handling my own stuff.”

As time went by, my frequent help and home visits played an important role in building trust and rapport with these seniors. I was able to understand the complex family relations, including struggles, complaints and the loneliness they would otherwise have been reluctant to share with me.

Another way I realized that grandparents' words can be misleading, incomplete, and sometimes not even honest was when they tried to describe their relations with children through competing views held by neighbours and friends. About one month later after I visited Grandpa Yue, I visited Grandma Ding, who was a neighbour and a friend of Grandpa Yue. Knowing that I had already met Grandpa Yue, she took me to see him, suggesting we all come together and chat right after my interview with her. Half an hour later, Grandpa Yue received a call from his son, telling him that he would be downstairs in a few minutes. Grandma Ding stood up and said, “We'd better leave and not bother the father-son time!” Grandpa Yue said it would be fine and asked us to stay. Grandma Ding insisted on leaving, grabbing my arm, and walking to the door. While we waiting for the apartment lift, she sighed, lowering her head and said, “I couldn't help feeling sad. You must be thinking that he [Grandpa Yue] is living well (*guode hao*). Like my son, his rarely comes. Even when he does come, the son gives his father only half an hour.”

“How do you know?” I asked.

“We are friends and friends will share.”

I heard a lot of similar comments from other grandparents,

“My friend who lives on the second floor was kicked out by her children after she couldn't be useful anymore to take care of the child of her children. Her son is so unflilal! How can he do this to his own mother?” (Grandma He). Grandma Ding summed up the situation of most seniors: “Most older people living here have their own difficulties and problems with their family. It is a matter of degree.

Not even one family who move here is 100% happy." I asked Grandma Ding "Why do you think so?" She seemed proud, as if she knew everything, "I heard it from them. They told me face to face or my friend told me the story of their friends." I told her honestly that I hadn't heard of any unfilial children so far. She laughed, "Family dirt shouldn't be public. You know that!" It often occurs to me that face, a family's reputation or prestige, and the stigma of being abandoned or inducing family dishonour are deeply connected.

Under certain circumstances, an accidental push may lead to a surprise. Grandma Zhu tended to be very understanding of her daughter, speaking many times in our conversations of the daughter's kindness and attention, such as how she insisted that her mother move back with her and her family. A "push" occurred when Grandma Zhu unthinkingly repeated that she moved to a new place without her daughter coming to help while all other neighbours had children to help, immediately adding that her own daughter was too busy to help. I asked whether her daughter would come to see her when she was not busy. Grandma said yes with confidence that her daughter would come to visit next weekend. I asked if I could invite her daughter for an interview, provided her daughter showed any interest in my research, and explained that there would be no pressure for either of them to participate. After such expressiveness from her, I did not expect the silence that followed my request. She broke the silence in a tone of bitterness and anger. "To be honest with you, my daughter is unfilial. She doesn't want to help me. I don't have this daughter. This is the ugly side of a family. But I don't care anymore." As she explained, it is the accumulated lack of care and respect for the mother whose sacrifice to her daughter's family drained up all her savings, time, affection, and labour, and made it difficult for her to maintain a close relationship that should be built on trust, care, and love. Her dramatic change of attitude toward her daughter makes me realize the words spoken before were texts to be expanded and unfolded as the story went deeper. Words could be deceptive, sometimes becoming contradictory and misleading in situations where what is spoken about turns out to be part of a complicated family truth.

Chapter 4 Mandarin-speaking seniors' migration

The Mandarin-speaking Chinese seniors I interviewed spent most of their lives in China, and many of them admitted they would prefer to have stayed in their own country rather than migrating to Canada. They usually explained their decision to migrate as a manifestation of the value they place on family, a value that both continues and evolves due to changing environment both in China and Canada. Sharing in the prosperity of their children emerges as a new expression of intergenerational reciprocity, reinforcing the powerful image of family care and support for the seniors. The changing intergenerational relationship between the older parents and young generations to some degree has placed the emphasis more on the continuity of parental devotion and sacrifice for the family and future generations than a reciprocal return from children. The sacrifice Chinese seniors made for the family rationalizes the hardship they suffer linguistically and socially by immigrating to Canada.

4.1 Sharing prosperity as a new meaning to intergenerational reciprocity

Aware of the China's low status in the global hierarchy in terms of modernization and prosperity, Chinese seniors and their family associate the West with power and upward mobility, and thus rationalize their migration as "finding a better place to retire" (*qu genghaode difang yanglao*), "broadening the horizon and coming to see the West" (*kaikai yanjie, qu xifang kankan*) and as a reciprocal return from children by sharing in overseas prosperity (*xiangfu*).

Their children's success overseas is a source of pride for Chinese seniors and thus the invitation to Canada is sharing in that prosperity. The son of Grandma Fan and Grandpa Lin told me, “It is natural for me to bring my parents to Canada. Better lives and better air. If I live a good life overseas, of course my parents should enjoy it too.” Senior immigrants tend to frame the children's success by giving credit to the parents' efforts. That is to say, the children's success is partly due to the parents' educational investment. Thus, the core principle of intergenerational reciprocity: the pattern of give-and-return between older parents and children is supposed to be a sharing of prosperity. Grandma Fan says, “Once my son had settled here, he immediately started to apply for our immigration, too. My son has his achievements, and he doesn't forget us. You shouldn't either!” Fan pointed at me. “One day if you prosper, do not forget who gave birth to you and raised you all the way up! Your parents! Thanks to your parents, you became the person that you are now. So immigrate here. Bring your parents.”

4.2 This is a "Chinese family tradition": I came here for my children and children's children

Chinese grandmas' migration to Canada is often framed by themselves as parental devotion to the family. In Grandma Cui's story, she frames her motivation as family tradition 'I came here for my children and children's children.' Despite the individualization that has occurred in China, the continuity of family practice still is reinforced by the Chinese state and families as a result of changing political economy and family planning. A trend of descending familism (Yan 2016), which is the shifted downward focus from ancestors to children, has emerged as a response to altered family practices. Holding children as the hope of the family's future success, Chinese parents and grandparents feel an obligation to devote their resources, attention, and love to their children, even if it involves sacrifice. Moving to Canada for Chinese seniors often means they are physically separated from the familiar home environment and out of direct touch with extended families, friends, colleagues, and neighbours. Chinese seniors sponsored by their children, once they move to Canada, have to learn how to adapt to life in a linguistically, socially, and culturally different setting, leaving behind their community and home environment. For them, moving to Canada is less a consideration about career opportunities or materialistic prosperity than a commitment to family tradition.

Grandma Cui explains that her migration expresses her commitment to the needs of family: "We go where our children go. We worry about our children as long as we live. My children need me to take care of their children, so I am here. I do this because I am the mother of my children and grandmother of my grandchildren." In this context, "I" is not an independent identity of the self but a relational expression of the self within the family, and the affective bond between a mother and her children. When I asked if, only considering herself, she would have moved to Canada, she answered,

> "I did not want to come Canada at first. Why? I have everything I need in China. I have my apartment. It's big and comfortable. I have my pension money and so does my spouse. We do not need our children to support us. I do not need to worry about their lives either. My son is an engineer and makes good money. He never bothers me or asks me for money. You know some children in China always ask for money from their parents until parents use up all their savings. But my son does not. He would always say, 'Mother, I do not need your money but I will give you money.' He is a man of his word. He married a woman without us paying a single cent for the wedding. My

> daughter has a successful career in Canada. As a parent, I am relieved and happy to see my children prosper. I also have many friends, neighbours and relatives. If not for my daughter and her children, I would not consider moving to Canada. However, my daughter needs me. She has one baby born in 2003, and she needs someone to take care of her child so that she can go to work. I came, stayed for a year, and then come back to China. Later she has the second child, I came and never came back to China [laughing]."

"Why did not you stay in Canada the first time you came to take care of your daughter's child?" I asked,

> "Vancouver is cold. The weather is cold. I could not stand it. There are very few people on street. It is so different from China. Don't you think that Vancouver is a place of loneliness? You don't have anyone to talk to. My daughter sent me to a church hoping that I could make some friends. I do not speak English or Cantonese. I didn't know what I was doing in that church so I never went there again. I was afraid of this life so I went back to China."

"Why did you decide to stay in Canada permanently the second time?"

She replied, "My daughter insisted [laughing] that I stay. I understand her situation and her family needs me. As a mother I will stay. You know it. This is the old tradition. Older generations always take care of the future generations."

4.3 Rationalizing hardship: One-Child policy and older mother's sacrifice

The state-induced family planning policy aiming to reduce fertility in China introduced in 1979, known as the One-Child policy, was an immediate factor for families such as Grandma Zhu and her youngest daughter leading them to migrate in the late 1990s. The youngest daughter of Grandma Zhu, originally from urban China and working in state-owned enterprises where the One-Child policy was most strictly implemented, had to negotiate her birthing rights when she learned of her second pregnancy. Determined to have the second child, she decided to leave China and obtain overseas citizenship. Zhu initially had no idea that her daughter was pregnant and only learned about it after her daughter asked her to go to the U.S. Both Grandma Zhu and her daughter gave up everything they had in China: jobs and careers as well as extended families. Zhu quit her job in a city

government office in Shenyang city and closed down her newly formed and very profitable company. Her daughter quit her job at a city hospital and her son-in-law closed his successful new private medical clinic.

Grandma Zhu rationalized her own hardships by developing strong affective ties with her grandchildren through intimate childcare. Grandma Zhu is proud of her granddaughter, who is smart and talented. She was delighted at her granddaughter's accomplishments and educational opportunities: “She's an accomplished piano and clarinet player, and an accomplished painter! She is kind and my dear baby. She makes me happy. I can't imagine her not being born; our family would have missed this beautiful gift from heaven.”

As a mother, Grandma Zhu supports her daughter with everything she can offer and endured hardships for the sake of her daughter and grandchildren. Her daughter and son-in-law resumed their studies in order to survive in North America. With financial support from Grandma Zhu, they were able to pursue advanced education in the United States while leaving Grandma with the full responsibility of taking care of two small children. Grandma was immensely proud of the children's success in higher education in the United States: “My daughter was a Chinese medicine practitioner back in China and my son-in-law was a doctor. They are great! They came to US and continued higher education. Later my daughter became a doctor and now works in Canada, while her husband did another degree in a health profession.”

But the duty of raising the granddaughter was entirely hers. The money remitted by her daughter was meagre, 400 Canadian dollars a month hardly enough to maintain the lives of three, especially with major expenses from the children's education. She had to keep a garden at the house that the daughter and son-in-law had bought, and she saved every penny she could. For example, she travelled from Burnaby to Chinatown for cheaper food. She also happily described the abundance of vegetables she harvested from her own garden and how much fun she had sharing surplus produce with neighbours. She was proud of how she and her grandchildren could enjoy a diversity of foods despite her low budget.

Like the seniors studied by Newendorp (2017), Grandma Zhu's sacrifice for the family is still influenced by the principle of intergenerational reciprocity, with a change from the emphasis on the filial sacrifice of children to the respected older parents to the grandmother's sacrifice to support the family. According to Grandma Zhu, all the hardships and sacrifices are rationalized through a reciprocal return from the family such as appreciation and gratitude from the daughter, intimacy with grandchildren, and a sense of accomplishment and pride; and more importantly, rationalizes her

migration to her family's new home. Grandma Zhu saw migration as a means of maintaining reciprocal filial relationships despite its hardships.

Chapter 5 Strategic older mothers and fathers: mediating between family and state

Immigration further complicated Chinese senior migrants' experience, as they left behind their social networks and resources in China and initially depended on the family for the support, financial support in particular, which further placed them in a vulnerable situation. Care work performed by Chinese senior migrants as Newendorp (2017) also discovered, have both economical and sentimental values to the family. Unpaid childcare performed by Chinese seniors contributed to the family income and at the same time supported the seniors, relieving some of the burden on their adult children. However, the situation sometimes was reversed, as in the case of Grandma Zhu, where seniors with savings assisted the family in buying daily necessities, paying bills, and even making educational investments in their adult children to help them find better employment in Canada.

Unpaid childcare and housework such as cooking, cleaning, gardening, and shopping performed by Chinese seniors (in my research all of them are women) freed busy and career-oriented adult children from paying for childcare and relieved them of many domestic duties. The seniors however were able to develop affective bonds with grandchildren, giving meaning and purpose to this unpaid labour. As described earlier, Grandma Zhu and Grandma Ding made this point in their stories of immigration. In the stories of immigration told by Grandma Zhu and Grandma Ding, they describe their intimate ties with grandchildren and how their devotion to their families was rewarded with affection, respect, and dignity.

However, three types of family tension also arise from childcare. Firstly, the intimacy between grandmothers and grandchildren sometimes stretches other relationships, such as that between the grandmother and her daughter. This occurred in Grandma Ding's and Grandma Zhu's case. By providing childcare Grandma Ding's working daughter became jealous of her mother. Secondly, different childrearing practices are often a source of conflict, and were a common reason that grandmothers gave for moving into subsidized housing. Third, care work and domestic services for the family can be exploitive and create resentment under the umbrella of family values embedded in intergenerational reciprocity. The children rather than older parents often demand multigenerational co-residence for the benefit of free domestic help and care work from the parents. Grandma Lin tells a story of her daughter's jealousy of her affective bond with two grandchildren and the conflicting views over child rearing practice further generates the family tension. While Grandma Zhu's experience illustrates the demanding needs from the family not only leads to Grandma's own poverty

and distress, but also exposes her to the family neglect and exploitation. Seniors' unpaid caregiving favours the children and grandchildren, rather than children providing support for seniors, which created generational conflicts and tension.

These particular types of tension contributed to descending familism, which is a downward shift from prioritizing seniority or ancestor worship to the third generation, to giving priority to the younger generation (Yan 2016). Caught in a modern and competitive society, Aunt Guan found it increasingly difficult to simultaneously perform the dual roles as a filial daughter-in-law to her parents-in-law and a loving mother to her son. Co-residence, according to Aunt Guan is a way to express filial piety towards parents. However, Grandma Fan and Grandpa Lin preferred the personal privacy and freedom they had in China and desired social relations beyond the immediate family in Canada. Thus, according to Aunt Guan, respecting parents' wishes not to live in a multigenerational household and move into their own subsidized housing was considered being filial.

5.1 Grandma Zhu- Mother, daughter and sons-in-law: Grandma's devotion to the family and the broken family solidarity

The tensions described in last section, and descending familism can break family solidarity. The family solidarity that is seen in Grandma Zhu's account of her commitment and sacrifice for the family was broken as the mother - daughter relationship deteriorated. As discussed earlier, Grandma Zhu gave up everything she had in China. She came to Canada to take care of her daughter and granddaughter, whose birth was against the one-child policy. To support her daughter's settlement in Canada, Grandma Zhu financed the advanced education that her daughter and son-in-law pursued in the United States. She also acted as a full-time babysitter for her two grandchildren, feeding, clothing, cleaning, tutoring, and taking them to schools. She also prepared meals in her daughter's house in Burnaby for the first years. The affective relationship that binds grandma Zhu to her granddaughter created a good family relationship that was initially appreciated by her daughter and son-in-law.

When I first met Grandma Zhu, she lived in an independent apartment on the sixth floor. She was always delighted to invite people to her apartment, to chat and look at her place. She spoke of her current living arrangement as a deliberate choice made by herself. More importantly, it was the best choice she could have made:

> “Living alone is extremely free. I like it very much. My daughter and son-in-law are very good to me and come to see me when available, though they will leave afterwards. They wanted me to live with them and asked me several times to move to their place. You know, they care this mother. But I didn't want to go and live with them so they compromised, suggesting that I could live in a senior apartment in another city instead of Vancouver as long as I am nearer to them. My daughter did get me an apartment in another city. But I refused and insisted on staying where I currently live. Why? The manger there can't speak Mandarin, only English, and Cantonese. I can't go there. She agrees now saying that I made the right decision. You see, if I lived with my daughter, I could be very much afraid. There is nobody home during the day. My daughter and son-in-law go to work and my two grandchildren go to school. What if I pass out, they would only find my cold dead body when they came back from work? I am telling you, my daughter and her family live in a forest. It's true, what you can see are only forest, river, and roads with just a few vehicles passing by. Nobody would talk to me, and that makes me very lonely. I would become dumb because no one talks to me. When I feel like a walk, I wouldn't get far because a sign warns you about bears. It is scary. How could I take a walk and feel safe? But things are different here where I live now. I have friends to talk and visit. More importantly, people would find me and get me an ambulance. This happened to me twice!”

She continued,

> “Seeing me adamant about my decision, my daughter asked me ‘are you sure?’ I was sure at that time so I said yes.”

She started to explain that no one can care for her if she is sick and it was not practical for her daughter to take days off because of the nature of her daughter's job, because so many people and lives depend on her daughter though she believes her daughter would take days off if the mother were sick.

> “My daughter confirmed with me again ‘this is the road that you chose’. I told her that was my decision and I was responsible for it and I would never blame her. You know she is afraid that her older sister in China would complain that she did not take care of the mother.”

Grandma Zhu justifies her decision first by acknowledging her daughter's continuous offering of care and urges her to be as near as possible with her daughter and daughter's family. She then

explained why she cannot accept moving with the family to a new town. It appears as if the choice is more dependent on personal considerations such as social isolation and health issues while the daughter's considerations are more out of love for a mother and importance of the family. However, as I visited her often, she shifted from praising her daughter to condemning her daughter as unfilial to her.

First, she described their loving affection for each other. Although her daughter was away from the family studying in the United States, she was proud because both her daughter and son-in-law did not disappoint her but strove to work hard and obtain academic success. More importantly, she felt her sacrifices in caring for her grandchildren and offering financial assistance was obligatory because of her role as mother and grandmother. In addition, her sacrifice was in exchange for the children's achievements and the affective bond she developed with her grandchildren. Also, the daughter's work in the hospital in Canada after graduating from studies in the United States, though inadvertently complained about work as a reason for lacking time for visits and family, is seen as understandable or even rewarding and noble. The intergenerational relationship of hierarchy and control in traditional views was transformed into and understanding and expression of affection between generations. Zhu believes her daughter is doing humanitarian work – serving people – and that accounts for not having enough time to serve her, even when her mother needs her help. Furthermore, Grandma Zhu told me about her occasional offers to provide food and to cook for her daughter's family during their visits. She referred to her action not as assistance or help, but expressions of love and affection. She wanted to share good things with her daughter rather than to keep them to herself.

To maintain the ties with her daughter and her family, every year grandma Zhu would visit her daughter during summer and winter vacations, a time when her grandchildren could spend time at home. She spoke with happiness and nostalgia of the many days and years she raised the two children when they were young, spending most of the money she had received for their education, while being frugal on food, clothing, and daily necessities for herself. She also talked about how her grandchildren loved her Northern cuisine cooking, and how happy they were when they came home. She described how she would stay up late cleaning the house, washing dishes and mending clothes so that her grandchildren could live in a clean environment and have decent clothes to wear. She spoke without complaining; rather expressing her willingness to care for and love her grandchildren and the love she received from them in exchange.

I was convinced of her motherly love but also confused. In most of our conversations she either talked about her devoted care and love for her grandchildren, and the hardships she experienced

raising them on a meagre budget, or described receiving respect and affection from the grandchildren. She also focused on how she understood her daughter's focus on her career, with the little time her daughter spent with her due to daughter's work or study abroad. However, she did not talk about how her daughter responded to her motherly devotion. She was ambivalent about her daughter. As I mentioned earlier, after I asked grandma Zhu if I could interview her daughter, she paused for a while before the story of her relationship with her daughter took a dramatic change.

The turning point for the family and Grandma Zhu was the family breakup due to her son-in-law's financial problems resulted from gambling. The house that Grandma Zhu used to live in with her grandchildren and the garden she farmed to support them while the daughter and son-in-law were away, was sold to pay his debts. Grandma Zhu felt emotionally disturbed:

> "Her [the daughter's] first husband gives everything away for gambling. Me? I gave everything I had to them, including all the money I saved before coming to Canada. Still, the son-in-law didn't stop gambling and even got worse. My daughter took all my money and even asked me for money to help her husband to pay off his debts. She is not my daughter. She pushed me to the limit forcing me to borrow money from my friends to help her husband out. I still remember, it was a rainy night, right here; he stood downstairs right in front of my window, waiting for my money. It was raining so hard. My daughter called for money. I could have been hard to them. No one would expect that they let my baby granddaughter call me crying over the phone, 'grandma, grandma please help my dad.' I couldn't bear to hear her crying. I raised them starting from cleaning up their bowel functions. How could I say no to my granddaughter?"

Not only was the relationship broken between the wife and her husband but also the relationship between the Granma Zhu and her daughter. The money she spent for her daughter and granddaughters became a continuing source of alienation and regret.

"Does your daughter still ask you for money?"

"No, she doesn't. She knows I have nothing left. The money I brought with me from China was the money I had earned from my business. I financed them to study abroad. I kept only a little for myself. However, they asked constantly for money. When I had nothing more to give, they stopped contacting me. They don't even bother to return a call." She contemplated for a moment in pain,

"Canada accommodates me, this is…." She was silent for two seconds, lowering her head, "too awful. I always wanted to write a book when I am not disturbed by pain and emotions."

The daughter moved to the city where she currently works and soon married her second husband. Grandma Zhu decided to stay in Vancouver. With the assistance of her friends and neighbours, she was able to find the seniors apartment and applied for it with the deposit money borrowed from her friends. She did not move to the apartment until her daughter's house was sold and planned to live in the apartment rather than move in with her daughter. Later, there were attempts from both daughter and mother to live together, but family conflicts centered on childcare intensified.

Not only was money an issue, the differing views over proper childcare generated conflicts between Grandma Zhu and her daughter's family, as she believes her new son-in-law's way leads to child neglect. For grandma Zhu, the proper care to a child is to be attentive to their needs, including feeding, cleaning, cooking, and serving. Love and affection are supposed to be absorbed with childcare. In Zhu's eyes, one's heart should be soft toward her children. She was furious at her second son-in-law's improper childcare, which often led to arguing and fighting. Granma Zhu was angered by her son-in-law's lack of attention to his two children. Rather than buying his children warm and decent clothing, his children had to endure the cold winter without warm clean clothes.

> "You didn't see how dirty the clothes of the two little children were. They are dirtier than beggars' clothes. My daughter bought clothes for them. No, those are not clothes to wear and keep the body warm. They are the clothes not to be put on the body but to be seen. I can't bear this. I took the clothes off, washed, sewed, and mended them for my two poor boys. I wouldn't say anything and let it go. I told my son-in-law sarcastically 'see, the hangers are full of clothes. What a clothes exhibition!' Of course, he hated to hear it'."

Feeding was another issue about which grandma is unhappy with her son-in-law. For Grandma Zhu, to be a mother or a father means to look after their children by feeding them with the best food they could possibly afford. She was disappointed to see that the two boys often had to eat leftovers and unhealthy food such as Pizza or canned food. One time she found rotten food stored in the refrigerator for days. She was so angry that she threw it all away. Her reaction infuriated her son-in-law making the relationship deteriorate.

Grandma Zhu was expected by her daughter and son-in-law to be a good Chinese grandmother - to maintain family harmony and love so as to help whenever she was needed. Simultaneously Granma Zhu wanted the personal freedom that she had in China, which was expected for a respected

as an elder. She demonstrated her independence when she decided not to move in with her daughter's family in another city. Her attitudes towards childcare are tremendously ambivalent. On one hand, her affection and attachment for the grandchildren continued and she offered help to the family when needed. On the other hand, she felt unfairly treated as free labour to offer help without appreciation or sometimes recognition from the family. And making it worse, she believed the family took advantage of her work, shunning parental responsibility. She was sad as she told me how much she hoped her daughter would not visit or call for she believed there was always a purpose. She knew the purpose of her daughter's attention was not caring for her, rather it was for the sake of her daughter and her son-in-law. Not paying attention to her mother is one of the reasons that Grandma Zhu believed that her daughter was unfilial and unqualified to be her daughter.

The triumph of conjugal ties over mother-daughter ties hurt Grandma Zhu's feelings and she believed it is one of the reasons that her daughter is unfilial. Grandma Zhu also believed her daughter was unfilial by obeying her husband rather than her mother. That obedience irritated the mother when her daughter took sides with her husband rather than her. Granma Zhu thought her daughter could readily argue and fight with her mother, while a gaze from her husband would make the daughter immediately submissive. It was the accumulated lack of care and respect for her grandmotherly sacrifice for her daughter's family that drained up all her savings, time, affection, and labour, making it difficult for her to maintain a close relationship that should be built on trust, care, and love. Nonetheless, the mother appears relieved saying that she was not sad anymore because she received more love, care, attention, and support from Canada, the Christian church, friends, and family back in China. She described with joy how her family members back in China showed their support by telling her they agreed on how unfilial the daughter was. They shared this opinion with other family members and friends.

5.2 Grandma Ding - Childcare: Good upbringing is moving out: parenting conflicts, motherly jealousy, and older mother's sacrifice

One of the challenges Chinese senior immigrants often face is the different ideal of childrearing practices when caring for their grandchildren. As mentioned previously, this was reported as a source of tension. Ding is a 74-year-old woman who currently lives with her spouse in the subsidized senior apartment and has two children, one son, and one daughter. The rapid urbanization in China and housing reforms, forced many families to live as nuclear families in most urban cities

in China. So, before coming to Canada, Grandma Ding lived with her husband in their state-allocated apartment in Kunming City in Yunan Province, which they obtained in 1978 under socialist policies. Her son moved out once he married and bought a new house to start his own family in Kunming City. She was pleased to see how independent her two children were for they did not take money from their parents for marriage. As to her daughter in Canada, Grandma Ding first came to visit in 2001 to help with the birth of her daughter's child, but she did not plan to stay permanently in Canada. In Canada, she struggled to make friends, she was unaccustomed to human connections that lack depth, she met few people, and she had a less colourful life. She was also unable to drive, lacked English language proficiency, and found the climate cold. Within six months, these factors drove her back to China where she had her own apartment, stable pension benefits, senior bus passes, and rich human relations – friends, colleges, and family. When she came to Canada for the second time in 2005, she decided to stay in Vancouver to take care of her first granddaughter and her newly born second granddaughter. She emphasized many times that she did not like moving to Canada, but did so under pressure from her daughter and out of her obligation as a mother to offer help to her child.

Grandma Ding developed an affective relationship with her granddaughters that she described as her accomplishment and it provided her with a sense of happiness. She stayed and continued to care for her two granddaughters and perform domestic work for the family. She spoke happily about how much fun she had with her two granddaughters during Christmas family dinner at her daughter's home, and showed me the photo of her granddaughters laying their legs on hers. Also, the granddaughters provided comfort and show their support whenever the mother argued with Grandma Ding, by telling her "grandma, grandma, don't worry. - Do not be afraid. You have me." She also described the attachment both showed for her when she left. She recounted a number of sentimental memories of how mutual affection developed between grandmother and granddaughters.

This affection and respect that the granddaughters showed was an indication of filial ethics within a family. However, the granddaughters' growing affection and attachment for their grandma gradually aroused the mother's jealousy. Grandma Ding believes that much of the granddaughters' attention, love, and respect were directed to their grandmother, which put their mother in second place within the family behind the grandmother. This, she believed created the tension between the two of them. The daughter complained that at dinner her daughters would only remember giving the first bite of the meal to the grandma rather than their own mother. They were also concerned whether grandma rather than their mother was satisfied with the food or not.

Realizing her daughter's jealousy, Grandma Ding started to think about what was best for her granddaughters. But beyond that, from her narrative, she believed that her home care was to some extent undervalued even by herself. She acknowledged that she had few resources to offer for the family in the return for the care and respect she wanted. As a result, she believed that she had to put up with her daughter's bad temper at her whenever there is a fighting between them. Moreover, with daughter's greater earning power and capabilities such as driving and English skills, Grandma Ding thought that her daughter, rather than herself could contribute most to the future of her grandchildren.

While receiving affection from the younger generation, and her generous domestic help to bring her happiness, it earned her respect and care from the daughter and son-in-law as well as the granddaughters. On the other hand, she realized her vulnerability as a senior person, who could only contribute minimal help. She laughed with bitterness.

> "They [granddaughters] treated me as if I were the greatest one who deserves all affection, honours, respect, and care. But what can this greatest person do? Driving, I can't drive. English, I can't speak English. It's their mother who will shoulder all the responsibility and costs in raising them, offering them opportunities and providing education for her children. Grandma is great but she is old. The mother plays the main role and grandma [is] just a sidekick. They [granddaughters] need to transfer their affection to their mother, knowing that only the mother would sacrifice and provide everything she could for her own children. I was afraid they would not listen to what their mother said and do what their mother told them to do."

Grandma Ding used this metaphor of role-playing to show the order of the caring relations, thus justifying the corresponding affection and respect that the granddaughters should devote to their mother. In addition, she acknowledged the affection should be forged and sustained through one's obedience to the primary care provider. If the mother does not have the necessary affection from her children, it will be hard for her to ask for obedience from the children. It is the mother, not the grandmother who has the abilities to create opportunities for the children's success and has to endure all the hardships to raise them until their adulthood.

Parental preferences for education, whether Chinese or Western, often led to tensions between the mother and the grandmother. According to Grandma Ding, Chinese education is based on hierarchy, discipline and control. This contrasts with the westernized education and parenting, which is more individualized, valuing independence, and often lacking in hierarchy. Ding gives an example

to clarify this point, “When a child falls down, Chinese parents would rush to the child and help this kid stand up. But my daughter, who is more westernized, would be unhappy to see what happen. What she would do is let the child stand up on its own. How can I do this to my kid seeing him or her cry in such pain?” She continued to explain that their differing approach to child education often confused the granddaughters and they would come to ask Ding whom they should listen to and whom to follow.

For the sake of her daughter's parental authority and the granddaughters' future, grandma Ding decided to move out without even discussing that step with her daughter, which led to a big fight. She explained that staying in the family would only bring more harm than good to herself, the granddaughters, and the daughter, but her leaving would solve the conflicts and tensions. Her daughter thought her mother wanted her freedom and therefore was willing to abandon the granddaughters who loved her so much. Grandma Ding believes that her daughter wanted more of her help to care for the granddaughters rather than respecting her desire for personal independence. Her daughter hoped her mother would stay two more years to care for the granddaughters until they went to high school, and yet the mother refused. Grandma Ding's daughter did not call her mother for half a year after Ding moved out.

5.3 Daughter-in-law's filial guilt and descending familism in Canada

The intergenerational reciprocity based on filial piety for a daughter traditionally ends with her marriage and restarts after her taking on the new role as a daughter-in-law. She cultivates gratitude and pays back the care debts to the mother-in-law and father-in-law. This indicates the change of loyalties from her father and brothers of her natal family, to her father-in-law and her husband.

Aunt Guan is the daughter-in-law of Grandma Fan and Grandpa Lin, who emigrated soon after they came to Canada under the Family Reunion program in the late 1990s. She now lives in a government-subsidized apartment in Vancouver. When she spoke of her decision to move abroad, Guan told me with an ambivalent sentiment that she neither regrets nor fully takes joy at her decision. She worked in an accounting position in a state-owned enterprise in China, commonly known as an "Iron Rice Bowl" job. These jobs provide life-long employment security and subsidized welfare benefits for individuals including benefits for education, medical resources, and pension plans. They mark one's career as a success and provide social mobility despite the rise of the neo-liberalized market economy. She came to Canada for a family reunion with her son and husband, but

according to her, her primary concern was to stay with her son. In her own words she said, "I live where my son lives and I go where my son goes. For me, that's to be a mother."

What I find interesting is not her deep attachment to her son, which is quite understandable, but the shift of a daughter-in-law's attention and intensive care from her parents-in-law to her son. Aunt Guan displayed great guilt towards her parents-in-law and paused for a moment when she spoke to me to contemplate what she would say. Her uneasy feelings of not being able to offer "time" to her parents-in-law incurred a sense of being unfilial as daughter-in-law.

Moving to Canada was imbued with hope, for her and her family that their only son could grow up receiving a better education that he would have in China. Yet moving abroad also meant giving up easy steady work and taking up a hard and menial job which consumed all her time. Aunt Guan described the job as "capitalist exploitative work". This exploitative work occupied her time, energy, and social space, and distanced her from the family. She took a deep breath several times and remained silent for few seconds before continuing to speak. She believed that her job on a chicken farm distanced her from the love of her husband, disconnected her from her son, and hindered her ability to fulfill her filial duties as a daughter-in-law toward her husband's parents.

When they first arrived in Canada, she routinely worked long hours per day. Both Guan and her husband worked on a chicken farm. Her husband took night shifts while she worked daytime. By the time she got up, her husband came back home. Yet before she got off from work, her husband had already gone to work. On one hand, working brought her a steady job and money for the family, and on the other, working around 15 hours per day meant she had little time for the family, let alone her own needs.

The jobs meant that they could start a family by having a house. The house meant a place of their own just like a tree that is deeply rooted in the soil, firm and secure. Renting a place not their own would be equivalent to a plant floating on the water, forever unsettled. Having a house of their own was one of their motives to work hard in order to settle and taking roots in a new soil. After they bought a house, but with a monthly mortgage to pay off, Aunt Guan and her husband had bigger plans for the future. Even though the future would be built upon their years of hard work and at the cost of social isolation, the future they were talking about was not a goal of personal prospectus; rather they wanted to save the money for the son's house and his marriage.

Aunt Guan thinks being a mother in Canada is different from being a mother in China. According to her, western mothers cultivate their children's independence so that their parental duties end when the children turn 18. She used a Chinese proverb to clarify what it means. In her understanding, to be a Chinese mother, "raising a son for a hundred years, in 99 of them a mother

often worries." She told me that the more she does when alive, the more she can offer her son - a comfortable life, and unlike their life were working was everything. What is more, being a mother, according to Aunt Guan, does not mean to be herself, placing her needs before others. A mother exists in order to care for her son, giving birth to him. Therefore, a mother offers selfless love and prioritizes the son's needs before hers and others. She could have learnt free English language courses provided in her community, but she rejected the offer because all she wanted to do was work. Extra hours were paid double. She could have reduced her working hours to develop her hobbies such as reading, but she did not because she thought it was better to earn more money as long as she is able to work. She could have participated in churches and the local community to make new friends, spending time with them on weekends, but she refused because she wanted to make money. She could have spent more time with her parents-in-law when they were in need, but she could not. That generated a constant source of guilt. At a time when her father-in-law was seriously ill and in need of someone to take him to the hospital, Aunt Guan thought I'd be the best person to be of help: I could speak English. Instead, she worked to provide for her son's future.

She knew it was hard for her to maintain both roles to be a good mother and a filial daughter-in-law. She took full responsibility for not being a good daughter-in-law because all of her sacrifices were for her only son and his future. Unable to fulfill dual role at the same time as primary caregiver to her mother-in-law and a loving mother to her only son, Aunt Guan has deep guilt feelings toward her aged parents-in-law.

Though Aunt Guan has unfilial feelings toward her parents-in-law, Grandma Fan and Grandpa Lin were not entirely upset. They were quite understanding of their daughter-in-law's and son's situation, knowing their life was not as easy as theirs. They praised their children's hard working because that is how modern life works. Grandma Fan and Grandpa Lin never complained once or indicated that their children were unfilial to them. For them, the children's filial devotion is not necessarily limited to materialistic return, children's filial feelings and emotions matter more than anything. However, Aunt Guan's work and her husband's work for the future benefit of their son were evidences of a generational shift, descending familism.

Chapter 6 A reconfiguration of filial piety between aged parents, family, and state

The stories recounted in the previous sections of this thesis primarily discuss parental devotion to the family and tensions and conflicts arising from their commitment to the family. However, Mandarin-speaking Chinese seniors have the agency to change their vulnerable and dependent status in the family through their engagement with wider networks beyond their immediate families. These other social relationships enable them to deal with difficult situations that emerged while co-resident with their children.

In this chapter, I will examine how families are reconfigured and how family relations are expressed and discussed by Chinese seniors as part of the transformation of the conceptualization and practice of filial relationships within the family.

6.1 Transforming filial transactions: from the family to the state

Traditionally, filial, reverent care, the obedience of youth, and filial sacrifice were reconfigured as interdependent, reciprocal relationships between seniors and children, which changed during the course of their lifetimes. Initially parents cared for their children when they were young, but the children cared for their parents in their old age. Throughout this relationship, Chinese parents, even as they became seniors, maintained authority and power. Relying on children is part of the Chinese tradition, and is premised on a hierarchy of age and gender. Parents commanded the respect of children and children who do not treat their parents with respect are unfilial.

However, the modern conditions both in China and in Canada have rendered Chinese seniors economically dependent on their children without the authority and power within the family. This transformation has made them dependant on their family for care and vulnerable because they lack the authority to command it. Among Chinese immigrant seniors to Canada this is especially true during the first years after they immigrate, when they are usually co-residing with their children who expect them to provide childcare, domestic labour, and perhaps even some income from work outside of the family, and they are not eligible for government programs for seniors.

In the initial years of co-residing with their families, many of Chinese seniors engaged in various kinds of unpaid and paid work and established ties beyond their immediate families through their paid work. Many Chinese seniors reconstruct personal ties with other Chinese migrant seniors,

with whom they shared the same experiences through their paid work such as blueberry picking, washing dishes at a restaurant. More importantly, through their social networks they rebuilt a community of their own in addition to their immediate family and learn about the government programs for seniors that they are eligible for after establishing permanent residency in Canada.

Through their social networks, many new senior immigrants learned about government-subsidized housing and immigration services at local churches and community centres. Both formal resources such as subsidized housing and financial assistance and informal resources provided by the government and community services helped to mitigate the precarious status of these Chinese seniors whose parental power declined within the family.

Government and community programs and services relieved families of some of the financial burdens of caring for seniors as they aged. These programs enabled seniors to move out without necessarily "earning filial care" from children or worrying too much about material and financial capabilities. By seeking out and enrolling in these programs these seniors were not passive recipients, but active agents strategically mobilizing formal and informal resources to renegotiate the individualistic values such as personal freedom or independence over family demands of homecare which could turn out to be exploitative and undervalued.

This transformation of financial relationships was explained by Grandpa Lin who noted that this new financial independence has also changed his ability to assess the respectful moral relationships between himself and his children.

> “It is hard to tell if your children are good or bad because you don't rely on them financially. In the past, it was "heavenly law and earthly justice" that your child served you when you were old. It was easy to tell if he was good or bad to you. You could tell by what he gave you and didn't give you and if the way he gave it was proper and respectful. Now, I don't need his money, I have enough. I have a pension from China and OAS income from Canada. I have money to buy food, services, and products that I need. And I can do it by myself. But now if you relied on them entirely, you would know if they are good to you or not.”

Grandpa Lin's words highlight the transformation of filiality. Reverent care, the dependent relationship between the older parents and children, changes with access to governmental support. In Canada, the state has taken over some of the financial responsibilities that families had before the seniors were eligible for government programs. While the seniors may lose status, the state's role in providing material support for parents encourages their independence and self-sufficiency.

The financial independence of elderly Chinese immigrants removes some of their dependence on their children. Many elderly people can independently buy what they need, accumulate savings, purchase treats for themselves from China or their hometowns, or even take a trip back to China. Some of them share a portion of their OAS income with their children's families.

Welfare services and resources are repackaged as a replacement of filial obligations. When I visited Grandma Ding, grandpa joked:

> "Finally you came to see us! You don't know how much I missed you. When I wanted to see you, you were not there. And my children were not either. I know you and my children are very busy. I was worried who else is going to help me if my family did not come. But my daughter is busy. Thanks to Canada. I feel loved by Canada. Canada gives love to old people. What contributions do I ever make to Canada? But Canada gives me everything. Canada helps me move when my children were not available. Canada is like our parents providing unselfish love to their children. What a loving parent! Canada!"

The Canadian government assisted with their relocation by finding them a place to live, setting a move-in date, and contracting with a moving company. The state is seen as a parent, *fumu guan* in the provision of care. Mothers and fathers hold such authority and power that would offer their children kindness and support, being attentive to their needs and growth. This notion reflects the vulnerability of elderly Chinese immigrants in Canada. The Canadian government helps to mitigate that vulnerability.

6.2 Modified filial piety

Though the Canadian government partially takes on some of the financial responsibilities of traditional filial obligations, the children continue to be responsible for creating intimate bonds of affection. Consequently, even when their children do not support them financially, parents do not necessarily think of their adult children as unfilial. Although Chinese seniors still expect children to value the actions that demonstrate their children's moral obligations in terms of emotion and companionship. Many of the children still provide limited material support for their parents. The support can take the form gifts of kitchen supplies, mineral water, food, household appliances, televisions, cellphones, and tablets. Some children also offer their parents small sums of money.

Offering physical help when necessary is still valued and emphasized as filial devotion to the older parents. Lack of it will lead to frustration and disappointment to older parents as demonstrated by Grandma Zhu's daughter's absence to help packing and moving.

Conjugal ties predominate, and many Chinese seniors I interviewed accepted the centrality of the nuclear family. In China, most of them had lived alone or with their spouses in similar family settings. In Canada, many of the seniors also changed the focus of their obligations when they no longer needed to live with their children and grandchildren. Assisting children and caring for grandchildren no longer dominated their relationships. Seniors not living with their children did not mean that children are unfilial. On the contrary, many of the seniors considered that it is preferable for parents and children stay out of each other's way. According to Grandma Fan and Grandpa Lin, living together leads to tension.

> “He [the son] watches the hockey all day. I prefer Chinese news. We can't live together. He works at night and comes during the day. His wife works in the day and comes at late night. Your grandma [Fan] makes dinner for the family. See, we are a family so I feel we should wait the family, at least the daughter-in-law to have dinner. But it would be too late. I am too hungry. I and your grandma [Fan] prefer bland food while my children love spicy. See? We can't live a life together [*yiqi guo rizi*].”

The modified filial piety for Chinese seniors is more based on demonstrations of respect for Chinese seniors' wishes such as freedom. Despite these changes, many elderly parents still emphasize the filial duties of their children in terms of attachment and affection. They see visits and phone calls as filial expressions of love and care. However, embedded in these offerings of affection are grandparents' longings for attention and respect. Chinese seniors were disappointed when they did not receive offers of help. Granma Zhu was saddened by her daughter's and son-in-law for their accumulated lack of care, respect and attention given to her such as constant fight and arguing with her, the lack of help and visits in her recent moving to new apartment, and their continual demands that she help the family. She suspects the agenda behind their calls and visits are not genuinely out of affection and care for their mother, but instead chances for them to ask her to make more sacrifices for the family. For Grandma Zhu, "mom" called by her daughter is a biological fact that can't be denied but the feeling and love attached to this word no longer exists. As she explained, “I raised her to a grownup, of course I deserved to be called mom by her. But the love and care that she should give to her mother is given to her husband and her own family. She only calls or visits with

her needs." This lack of attention and genuine feelings towards her by her daughter is deemed by Grandma Zhu as unfilial.

Also, some elderly immigrants have redefined filial expectations is in terms of "not placing the [financial] burden on the children", particularly those children who remain in China. Due to the distance, children who remain in China have few ways to show their filial respect except such as calls and visiting. It is unrealistic to expect support from children in China due to the changing reality of political economy and unnecessary in Canada.

6.3 Flexible family kinship in the context of migration

Economic and other practical considerations forced these migrant families to develop new kinship strategies, which lead to further changes in family organization. One of the practical considerations is housing expenses. Grandma Zhang and Grandpa Yue Came to Canada under the sponsorship of their son and lived with him for half a year. However, unlike other children, Zhang and Yue's son had no intention of buying an apartment or a house and would rather be a long-term renter in Vancouver. After Grandma Zhang and Grandma Yue received their OAS, they and their son decided to split up the household because the costs of living together were much higher than if they lived separately. Again, the availability of government financial support, which Grandpa Yue called "capitalist welfare", made this possible. Grandma Zhang and grandpa Yue did not think of their son as unfilial. Rather this arrangement was good for both sides. On one hand, they could have more space than if they stayed crowded together with their son. On the other hand, they understood that living together put too much of a burden on him. This understanding developed within an intergenerational relationship showing an element of modern filial piety (Yan 2016).

For some of these families, migration did not end with their move to Canada. Some families further maximized their economic gains by repeating the migration process. With Canadian welfare available to support older parents, some children moved to the United States for better salaries and lower taxes, leaving their elderly parents behind in Canada. Grandma Zhou lived in a subsidized apartment while her son and the family moved to the United State for better employment. She told me that one of the primary issues the family considered in moving to the US but leaving her in Canada was the free Medicare in Canada. This was especially important for her because her health condition was likely to decline. She felt that this was the best decision. It avoided placing a burden

on the family and she felt that it was necessity to save money for the family in order to support her grandchildren's education and future opportunities.

6.4 Loneliness and reduced intimacy

Though many parents acknowledge that it is a generous offer by their children to help them migrate to Canada, whether the intent of such an offer is sharing in accomplishments, the need for childcare, or the desire for better living conditions in the West, some Chinese senior immigrants expressed their ambivalence about migration and separation from old friends.

Loneliness is the constant topic among seniors. They often address their loneliness by talking about the memories of people in their hometown and their nostalgic laughter. They described the close ties they developed with their friends, relatives, and neighbours in their everyday lives. For example, one grandma told me that in China she often met her friends and relatives, and sometimes there were so many meetings, especially during festivals, that she wished she could take a break. Here in Canada, she finds more time for breaks than activities. As her health declines, she finds it more difficult to go out and meet new friends. Although many of the Chinese seniors participate in church and community activities, they describe this as "killing time" (dafa shijian) and "making friends" (jiao pengyou). An intimate human bond is not easy to find.

Another grandma showed her ambivalence to migration and loss of friends by saying, “What we can have in Canada we have in China, too, like public health care. He [her spouse] is a cadre so his whole family enjoys free health care services. Pensions in Canada - we have pensions in China, too.” Grandma continues, “but some things we don't have in Canada that we did have in China. Back in China, we had a bigger house, with bright and spacious rooms much better than this cramped apartment. It's tiny and old. Back there, we had friends and relatives. Here, who else do I have besides my son and his family?”

However, independence and distance between older parents and their adult children after the parents moved out of a shared household and into their own apartments do not necessarily entail a lack of closeness. Quite a few Chinese senior immigrants insisted that the physical distance created an emotional closeness that could have been lost or turned into tension if they had all lived under the same roof. On one hand, they see the move as a restoration of intimacy. Now they enjoy the weekly family reunions at which the adult children defer to their parents. On the other hand, this deference

can create emotional distance between the elderly parents from the rest of the family. Grandma Cui said,

> "Every time I went to my daughter's place, they treated me so well. My daughter took my bag after I entered. They served me tea and treats, took me out for dinner and offered me the first bite of the food, and later asked me if I wanted to have dessert. They treated me with great respect. They never get mad and are so welcoming when you come to their family. But you know, that kind of generous spirit and polite manner is for guests, not for the mother."

I asked, "Is that what a daughter is supposed to do for the mother?
She laughed,

> "When I stayed with them, taking care of her daughter, I wasn't treated in that manner. I am not saying they didn't serve me at all or ordered me around to serve them. But now it's politeness and etiquette. This is a host's hospitality reserved for guests. For the family, it is more casual and less formal."

The elements of filial piety that matter the most to parents are time and companionship. The lack of them often leads to frustration. One grandmother was proud to tell me that her son had taken her to a piano concert that he did not really enjoy. But his desire to make her happy meant a great deal to her. She described how filial her son had been at the concert, asking her whether she liked this piece or that. It was a sign of the reciprocal sacrifice that is an important part of filial respect.

Independent living indeed resolves some of the conflicts that arose when the generations shared a household. However, some elderly Chinese immigrants lament that their relationship with children appears to be too much like that between a guest and a host. In addition, children's lack of time upset Chinese senior migrants. The family dinner is timed due to fixed parking time: when the time is up, the meal ends and everyone leaves the table. One grandma told me, "I don't want them to come [to my place]. They rush to leave and leave a mess behind. I have to clean up and I am tired of doing it."

The children's rush to leave is disheartening to their parents, making them feel unimportant and neglected. When children had not come to see their parents for quite a while, the parents said they counted the days since their children's last visit. The most frequent complaints were, "My son stayed for a sip of tea." "They [my son and daughter-in-law] checked their watches all the time during dinner rather than checking on us to see if we enjoyed the food or not." Or "my son waited for me impatiently, urging me to be quick or else he would be late. I have a problem with my leg. I cannot

walk fast. But I do not want to waste his time either. His time is too precious. He is a nice son, but he is not patient with me and his father." While living in separate households reduced some tensions, it created new ones. In both settings, the seniors were concerned that their children would show them the respect that they deserved. By taking time, providing companionship and showing affection for their elderly parents, adult children created a new form of filial respect.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the changes to Chinese immigrants' understanding and practice of filial relationships. The transformations of reverent care have maintained the family values of reciprocity between generations, but have also increased the individual independence of both the Chinese senior migrants and their children. The availability of financial support by the provincial and Canadian governments has shifted the focus of reverent care from "care" to reverence, affection, and respect.

I preferred to reject the dualistic framework between the West and East, modernity and tradition in accounting for the modified practice of filial piety for Chinese families in Vancouver. I have considered the experiences of seniors in China and their experiences as immigrants to Canada. I have drawn attention to how the filial family values of reciprocity and intergenerational relationships have evolved due to the changing landscape of the political economy in China that stimulates migration and also affects the Chinese seniors' immigration experience. Specifically, I traced the continuity of values and the practical ruptures of family practices that happened during China's path to modernity. This transformation in China was marked by stages such as the demise of socialism and the rise of the market-based economy. This transformation modified the meaning of old age and retirement through changes in state policies, political ideology, developmental strategies and demographic reality. More egalitarian intergenerational and gendered relations emerged as a result of the demographic, economic, and social transformations in China. Weakened parental authority and power has placed Chinese seniors in precarious positions to secure care. It became increasingly difficult for Chinese seniors to obtain support and care either from the Chinese state or their families. In the new economically neoliberal environment in China, it has become common for Chinese seniors to need to earn respect and care from their children through sustained efforts such as domestic work, rather than simply assuming that their place in the family hierarchy entitled them to care.

China's open-door emigration policy of the 1990 that allowed upward social mobility through transnational migration generated a new expression of intergenerational reciprocity. Due to their elite status back in China, highly educated, economically and/or politically privileged, my participants did not consider their migration as a mere strategy to secure support that otherwise is relatively lacking in China. Some participants migrated to enjoy a good retirement in the west, based on the notion of sharing prosperity with their adult children. Many of my participants migrated to join their adult children and to become the primary caregivers within the family and manage family

obligations and reciprocity in the name of family tradition based on family devotion and motherly sacrifice. Though, such parental obligation and sacrifice is more emphasized according to my participants to the young generation rather than the other way around.

I have explored the ways in which older Chinese immigrants, before they have established permanent residence in Canada, negotiated their care needs initially by performing paid or unpaid work inside or outside the family. Later, after they became permanent residents eligible for formal and informal support provided by the Canadian government and local organizations, they again renegotiated relationships with their children's families. In the first stage, I have paid attention to the ways in which parental sacrifice under the umbrella of family values reinforced and rationalized Chinese senior immigrants' decision to emigrate, provide care work for their family, and endure other hardships in Canada.

In order not to place much financial burden on their families, many Chinese seniors participated in various paid and unpaid domestic work or service work before their dependent relationship shifted from children to Canadian government. However, as noted by Newendorp's (2017), care work performed by Chinese grandmothers in particular has not only economic value, it is also of sentimental and affective importance. This helped to compensate for the cultural devaluation of seniors from their traditional place of authority and respect. The intimate ties with grandchildren created meaning and purpose for Chinese seniors on one hand, and their parental sacrifice under the umbrella of family value reinforced elderly immigrants' rationalization of their decision to migrate on the other. During the time before they were eligible for government programs, many seniors also worked outside of the house, which extended their social ties.

Notwithstanding, care work put Chinese grandmothers at high risk of distress and exploitation, creating difficulties for grandmothers to deal with family conflicts and tensions. The unpaid care work in this sense further leads to a devalued position of Chinese seniors as they realize if their value and use is no longer valuable and useful to the family if their health declines or the family no longer needs grandmothers' parenting when grandchildren enter their adulthood. Chinese seniors find themselves more vulnerable to the loss of power and dignity within the family.

While the paid work outside family not only eased the financial considerations for both the family and the seniors themselves, it also helped seniors to rebuild a social community beyond their immediate family, connecting Chinese seniors to the wider society. Importantly, paid work outside of the home and the social networks it enabled informed them of the various informal and formal resources such as subsidized housing, free meals, church services, and etc. that are accessible to them. Benefiting from social ties with other Chinese senior migrants, my participants creatively

mobilized the formal and informal resources to deal with family conflicts and mitigate their devaluation and vulnerabilities.

I have focused my attention on the second stage where Chinese senior immigrants mobilise government and community welfare resources to deal with family conflicts and secure their personal needs for care and freedom. I have discussed the ways in which government programs enabled a shift in dependence from the family to the state, thus imbuing filial piety between older parents and their adult children with new meanings. Both formal resources such as subsidized housing and financial assistance, and informal resources provided by the community services helped them to compensate for their declining cultural status and to deal with family conflicts resulting from co-residence and childcare. Affordable subsidized housing not only satisfied some of my participants' needs for privacy and freedom, but also help grandmothers to deal with difficult family relations and cultivate self-reliance.

As the Canadian government assumed part of care responsibilities, mainly in materialistic assistance to Chinese senior migrants, the meaning of filial piety changed accordingly. Chinese seniors' dependence on the family for financial support was transferred from the family to the state. However, Chinese senior migrants still value the felt obligations from their children more in terms of emotion and companionship than material assistance from adult children. Independent living had its limitations. It can produce loneliness and human alienation, and reduced intimacy in family relationships. Nevertheless, despite these disadvantages filial relationships were maintained in most instances, based on reverent care, but changed from a focus on financial support care, to emotional support, affection, and respect.

Reflecting on the best site of elderly care, be it the family, the individual, or the state, Lamb (2009) argues that the care for the aged parents is locally, morally, socially, developmentally, and societally constructed (p. 267). In this thesis, I have demonstrated that the changing social and political situations in China and the social and governmental programs in Canada have created new ways for Chinese seniors and their families to express and perform their reciprocal intergenerational obligations of reverent care.

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