
**Highly Skilled Chinese Immigrant Women's Labour Market Marginalization in Canada:
An Institutional Ethnography of Discursively Constructed Barriers**

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ABSTRACT

Canada has been active in attracting highly-skilled, foreign-trained workers to overcome its labour shortage, facilitate its economic growth, and enhance its global competency. While promoting gender equality in the workplace and advancing women's labour market participation are ongoing focuses of Canada's attention, the arrival of an increased number of skilled immigrant women and their marginalized experiences in the Canadian labour market reflects a critical problem that the underuse of highly skilled immigrant women's professional skills might be a loss for both Canada and individual immigrants.

This research reveals the lived experience of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in the Canadian labour market, and analyzes how the barriers to their career restoration were constructed. It adopts Seyla Benhabib's weak version of postmodern feminist theory and Dorothy Smith's Institutional Ethnography methodology. Based on interview data with 46 highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, this research identifies these immigrant women's standpoint within the institutional arrangements and understands the barriers to their career restoration as discursively constructed outcomes. This research contends that the settlement services for new immigrants funded by the federal government fall short of meeting the particular needs of highly skilled immigrants who intend to find highly skilled jobs that match their qualifications. This research also makes recommendations for improving existing language training and employment-related settlement services in order to better assist highly skilled immigrants in using their skills to a larger extent.

Keywords: skilled migration, economic immigrants, Chinese immigrant women, labour market marginalization, settlement services

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Highly Skilled Chinese Immigrant Women’s Labour Market Marginalization in Canada: An Institutional Ethnography of Discursively Constructed Barriers

Chapter I Introduction

1. Background

In September 2015, I embarked on this doctoral research journey focusing on highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s career restoration experience in the Canadian labour market at the University of Ottawa. Before I chose this topic for my doctoral research, I had personally navigated a number of options to immigrate to Canada under its skilled immigration programs. From that time, I knew many highly skilled Chinese professionals who were, like me, eager to immigrate to Canada and were very optimistic about building their new careers in Canada. In 2014, I came to Canada as an international student. This gave me an opportunity to meet more highly skilled ¹ Chinese immigrants over the following years, and to gain a deeper insight into their struggles in their post-migration lives in Canada. This experience helped me to build my doctoral project, which studies the barriers to highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s career restoration in

¹ *Note:* in this research, I use the terms “professional” and “highly skilled” to describe the skill levels of immigrants and the jobs they work in. There is academic research criticizing the dichotomy of high and low skilled workers and jobs because jobs that are traditionally seen as low-skilled may also require professional skills. Please see, OECD, “Recruiting for Success: Challenges for Canada’s Labour Migration System” (November 2016), online:<<https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/recruiting-for-success-Canada.pdf>>. However, in the Canadian immigration system, there is still a clear boundary between high and low skilled workers and jobs based on its National Occupational Classification (NOC). In this research, highly skilled Chinese women participants used these terms interchangeably.

Canada. As I am a member of this researched group, I have an advantage in accessing highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. I also take up these immigrant women's position within the institutional arrangement as an entry point to uncover the structural inequalities by taking into account gender, class, race, ethnicity factors from a postmodern view.

Canada has presented itself as a nation built on immigrants.² Before the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous peoples lived in six main geographic areas in what is now Canada³ and they had the autonomy to occupy the land and organize themselves according to their culture and traditions.⁴ The contact between Indigenous peoples and European settlers in the 1500's was non-violent, characterized by peaceful trading and economic alliances.⁵ Nonetheless, a more critical analysis of these relations argues that trading with European settlers and traders led to over exploitation of resources, disruption to traditional trade, and exposure to alcohol and foreign disease, which render Indigenous peoples more vulnerable to colonial control.⁶ The situation of French and British settlers each allying with certain indigenous groups to compete for controlling land and access to resources changed in 1763 when France ceded its colonial territories to British settlers.⁷ With a growing demand for more land and property, European settlers began to perceive

² Note: Throughout the 17th century and much of the 18th century, European colonial authorities sent immigrants to Canada, taking lands and resources from indigenous peoples and excluding immigrants of non-European origins. Later, this racist immigration policy in the Canadian history has been changed. In the late 1960's, Canada began to privilege the selection of economic immigrants in constant reference to the gains of the human capital model, which enabled skilled workers of non-European origins to come to Canada. For Canada's modern immigration policy, please see Bob Birrell & Elizabeth McIsaac "Integrating Immigrants in Canada: Addressing Skills Diversity" in *From Immigration to Integration: Local Solutions to a Global Challenge* (Paris: OECD 2006).

³ Government of Canada, "First Nations in Canada", online:< <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1307460755710/1536862806124>>.

⁴ See, Rene Dussault & Georges Erasmus, *Report of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Canada Communication Group Publishing, 1996).

⁵ The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Fur Trade in Canada", online:< <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/fur-trade>> .

⁶ See, Chelsea Vowel, *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Issues in Canada* (HighWater Press, 2016) at 18, 152 and 155.

⁷ Government of Canada, "The Arrival of the Europeans: 17th Century Wars", online< <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/popular-books/aboriginal-people-canadian-military/arrival-europeans-17th-century-wars.html>>.

Indigenous peoples as obstacles to colonial expansion, and began to strengthen the colonial control over Indigenous peoples in the 1830's. The theory of promoting "civilization" among Indigenous peoples in Canada reflected how European settlers perceived European culture as superior to indigenous cultures, and they believed that indigenous peoples needed to be separated or assimilated.⁸ In the next 150 years, Canada systematically imposed discriminatory laws and policies to restrict Indigenous peoples' rights and titles, which traumatized many Indigenous peoples with forceful displacement and dispossession.⁹ Nowadays, although Canada has put in considerable effort to redress the inequalities, Indigenous peoples are still affected by the consequences of colonialization, including housing insecurity,¹⁰ food insecurity,¹¹ unemployment,¹² and mental health issues.¹³

The arrival of Chinese immigrants is another part of Canada's racialized and gendered state-building history, during which structural inequalities and oppressions were reproduced. The first recorded Chinese immigrants were a group of artisans working on a trade vessel, arriving at Vancouver Island in 1788.¹⁴ Earlier Chinese immigrants were mainly unskilled labouring men who came into Canada as gold miners in the 1850's¹⁵ and railway constructors in the 1880's¹⁶, and

⁸ See, Mark Francis, "The 'Civilizing' of Indigenous People in Nineteenth-Century Canada" (1998)9:1 *Journal of World History* 51-87.

⁹ Peters Evelyn & Juia Christensen, *Indigenous Homelessness: Perspectives from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (University of Manitoba Press, 2016) at 16.

¹⁰ See, Thomas Anderson, "Results from the 2016 Census: Housing, Income and Residential Dissimilarity Among Indigenous People in Canadian Cities", Statistics Canada, December 10, 2019.

¹¹ See, Michael Robidoux & Courtney Wade Mason, *A Land Not Forgotten: Indigenous Food Security and Land-Based Practices in Northern Ontario* (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2017).

¹² See, Kar-Fai Gee & Andrew Sharpe, "Aboriginal Labour Market in Canada: 2007-2011"(2012)Center for the Study of Living Standards, CSLS Research Report 2012-04; Michael Mendelson, "Aboriginal People in Canada's Labour Market Work and Unemployment, Today and Tomorrow"(March 2004) Caledon Institute of Social Policy.

¹³ See, Sarah Nelson & Kathi Wilson, "The Mental Health of Indigenous Peoples in Canada: A Critical Review of Research"(2017)176 *Social Science & Medicine* 93-112.

¹⁴ Marry Gough, *Historical Dictionary of Canada* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010) at 130.

¹⁵ Victor Lee, "The laws of Gold Mountain: a Sampling of Early Canadian Laws and Cases that Affected People of Chinese Ancestry" (1992): 21 *Man.L.J.* 301 at 301.

¹⁶ Marry Gough, *supra.* note 14.

Chinese immigrant women were usually the wives and daughters of these labouring men who followed them and worked in labour-intensive positions in Canada. The admission of Chinese immigrants was strictly limited from the 1880's to the late 1940's due to Canada's immigration laws that purposefully excluded Chinese immigrants.¹⁷ In 1967, Canada de-racialized their immigration policies, shifting instead to an emphasis on the potential economic production of immigrants, which prioritized skilled workers by adopting a universal point system to assess immigration candidates. Since then, an increased influx of highly skilled Chinese immigrants have arrived in Canada, and recent data shows that the number of Chinese immigrant women arriving as independent skilled workers sometimes exceeded the number of Chinese immigrant men in the past two decades.¹⁸

Although the number of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women has increased over time, they are still understudied. Migration research has historically paid less attention to women; in much of existing research, migration has traditionally been viewed as an activity that is dominated by men with immigrant women participating as passive followers.¹⁹ Highly skilled immigrant women are also likely to be understudied because immigrant women are typically not distinguished by their skills.²⁰ In this research, I focus on the employment-related barriers confronted by highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in Canada.²¹ These immigrant women were disadvantaged

¹⁷ *Chinese Immigration Act, 1885*, S.C. 1885, c. 71; *Chinese Immigration Act, 1903*. C. 8 S.6.

¹⁸ See, Immigration, Refuge, Citizenship and Canada (IRCC), Facts and Figures 2017: Immigration Overview – Permanent Residents, online:< <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/082f05ba-e333-4132-ba42-72828d95200b>>. For more recent data that has not been updated with the Facts and Figure, please check the *2018, 2019, and 2020 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration* released by the Government of Canada, see, for example, *2020 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration* (December 31, 2019) online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2020.html>>.

¹⁹ Jan Ryan, “Chinese Women as Transnational Migrants: Gender and Class in Global Migration Narratives” (2002)40:2 *International Migration* 93 at 106.

²⁰ Chieh Hsu, “Germany’s Integration Politics in Practice: Lived Realities of Chinese-speaking Skilled Female Family Migrants” (2020)0:0 *Migration Studies* 1 at 3.

²¹ *Note*: mentioned in detail in the subsequent chapters.

particularly when they intended to find highly skilled jobs matching their pre-migration qualifications and experience.

In this research, many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women reported that they were compelled to make quick cash during the initial years of arrival.²² Some immigrant women remained in these positions for their entire careers in Canada.²³ Other immigrant women might eventually find ways to return to highly skilled careers, but not necessarily in the areas that they were originally trained to enter or intended to work in.²⁴ Only very few highly skilled Chinese immigrant women managed to work in their initially intended areas or even to further developed their careers in Canada.²⁵ Their experiences posed thought-provoking questions: why does Canada show its great desire to attract and to welcome economic immigrants, but leave these highly skilled immigrants in prolonged underemployment or unemployment once they are admitted to Canada? Why are the government-funded settlement services ineffective in helping them to find commensurable jobs?

Identifying the barriers to highly skilled immigrants' career restoration and exploring measures to reduce these barriers are consistent with Canada's policy intention of using immigrants' skills to enhance Canada's global competency.²⁶ Canada has invested great effort in developing immigration policies to attract qualified immigrants, in facilitating their smooth transition for settlement, and in understanding various impacts these policies have on immigrants. These efforts have earned Canada a good reputation worldwide as a diverse, tolerant and

²² See, my interview data with Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 20, 22, 23, 30, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, and 44.

²³ See, my interview data with Participants 2, 8, 11, 13, 19, 20, and 23.

²⁴ See, my interview data with Participants 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 21, 22, 30, 34, 35, 36 and 42.

²⁵ See, my interview data with Participants 1, 4, 14, 16, 17, 18, 29 and 41.

²⁶ See, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, "Immigration for a Competitive Canada: Why Highly Skilled International Talent is at Risk", (January, 2016) at 3.

multicultural nation that is welcoming to immigrants.²⁷ Statistic data shows that Canada steadily increases the overall admission of immigrants in recent years with economic immigrants being a major part of it.²⁸ Two thirds of immigrants are admitted through economic immigration programs.²⁹ As the localized labour market shortage still impacts the economy in many regions across Canada,³⁰ attracting skilled immigrants and developing the economic potential of these skilled immigrants is an important national strategy of Canada. With the arrival of more highly skilled immigrant women who have strong abilities to engage in paid employment, Canada would benefit from taking more interest in developing the economic potential of these skilled immigrant women.

The research makes contributions in the following aspects. First, this research makes empirical contributions by interviewing 46 highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, who mainly resided in Ottawa, Ontario and Edmonton, Alberta in Canada. Although experiences of these immigrant women, living and working mainly in two mid-sized cities, cannot be generalized across Canada, their lived experiences effectively illustrate how highly skilled Chinese immigrant women access highly skilled jobs in the labour market and how they use or resist the federally funded settlement services in Canada. Second, this research reveals the gap between what these immigrant women's settlement needs actually are and how the federal government of Canada understands

²⁷ Bob Birrell & Elizabeth McIsaac "Integrating Immigrants in Canada: Addressing Skills Diversity" in *From Immigration to Integration: Local Solutions to a Global Challenge* (Paris: OECD 2006).

²⁸ Government of Canada, "CIMM- Immigration Levels Plan 2020-2022", online:<
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/committees/march-12-2020/immigration-levels-plan.html>>.

²⁹ See, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, "Immigration for a Competitive Canada: Why Highly Skilled International Talent is at Risk", (January, 2016) at 3. More specific information could be found in Canada's Immigration Levels Plan that is made by the Government of Canada each year. For example, the 2021-2013 Immigration Levels Plan can be seen at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2021-2023.html>.

³⁰ Andreea Bourgeois, "Immigration and Small Business: Ideas to Better Respond to Canada's Skills and Labour Shortage" (2006) Canadian Federation of Independent Business at 10.

these immigrants' needs. While most highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in this research reported that finding highly skilled jobs was their primary concern after migration, this settlement need was not fully reflected in the mandate of the settlement programs funded by the Canadian federal government. Third, this research focuses on two major types of settlement services funded by the federal government, and makes policy recommendations to improve language training and employment-related services. My general recommendations suggest ways to include employment-oriented services for highly skilled immigrants while considering cultural and gender sensitivity. My specific recommendations for the language training services suggest more flexible ways for immigrants to take language placement tests and for language assessors to take overall consideration of immigrants' test results and other qualifications. My specific recommendations for employment-related services discuss expanding the publicity of existing services for immigrants, ensuring clients' privacy and confidentiality, and maintaining stable funding for operating certain service programs and retaining experienced community workers to help highly skilled immigrants.

My feminist research adopts a postmodern lens to understand how barriers to highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's post-migration career restoration are discursively constructed within institutional arrangements.³¹ Highly skilled Chinese immigrant women are situated within a complex interplay of gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality. The past decades have witnessed an increase in academic studies which enrich migration research by bringing an intersectional lens

³¹ Please see more discussion on postmodernism in the next section of this chapter.

(e.g. gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality) to the academic analysis.³² The following parts explain how these identities interact to impact highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's labour market experiences in Canada.

1.1. Gender Gaps in Accessing Employment Opportunities

Canada has a long-standing commitment to gender equality,³³ which is an important part of Canada's constitutional framework and fabric under section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* about the prohibited grounds of discrimination.³⁴ In Canada, gender inequality in the workplace has been an ongoing focus of government attention, and a variety of strategies and resources have been developed over time to advance women's participation in the labour market.³⁵ Statistics Canada reports that, in Canada, in 2007, about 29.3% of all working women over the age of 15 worked in retail sectors, and an additional 27% women worked in business, finance, and administrative occupations.³⁶ Another report reveals that, in 2020, only 28.6% of senior management positions in Canada were occupied by women, which contrasts with the high proportion of men in these positions at 71.2%.³⁷ The ratio of women to men in middle management occupations becomes more even, but men are still overrepresented compared to women in taking managerial positions.³⁸ Not only are occupational structures gendered, a gender

³² Yvonne Riano, Nadia Baghdadi & Doris Wastl-Walter, "Social Integration and Social Exclusion of Skilled Immigrant Women from Countries outside the European Union" (2006) Final Report, Politic, Geography and Gender Studies, Geographic Institute, University of Bern 1 at 8.

³³ OECD, "Gender Equality in Canada: Mainstreaming, Governance and Budgeting", online:< <https://www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/Gender-Equality-in-Canada-Highlights.pdf>>.

³⁴ *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, s 8, Part 1 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, being Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982* (UK), 1982, c 11.

³⁵ Government of Canada, "Women and the Workplace – How Employers can Advance Equality and Diversity – Report from the Symposium on Women and the Workplace", online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/women-symposium.html#h2.1>>.

³⁶ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, online: < <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/2008001/sectione/e-female-femme-eng.htm>>.

³⁷ Statistics Canada, "Proportion of Women and Men Employed in Management Positions, Annual", online: < <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410033503>> .

³⁸ *Ibid.*

wage gap also exists with statistical data from 1998 to 2018 showing that women earned \$4.14 (or 13.3%) less per hour, on average, than men in Canada.³⁹ Considering the existence of these gaps, Canada commits to offering opportunities to narrow the gender gap in terms of the share of women in the paid workforce, the kinds of positions and occupations that women work in, and the wage that women receive, in comparison to men.

The increased influx of highly skilled immigrant women as independent skilled workers poses new challenges to achieving gender equality in the workplace. Whilst gender inequality in the workplace impacts both Canadian-born and immigrant women, the disadvantages for foreign-born and racial minority immigrant women compared to Canadian, non-racialized, working men are greater.⁴⁰ Immigrant women's labour activity is likely to be seen as less economically relevant,⁴¹ and they are more likely to be marginalized when they try to engage in paid employment.⁴² However, "highly skilled" immigrants may have slightly better long-term prospects than their immigrant peers. For highly skilled immigrant women, a promising pattern revealed by previous research is that "[u]niversity-educated [immigrant] women start at relatively low levels of participation and wages but experience substantial improvements over the years."⁴³ In their effort to improve job quality over time, they usually need to tackle significant difficulties that are

³⁹ Rachelle Pelletier & Martha Patterson, Statistics Canada, "The Gender Wage Gap in Canada: 1998 to 2018", online: < <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019004-eng.htm>>.

⁴⁰ Monica Boyd & Jessica Yiu, "Immigrant Women and Earnings Inequality in Canada" in Agnew Vigay, ed, *Racialized Migrant Women in Canada: Essays on Health, Violence and Equity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) at 209.

⁴¹ Alicia Adserà & Ana Ferrer, "Occupational Skills and Labour Market Progression of Married Immigrant Women in Canada" (2016) 39 *Labour Economics* 88 at 88; Monica Boyd & Elizabeth Grieco, "Women and Migration: Incorporating Gender into International Migration Theory" (2003) Center for the Study of Population. Working Paper WPS 98-139 ISSN 0740-9095 at 3.

⁴² Canadian Women's Foundation, "Fact Sheet: Women and Poverty in Canada", online:< <https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Facts-About-Women-and-Poverty.pdf>>.

⁴³ Alicia Adserà & Ana Ferrer, *supra*. note 41 at 88.

particular to immigrant women in the Canadian labour market.⁴⁴ To give an example, work interruption has been proven to have negative impacts on employment outcomes;⁴⁵ immigrant women are more likely to experience work interruption than immigrant men. One reason for these interruptions is often rooted in inadequate support for immigrant families, as much of the childcare work is loaded onto immigrant families, and immigrant women typically have to absorb this work in addition to other responsibilities.⁴⁶ In some cases, immigrant women sometimes have no other choice than to take whatever kind of jobs are accessible to them.⁴⁷

Law and policy shaped around the assumption of women's dependency compel immigrant women to join low-skilled sectors,⁴⁸ and this mismatch falls short of developing immigrant women's full potential by using their professional skills to contribute to the economic growth.⁴⁹ Gender gaps in the labour market decrease the efficiency of the labour force.⁵⁰ Ensuring gender equality to a larger extent guarantees the better use of skills of immigrant women, which also greatly benefits Canadian society. Therefore, addressing gendered inequality in the Canadian labour market is a key step towards equality in Canadian society; integrating highly skilled women immigrants into the Canadian labour market with jobs that match their qualifications is an important factor in this process.

⁴⁴ Daniela Mello, "Wage Gap Between Immigrants and Canadian-born: The Impact of Immigration Status and Post-secondary Education", online:<
<https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/32375/1/ALVES%20MELO%20E%20SILVA%2C%20Daniela%2020151.pdf>> at 20.

⁴⁵ Melissa Moyser, "Measuring and analyzing the gender pay gap: A conceptual and methodological overview" (2019) *Studies on Gender and Intersecting Identities*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 45-20-0002.

⁴⁶ See, Guida Man & Elena Chou "Transnational Familial Strategies, Social Reproduction, and Migration: Chinese Immigrant Women Professionals in Canada" (2020)26:3 *Journal of Family Studies* 345–361.

⁴⁷ Canadian Women's Foundation, "Fact Sheet: Women and Poverty in Canada", online:<
<https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Facts-About-Women-and-Poverty.pdf>>.

⁴⁸ Kathleen Lahey, *Women and Employment: Removing Fiscal Barriers to Women's Labour Force Participation*, (Ottawa: Status of Women Canada, 2005) at 12.

⁴⁹ Umesh Chandra Pandey & Chhabi Kumar, *SDG5- Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2009) at 23.

⁵⁰ Romina Kazandjian, "Gender Equality and Economic Diversification" (2019)8:4 *Social Sciences* 118 at 118.

1.2. Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Causes Career Disadvantages

Chinese immigrant women are an important population in terms of their visibility in Canada. Ethnic Chinese people are the second largest visible minority group with a population of over 1,324,700 in Canada.⁵¹ This group makes up 21.1% of the visible minority population and 4% of the total population in Canada.⁵² Whilst ethnic Chinese are not necessarily newcomers to Canada, the increasing influx of Chinese immigrants makes China one of the leading source countries of immigrants to Canada. From 2018 to 2019, China has always been among the top 3 source countries of permanent immigrants, with between 19,534 to 34,114 permanent residents admitted to Canada every year, accounting for about 9% of total permanent immigrant admission.⁵³ The same source of data also shows that the number of Chinese immigrant women usually exceeds that of Chinese immigrant men.⁵⁴ Highly skilled Chinese immigrant women are a sizable ethnic group in Canadian society, which constitutes one of Canada's largest immigrant populations that is of great research value.

Race and ethnicity discrimination may cause highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's labour market disadvantages directly or indirectly within the discursively-constructed institutional arrangements. Research has revealed that skilled job applicants with Asian (including Chinese) names are less likely to receive a call for an interview, and the disadvantages in smaller organizations are greater.⁵⁵ To give another example, as I will mention in Chapter II, Canadian

⁵¹ Statistics Canada, "Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada", online:<
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm>>.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Supra. note 18.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Rupa Banerjee, Jeffrey Reitz & Phil Oreopoulos, "Do Large Employers Treat Racial Minorities More Fairly? An Analysis of Canadian Field Experiment Data" (2018) 44:1 Canadian Public Policy 1 at 1. For similar results in other countries, please see Frances McGinnity & Peter Lunn, "Measuring Discrimination Facing Ethnic Minority Job Applicants: an Irish Experiment" (2011) 25:4 693-708; Lei Lai & Linda Babcock, "Asian Americans and Workplace Discrimination: The Interplay Between Sex of Evaluators and the Perception of Social Skills (2013) 34:3 Journal of Organizational Behavior 310-326.

employers may de-value educational degrees received from non-European countries, such as degrees received from Asia,⁵⁶ which may result in fewer employment opportunities for Asian immigrants. In highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's job search practice, race and ethnicity discrimination may operate as barriers that impede them from accessing desirable employment opportunities.

1.3. Class Mobility During the Migration Processes

Migration can have a deep, negative impact on the income of immigrants as compared to their earning power in their home countries.⁵⁷ Chinese immigrants to Canada have historically been labourers; however, more recent Chinese immigrants (including women) coming to Canada are highly-skilled, highly-educated professionals.⁵⁸ Research estimates that around two thirds of Chinese immigrants are admitted as economic immigrants with skills,⁵⁹ and as mentioned above, there are more Chinese immigrant women coming to Canada than Chinese immigrant men.⁶⁰ In this research, all of my women participants have held highly skilled jobs before immigrating to Canada, most of them have university degrees, and some were even in managerial positions before immigrating to Canada. Women's labour force participation rate in China is as high as 70%; immigrant women with higher rates of labour force participation prior to immigration are more

⁵⁶ Shibao Guo, "Difference, Deficiency, and Devaluation: Tracing the Roots of Non-Recognition of Foreign Credentials for Immigrant Professionals in Canada"(2009) 22:1 Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 37-52.

⁵⁷ See, Shahram Azhar, "Class Analysis of the Experience of Migration during the Partition of India" (2020)43:3 South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies 407-428.

⁵⁸ Tina Cui, John Flanders & Kelly Tran, "Chinese Canadians: Enriching the Cultural Mosaic" (March 2005), online:< <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/11-008-X20040047778>>.

⁵⁹ Kenny Zhang, "Chinese in Canada and Canadians in China: The Human Platform for Relationships between China and Canada", in *The China Challenges: Sino-Canadian Relations in the 21st Century*. online:< <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt1ch77rj.17.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5f0b00d15a3a67fdc95e4a99d2a7e055>>.

⁶⁰ *Supra. note 18.*

likely to be “career-oriented”.⁶¹ Thus, a great number of Chinese immigrant women have high expectations for their career development and endeavor to turn their high human capital to their advantage soon after arriving in Canada.

With their high qualifications at the time of arrival, these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women need additional support to activate their previous experiences in the Canadian local labour market. However, in practice, these Chinese immigrant women encounter significant barriers to access effective support. Although economic immigrants must bring a certain amount of settlement funds with them to Canada, these skilled immigrants typically have to quit their jobs in China and remain in prolonged financial insecurity in Canada. These financial difficulties compel immigrant women to work in the most accessible positions, mostly low-skilled labour, to make quick cash in order to cover the basic family expenses, and leave them with few resources to improve their own qualification, such as paying for private language classes.⁶² Their situation as new immigrants with great difficulties in integrating into the local market contradicts their previous status as highly skilled professionals who had stable jobs that brought financial security in China.

2. Chapter Arrangement

Chapter I provides an overview of this research. Following this brief overview, I provide a literature review of several important topics that have been the subject of existing research, which can help me further explore my research questions. The literature review begins by highlighting the overarching concern about the absence of women’s voice in migration practices and academic research. Following this discussion, Chapter II further discusses immigrant women’s

⁶¹ Frank Kristyn & Feng Hou, “Source-Country Female Labour Force Participation and the Wages of Immigrant Women in Canada”, online: < file:///Users/chenwang/Desktop/2015+Sourcecountry_femal+Date=[2020-11-02].pdf> at 8.

⁶² Mehrunnisa Ali, Elaine Frankel & Patricia Corson, *Listening to Families: Reframing Services* (Toronto: Chestnut Publishing Group, 2019).

marginalization in the Canadian labour market, which can be broken into several important sub-topics that include deskilling, inadequate local language proficiency, and non-recognition of foreign credentials and foreign work experiences. Existing academic literature has set up a concrete foundation for me to analyze further.

Chapter III discusses the theoretical and methodological framework that I follow to conduct this research, and it is divided into three parts. In the first part, I begin by clarifying several relevant terms that conceptually tie Seyla Benhabib's weak version of postmodern feminist theory⁶³ and Dorothy Smith's Institutional Ethnography (IE) methodology⁶⁴ together. To give an example of their common ground, Benhabib argues for the necessity of maintaining women's subjectivity in studying their discursively constructed experiences, and Smith also considers it as important for researchers to precisely locate the standpoint of women.⁶⁵ Postmodern feminist theory also shares interests with IE in discussing the notions of text, language, discourses, and power relations, but they also understand it differently. For instance, Smith understands discourse as an organizer of people's actual experience, which differs from postmodern understandings of discourse as an underlying deep structure of the human mind that governs particular social relations.⁶⁶ In Part II, I explain how I proceed with this research under the guidance of IE methodology. I analyze these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's experiences in local settings to identify their standpoint in the discursive practices. I then identify some puzzling events that reflect how institutional processes shape these immigrant women's experiences. The final step is to explore the textually

⁶³ See, Seyla Benhabib, et al. *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995) at 20.

⁶⁴ See, Dorothy Smith, *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2005).

⁶⁵ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography* (Toronto: Higher Education University of Toronto Press, 2008) at 40.

⁶⁶ Diaz-Bone, "The Field of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis: Structures, Developments and Perspective" (2008)33:1 *Historical Social Research* 7 at 10.

mediated ruling relations that determine how things work. In this part, I also provide a detailed description of the specific steps that I followed to conduct this research.

In the next three chapters, I draw on the experiences of my research participants to discuss the major barriers experienced by highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in their career restoration respectively. In Chapter IV, I focus on the discursively constructed immigration categories and argue that, regardless of the immigration categories that many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women were admitted through, most of them intended to use their skills after migration, and they commonly encountered barriers to their highly skilled career restoration in Canada.

In Chapter V, I focus on the impacts of language barriers on these immigrant women's job search outcomes. Highly skilled Chinese immigrants who do not already speak English or French are comparatively disadvantaged in the Canadian labour market where local language proficiency is heavily relied on in the job application process. Many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women do not have the opportunities to demonstrate their substantive skills to employers due to the language barrier. Moreover, the government-funded settlement services that aim to help them improve language skills fall short of meeting their employment-oriented learning needs. Many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women report their experiences of dropping out of this service.

In Chapter VI, I focus on employment-related settlement services and highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's job search outcomes in Canada. I analyze why many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women remain distant from the employment-related settlement services that they could potentially benefit from after immigration. Multiple reasons can be found to explain these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's unfamiliarity with the government-funded services. For instance, they may feel embarrassed to seek assistance, lack familiarity with Canada's settlement

services framework, or be preoccupied with other family responsibilities. I compare the experiences of four women participants to reveal whether making use of settlement services influenced their job search outcomes in Canada. However, I also explore another question: why are these women participants rarely able to return to the same level in their previous professions even after using these employment-related settlement services? This question guides me to identify a lack of funding dedicated to developing responsive settlement programs and to maintaining experienced community workers to better assist highly skilled Chinese immigrant women.

In the final chapter, I bring together previous discussions and highlight my key research findings. I suggest ways for Canada to improve current language training and employment-related settlement services to better meet highly skilled immigrants' employment-driven learning needs, with the voices and experiences of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women being represented. The final part of this chapter also mentions the limitations of this research, as well as pointing out the directions for future research.

Chapter II Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of academic literature in relation to highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's post-migration experiences and concerns. Previous studies have set up a concrete foundation for me to continue the discussion on the barriers against racialized immigrant women's labour force participation in host societies.⁶⁷ Further studies on how the particular group of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women experience struggles for the restoration of their highly skilled careers in Canada are still needed.

Between 2015 and 2021, I have reviewed the English-language literature on topics that relate to highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's lived experiences in Canada. Most of the literature pertains to Chinese immigrants' migration experiences in the majority-Anglophone provinces outside Quebec, therefore the results of this research could not be extrapolated across Canada.⁶⁸ Upon reviewing this literature, I have also identified research gaps in various aspects that need to be further explored for us to gain a deeper understanding of the unique experience of this group of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. To be more specific, my research contributes to the current immigration scholarship by giving visibility to several under-researched topics of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's post-migration experiences in Canada, such as their higher risk of underemployment or unemployment and limited access to effective settlement services.

⁶⁷ Please see a number of essays published collectively in Rita Simon, ed, *Immigrant Women* (New York, Routledge, 2001).

⁶⁸ *Note:* 45 out of the 46 Chinese women participants speak English as their second language because foreign language education in China primarily teaches students English, but not French. Only 1 of the 46 women participants learned French by paying for private lessons in order to meet the requirements of a Quebec immigration program.

I explain these topics from a feminist lens. This research reveals the processes during which these aforementioned aspects constitute highly skilled Chinese immigrant's marginalization in the Canadian labour market. This research also contributes to revealing specific barriers that led to highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's marginalization. I examine the settlement services funded by the Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and argue that these policies fall short of meeting the actual needs of these immigrant women. A lack of consideration for the particular situations of this disadvantaged group of immigrants contributes to their marginalization in the Canadian labour market.

To understand these topics, it is essential to review literature that covers several relevant aspects. I begin by reviewing the feminist literature that reveals the absence of women's voices in migration research, which also relates to more specific topics including immigrant women's labour market marginalization, inadequate language skills, and the discursively constructed immigration categories. This chapter provides an overview of the literature on each topic.

1. The Absence of Immigrant Women's Voices

Researchers began to realize that immigrant women have often been undertheorized in mainstream migration scholarship in the 1980's.⁶⁹ Boyd and Grieco argue that early migration theories often "[fail] to adequately address gender-specific migration experiences" and leave women nearly invisible as independent immigrants.⁷⁰ An important reason is that transnational migration has historically been initiated by economically motivated men with immigrant women accompanying or following at a later date as dependent family members.⁷¹ Women have been

⁶⁹ Paul Boyle & Keith Halfacree, eds, *Migration and Gender in Developed World* (London: Routledge, 1999) at 26.

⁷⁰ Monica Boyd & Elizabeth Grieco, *supra*. note 41.

⁷¹ Thobani Sunera, "Sponsoring Immigrant Women's Inequalities" (1999)19:13 *Canadian Woman Studies* 11 at 11; Youna Kim, *Transnational Migration, Media and Identify of Asian Women: Diasporic Daughters* (New York, London: Routledge, 2011) at 34.

traditionally regarded as less likely to participate in economic migration due to their lack of sufficient skills for the labour market.⁷² As mentioned in previous literature, migration scholarship has intrinsically neglected the lived experiences and the viewpoints of immigrant women, which reflects a masculine bias that minimizes women's voices.⁷³ Research also indicates that various types of gender discrimination are derived from the stereotype of equating men to the general and women to the specific population.⁷⁴ Although we have observed an increased number of women over time, the voices of immigrant women are still being continuously excluded from patriarchal accounts of the world.⁷⁵

Situating this problem of the absence of immigrant women's voices in the larger context of the feminist movement, this research shares the ultimate goal of all feminist advocacy in alleviating women's inequality by bringing women's voices from the margin to the center.⁷⁶ There is extensive research sustaining this foundational feminist goal by arguing that law only addresses "male conception of problems" and adopts "male objective and neutral methods of analysis".⁷⁷ Over time, several branches of feminism have been developed to bring the missing voices of immigrant women to light from different angles.

Liberal feminism focuses on the "sameness" between men and women to reject the unequal distribution of rights and opportunities for women and men in public spheres.⁷⁸ Radical feminism

⁷² Monica Boyd & Elizabeth Grieco, *supra*. note 41 at 3.

⁷³ Debra Delaet, "Introduction: The Invisibility of Women in Scholarship on International Migration" in Gregory Kelson & Debra Delaet, eds, *Gender and Immigration* (Washington: New York University Press, 1999) at 1; Patricia Pessar, "Women, Gender, and International Migration Across and Beyond the Americas: Inequalities and Limited Empowerment" UN/POP/EGM-MIG/2005/08 (28 November 2005) at 8.

⁷⁴ Monica Boyd & Elizabeth Grieco, *supra*. note 41 at 1.

⁷⁵ See Maria Lugones & Elizabeth Spelman "Have We Got a Theory for You: Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for the Women's Voice" (1983)6:6 *Women's Studies International Forum* 573-581.

⁷⁶ Daniel Ortiz, "Feminisms and the Family"(1994-1995) 18 *Harv.J.L& Pub. Pol'y* 523 at 523

⁷⁷ Lucinda Finley, "Breaking Women's Silence in Law: The Dilemma of the Gendered Nature of Legal Reasoning" (1989) *Notre Dame L. Rev.* 886 at 886.

⁷⁸ See, John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2000).

contests liberal feminism's assertion of sameness, and highlights the fundamental "differences" between men and women so as to discourage women from behaving like men.⁷⁹ Intersectional feminism criticizes the limits of the single axis notion of identity and considers how multiple identities interplay with gender to exacerbate racialized women's marginalization.⁸⁰ Intersectional feminism has broadly coincided with the "postmodern turn" in the sense that our social reality can be taken as intersectionally constructed.⁸¹ Postmodern feminism challenges the conventional understanding of identity as a fixed or pre-determined status, which argues that "woman is a gendered subject position which legal discourse brings into being" and rejects the pre-existence of marginalized identities that contribute to women's subordination.⁸²

These branches of feminist legal theory take different approaches to highlight the problem of missing women's voices in patriarchal social structures. In this research, I mainly employ Seyla Benhabib's weak version of postmodern feminist legal theory to explore how different types of barriers impeding highly skilled Chinese immigrant women from developing professional careers have been constructed in Canada. Drawing upon the postmodern feminist view, social activities are structured by discursive practices that are organized by power relations in our society.⁸³ Postmodern feminism encourages me to consider immigrant women's marginalization from women's reported experiences and also to connect their experiences with the dominant discursive practices in our society. As Joan Scott notes, feminist advocates mean not to "reverse the old

⁷⁹ Cathrine MacKinnon, "Difference and Dominance: On Sex Discrimination", in Katharine Bartlett & Rosanne Kennedy, eds, *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991) at 382.

⁸⁰ See Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989) 1 U of Chicago Legal Forum 139-167.

⁸¹ Leena Alanen, "'Intersectionality' and Other Challenges to Theorizing Childhood" (2016)23:2 *Childhood*157 at 157.

⁸² Carol Smart, "The Woman of Legal Discourse" (1992)1 *Social & Legal Studies*29 at 34.

⁸³ See, Marxine Eichner, "On Postmodern Feminist Legal Theory" (2001) 36:1 *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 1-77.

hierarchies or confirm them”, but to reformulate the language and discourse so as to create a more gender-neutral environment at its source.⁸⁴

2. Immigrant Women’s Labour Market Marginalization

Previous research has mentioned immigrant women’s marginalization in the workplace in Canada from various perspectives.⁸⁵ Chui in a Statistics Canada report found that the employment rates of immigrant women have been lower than those of Canadian-born women.⁸⁶ Premji et al revealed that, although immigrants are more likely to be university-educated than their native counterparts, immigrant women often experience elevated rates of underemployment or unemployment, or being over-represented in precarious jobs.⁸⁷ Boyd’s research found that “immigrant women in the Canadian labor force have occupational statuses which are lower on the average than those of other sex and nativity groups”.⁸⁸ Cardu contends that the ever-changing professional relations structure of the career path of highly skilled immigrant women and segregates them into “so-called risky areas” or “secondary industries” characterized by deskilling, precarious, and undesirable jobs.⁸⁹ Li argues that, the term *immigrant women* has become a codified word for people of colour who come from different racial backgrounds, who possess “irreconcilable values that threaten Canada’s cohesion”, who do not speak fluent English, and who

⁸⁴ Joan Scott, “Deconstructing Equality versus Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism” (1988) 14:1 *Feminist Studies* 33 at 33.

⁸⁵ Jannifer Jagire, “Immigrant Women and Workplace in Canada: Organizing Agents for Social Change.” (2019) 9:2 *SAGE Open* at 2.

⁸⁶ Tina Chui, “Immigrant Women” in Statistic Canada, *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report* (July, 2011) online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11528-eng.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Stephanie Premji et al, “Precarious Work Experiences of Racialized Immigrant Women in Toronto: A Community-Based Study.” (2014) 22 *Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society* 123 at 123.

⁸⁸ See, Monica Boyd, “At a Disadvantage: The Occupational Attainments for Foreign Born Women in Canada” (1984)18:4 *International Migration Review* 1091-1119.

⁸⁹ Helene Cardu, “Career Nomadism and the Building of a Professional Identity in Female Immigrants” (2007)8 *Int. Migration & Integration* 429 at 433.

work in lower-level jobs.⁹⁰ These research results indicate that a number of factors rather than any single one could provide explanations for the marginalization of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in Canada. The following parts further illustrate the marginalization of this group of immigrants in the Canadian labour market.

2.1. Deskilling

Deskilling generally manifests as a job-education mismatch, where skilled immigrant workers' occupational status in host societies is lower than the level of employment they could normally expect with their qualifications.⁹¹ Previous research has highlighted the mismatch between skilled immigrant women's qualifications and their skill levels for their actual employment in Canada.⁹² For example, researchers widely agree that foreign-trained immigrant workers who are employed at higher levels before immigration often confront obstacles in finding highly skilled jobs that match with their previous qualifications in their initial years of arrival in host societies.⁹³ In other literature, researchers also explain deskilling with some relevant terms: underemployment, which occurs when a worker is employed at a job that does not make full use

⁹⁰ Peter Li, "Deconstructing Canada's Discourse of Immigrant Integration" (2003)4:3 *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 315 at 322.

⁹¹ Cynthia Chen, Peter Smith, & Cameron Mustard, "The Prevalence of Over-qualification and its Association with Health Status among Occupationally Active New Immigrants to Canada." (2010)15:6 *Ethnicity & Health* 601 at 601.

⁹² See, for example, Alicia Adserà & Ana M. Ferrer, "The Myth of Immigrant Women as Secondary Workers: Evidence from Canada" (2014)104:5 *American Economic Review* 360 at 360; Helene Cardu, "Career Nomadism and the Building of a Professional Identity in Female Immigrants" (2007)8 *Int. Migration & Integration* 429 at 433; Frank Kristyn & Feng Hou, "Over-education and Well-being: How does Education-Occupation Mismatch Affect the Life Satisfaction of University-Educated Immigrant and Non-immigrant Workers?" (2018)23:8 *Ethnicity & Health* 884 at 894; Patricia Pessar, "Women, Gender, and International Migration Across and Beyond the Americas: Inequalities and Limited Empowerment" UN/POP/EGM-MIG/2005/08 (28 November 2005) at 8; Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative, "Immigrant Transitions from Underemployment to Skills-commensurate Employment" (2013) Roundtable Discussion Paper #4 at 2.

⁹³ See, Tania Das Gupta, et al, "Chinese and South Asian Canadian Professional Women Navigating the Labor Market" (2014)23:1 *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 55 at 55-56; Janice Fine, "Segmentation and the Role of Labor Standards Enforcement in Immigration Reform" (2017)5:2 *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 431-451.

of their skills;⁹⁴ brain waste, which refers to immigrants' situations of being compelled to work in jobs unrelated to their background and/or below their skill level at much lower wages;⁹⁵ and downward social and occupational mobility, which emphasises immigrants' inaccessibility to professional jobs as the main cause of their being constrained in lower-level positions after immigration.⁹⁶ In my research, a significant number of participants reported their experiences of switching to low-skilled jobs,⁹⁷ remaining unemployed, receiving vocational education, and giving up their original trained areas of practice since they arrived in Canada.⁹⁸ My empirical research is consistent with previous research, which finds that immigrants who originally work in highly skilled positions often see a decline in the levels of their post-migration employment in Canada.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Gordon Jong & Anna Madamba, "A Double Disadvantage? Minority Group, Immigration Status, and Underemployment in the United States" (2001) 8:1 *Social Science Quarterly* 117 at 117; Laura Guerrero & Mitchell Rothstein, "Antecedents of Underemployment: Job Search of Skilled Immigrants in Canada" (2012) 61:2 *Applied Psychology* 323 at 325; Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative, "Immigrant Transitions from Underemployment to Skills-commensurate Employment" (2013) Roundtable Discussion Paper #4 at 2.

⁹⁵ Marco Pecoraro, "Gender, Brain Waste and Job-education Mismatch Among Migrant Workers in Switzerland" (2011) International Labour Office; Rupa Banerjee, Anil Verma & Tingting Zhang, "Brain Gain or Brain Waste? Horizontal, Vertical, and Full Job-Education Mismatch and Wage Progression Among Skilled Immigrant Men in Canada" (2019) 53:3 *International Migration Review* 646 at 647.

Ivy Lynn Bourgeault, et al, "Brain Gain, Drain & Waste the Experiences of Internationally Educated Health Professionals in Canada" (October 2010) Ontario Health Human Resource Research Network at 11.

⁹⁶ Gillian Creese & Brandy Wiebe, "'Survival Employment': Gender and Deskilling among African Immigrants in Canada." (2012) 50: 5 *International Migration* 56 at 58; Shibao Guo, "Economic Integration of Recent Chinese Immigrants in Canada's Second-Tier Cities: The Triple Glass Effect and Immigrants' Downward Social Mobility" (2013) 45:3 *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 95 at 108; Herbert Gans, "First Generation Decline: Downward Mobility Among Refugees and Immigrants" (2009) 32:9 *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1658 at 1659.

⁹⁷ *Note:* As mentioned in Chapter I, I use Canada's National Occupational Classification or "NOC" as a guide for discerning what is "high skilled" versus "low skilled" work. In Canada, the NOC is a nationally recognized and standardized system that is used to measure and distinguish the skill level of an occupation in Canada. In a migration context, IRCC uses NOC to identify and understand immigrants' previous work experience, but also the category of work that they have obtained an offer of employment for. Occupations classified as skill level A, B and O are considered to be highly skilled work in Canada. Skill Type O are management jobs, such as restaurant managers and mine managers; Skill Type A are professional jobs that usually call for a degree from a university, such as doctors and dentists; Skill Type B are technical jobs and skills trades that usually call for a college diploma or training as an apprentice, such as electricians and plumbers. NOC provides me with a reference point to compare and contrast the employment an immigrant has obtained with the skill levels of a particular immigrant. For National Occupational Classification, see Government of Canada, online: < <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/noc.html> >.

⁹⁸ See my interview data with Participants 2, 11, 13, 19 and 23, for instance.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Alicia Adserà & Ana M. Ferrer, "The Myth of Immigrant Women as Secondary Workers: Evidence from Canada" (2014) 104:5 *American Economic Review* 360 at 360; Shibao Guo, "Economic Integration of Recent Chinese Immigrants in Canada's Second-Tier Cities: The Triple Glass Effect and Immigrants' Downward

Focusing on immigrant women in Canada, Tania Das Gupta et al. reveal that Asian immigrant women commonly struggle with reformulating their skills in Canada in order to restore their economic status to the level prior to their migration.¹⁰⁰ Immigrant women who worked in highly skilled positions in their country of origin frequently change professions and positions, sometimes to lower skilled positions, for economic survival.¹⁰¹ Research reports that immigrant women with considerable professional experience in their country of origin often have difficulties finding professional jobs commensurate with their previous employment, experience, and education; “they remained either unemployed or pressured into jobs that demanded ‘the use of their hands rather than their minds’”.¹⁰² Piper notes that skilled immigrant women are also compelled to accept subordinate and less secure employment; immigrant women of skilled or professional categories often work in feminized sectors such as education and healthcare.¹⁰³ In addition, Bauder notes the stress resulting from a downward shift both in immigrants’ careers and social status, which brings traumatic emotional effects on immigrants and their families.¹⁰⁴ In my research, some immigrant women also mentioned that they never felt happy about their post-migration employment status.¹⁰⁵

Parallel to this Canadian experience, global labour market segregation has created gendered occupations that concentrate immigrant women in a small spectrum of occupational choices.¹⁰⁶

Social Mobility (2013) 45:3 Canadian Ethnic Studies 95 at 108; Herbert Gans, “First Generation Decline: Downward Mobility Among Refugees and Immigrants” (2009) 32:9 Ethnic and Racial Studies 1658 at 1659; Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative, “Immigrant Transitions from Underemployment to Skills-commensurate Employment” (2013) Roundtable Discussion Paper #4 at 2.

¹⁰⁰ Tania Das Gupta, et al, *supra*. note 93 at 74.

¹⁰¹ Jannifer Jagire, *supra*. note 85 at 1.

¹⁰² Mojab Shahrzad, “De-skilling Immigrant Women” (1999)19:3 Canadian Woman Studies 123 at 127.

¹⁰³ Nicola Piper, “International Migration and Gendered Axes of Stratification: Introduction” in Nicola Piper, ed, *New perspectives on gender and migration: livelihood, rights and entitlements*, (NY: Routledge, 2008) 1 at 6.

¹⁰⁴ See, Harald Bauder, “Brain Abuse, or the Devaluation of Immigrant Labour in Canada.” (2003) 35:4 *Antipode* 699-717.

¹⁰⁵ See my interview data with Participant 2 mentioned in Chapter VI.

¹⁰⁶ See, Silvia Pedraza, “Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender” (1991) Annual Review of Sociology 303 at 314; United Nations, “Women and International Migration” online: <
http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/3/docs/P01_DAW.pdf>.

Espiritu observes a similar trend in the United States labour market: an increased number of immigrant women enter into gendered occupations in healthcare and apparel manufacturing industries.¹⁰⁷ Research has found that recent immigrant women are more likely to engage in the “low wage informal labor structure”.¹⁰⁸ They encounter this situation because immigrant women often follow the career path of other immigrants from similar backgrounds or countries of origin to first work in marginalized positions.¹⁰⁹ Research findings focusing on international and Canadian situations have all helped me build an understanding of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s marginalization from a gendered perspective.

2.2. Foreign Credential Recognition

Another main barrier that contributes to the marginalization of highly skilled immigrant women is the non-recognition of foreign credentials.¹¹⁰ Statistics Canada reports that 49.6% of recent immigrant women in the core working age group of 25 to 54 years old had completed at least a bachelor’s level certificate or degree.¹¹¹ However, they face great challenges in having Canadian employers recognize their credentials received from outside Canada. Ferrer and Riddell found that their years of schooling and experiences accumulated before arrival are valued much less than the Canadian experience of comparable Canadian professionals.¹¹² Premji et al identify the non-recognition of foreign credentials and experiences as one of the top-cited barriers

¹⁰⁷ Yen Le Espiritu, “Gender and Labor in Asian Immigrant Families” (1999)42:4 *American Behavioral Scientist* 628 at 630.

¹⁰⁸ Bindu Panikkar et al, “ ‘They See Us as Machines’ The Experience of Recent Immigrant Women in the Low Wage Informal Labor Sector” (2015)10:11 *PloS One* at 2.

¹⁰⁹ Jannifer Jagire, *supra*. note 85 at 2.

¹¹⁰ Shibao Guo, *supra*. note 56 at 40.

¹¹¹ Tamara Hudon, “Immigrant Women”, online:< <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14217-eng.htm#:~:text=Immigrant%20women%20were%20more%20likely,women%20of%20the%20same%20age>.

¹¹² Ana Ferrer & Craig Riddell, “Education, Credentials, and Immigrant Earnings” (2008)41:1 *Canadian Journal of Economics* 186 at 186.

experienced by immigrants in Canada.¹¹³ For example, foreign-trained lawyers and medical doctors face significant barriers after immigrating to Canada to joining the same professions as they were in before.

To reveal the underlying reasons, previous institutional ethnographic research suggested that a credential and certification recognition regime has created a working dynamic that devaluates immigrants' foreign credentials.¹¹⁴ When a foreign-trained immigrant worker intends to enter a regulated occupation, this worker encounters a complex foreign credential recognition process involving a number of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.¹¹⁵ For example, immigrants seeking employment in many high skilled regulated professions rely on agencies to evaluate their foreign credentials in order to meet regulatory standards.¹¹⁶ This credential accreditation regime defines foreign-trained highly skilled immigrant workers' qualifications as deficient. Research shows that Canadian employers value education from European countries more than countries in some other regions, such as degrees received from Asia.¹¹⁷ Jantzen's research echoes these findings by highlighting that recent immigrants from non-European backgrounds experience delayed entry into regulated occupations because they need to spend extra time to go through additional processes to accredit their credentials or to be re-educated in order to enter their intended occupation.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Stephanie Premji et al, *supra*. note 87 at 136.

¹¹⁴ See, Hongxia Shan, "Shaping the Re-training and Re-education Experiences of Immigrant Women: The Credential and Certificate Regime in Canada" (2009)29:3 International Journal of Lifelong Education 353-369

¹¹⁵ Lorna Jantzen, "Do Economic Principal Applicants Work in Their Intended Regulated Occupations?" (2015) 41:1 Canadian Public Policy S48 at S50.

¹¹⁶ Melinda Suto, "Compromised Careers: The Occupational Transition of Immigration and Settlement" (2009) 32 Work 417 at 424.

¹¹⁷ Shibao Guo, *supra*. note 56 at 37-52.

¹¹⁸ Lorna Jantzen, "Do Economic Principal Applicants Work in Their Intended Regulated Occupations?" (2015) 41:1 Canadian Public Policy S48 at S50.

In Canada, some professions are regulated to protect public health and safety. Workers who intend to work in these professions must go through a specific registration process with the regulatory agencies in order to obtain a license or certificate.¹¹⁹ However, a considerable problem is that regulatory bodies frequently do not recognize immigrant workers' foreign credentials and require them to go through additional processes to accredit their foreign credentials.¹²⁰

For regulated professions such as engineering and teaching, regulatory bodies or professional associations establish specific requirements to determine the credential necessary to practice the occupations.¹²¹ Immigrants in these professions must prove that their foreign qualifications meet Canadian standards because their previous training outside Canada is deemed insufficient and they need to go through additional steps to prove this.¹²² While it is possible to work in regulated professions without going through the accreditation process, Canadian employers still prefer to hire immigrant workers who have passed the accreditation process as they are more familiar with Canadian credentials.¹²³ This situation makes it more difficult for foreign-trained skilled immigrants who intend to work in regulated occupations to find professional jobs in Canada. By contrast, to hire immigrant workers in occupations with less onerous requirements for credentials, employers have the autonomy to decide whether candidates have an acceptable combination of

¹¹⁹ Welcome to Ontario, online < <https://settlement.org/ontario/employment/professions-and-trades/regulated/where-can-i-find-career-maps-for-trades-and-regulated-professions/>>

¹²⁰ See, Peter Li, "The Role of Foreign Credentials and Ethnic Ties in Immigrants' Economic Performance" (2008)33:2 *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 291-310; Jeffrey Reitz, "Immigrant Skill Utilization in the Canadian Labour Market: Implications of Human Capital Research" (2001) 2:3 *International Migration & Integration* 347 at 349.

¹²¹ Guida Man, "Gender, Work and Migration: Deskillling Chinese Immigrant Women in Canada" (2004)27 *Women's Studies International Forum* 135 at 142.

¹²² Danielle Zietsma, "Immigrants Working in Regulated Occupations", online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-001-x/2010102/article/11121-eng.htm>

¹²³ Steven Tufts, "What are the Labour Market Outcomes for Immigrants Planning to Work in Regulated and Unregulated Occupations?" (February, 2010) *Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative TIEDI Analytical Report* 5 at 3.

degrees and experience.¹²⁴ The extra layer of having a regulated body act as a gatekeeper to a profession contributes to a lower rate of foreign-educated immigrants working in their previously trained professional occupations compared with the Canadian-born professionals.¹²⁵ For immigrants whose expertise is in regulated professions, academic literature has shown that they frequently reported that they cannot make full use of their valuable skills soon after immigration because they need to take additional steps to prove that their previous qualifications meet the Canadian standards.¹²⁶

There are different requirements for entering different kinds of professions in Canada, and it is difficult for some skilled immigrants whose intended occupations are regulated to find commensurate employment,¹²⁷ but the barriers can be very difficult to reduce. Canada's constitutional division of powers enables the provinces and territories to be responsible for licensing trades and professions with the latter being self-regulating.¹²⁸ The provinces and territories are responsible for licensing trades and professions, and therefore the federal government has no jurisdiction to change the regulations/processes of credential recognition. Research has also revealed the disjuncture between the institutions that administer immigration admission and institutions that regulate the credentialing process and controls entry to desirable professions.¹²⁹ To resolve the problem, a systematic reform requesting collaborative efforts from

¹²⁴ Danielle Zietsma, *supra*. note 122.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*.

¹²⁶ See, Peter Li, "The Role of Foreign Credentials and Ethnic Ties in Immigrants' Economic Performance" (2008)33:2 *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 291-310; Jeffrey Reitz, "Immigrant Skill Utilization in the Canadian Labour Market: Implications of Human Capital Research" (2001) 2:3 *International Migration & Integration* 347 at 349.

¹²⁷ Danielle Zietsma, *supra*. note 122.

¹²⁸ David Tilson, "Recognizing Success: A Report on Improving Foreign Credential Recognition" (2009) Report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. Canada. Parliament. House of Commons, 2009.

¹²⁹ Daniel Hiebert, "Winning, Losing, and Still Playing the Game: The Political Economy of Immigration in Canada" (2005) 97:1 *Royal Dutch Geographical Society* 38-48.

multiple stakeholders is needed.¹³⁰ The difficulties immigrants experience to accredit their foreign credentials in Canada is a considerable problem that has yet to find effective solutions.

For highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, Man's work illustrates the non-recognition of foreign credentials made highly skilled Chinese immigrant women more likely to become deskilled workers or unemployed.¹³¹ In my research, a large number of women participants who were trained to work in highly skilled occupations gave up their areas of expertise and opted to work in lower skilled unregulated occupations in Canada after migration.¹³² In other cases, some immigrant women took several years to return to their previously trained professions and only managed to work in this profession for a few years before reaching the age of retirement.¹³³ These immigrants had to re-establish their professional careers from scratch as their previous credentials outside Canada were not fully recognized by local employers. For instance, immigrant women who had experienced the least negative impacts were those who worked in Information Communication Technology (ICT) professions (e.g. software engineer, software developer, and software architecture) because this is an unregulated profession in Canada. By contrast, some immigrant women who were trained for occupations in regulated professions, such as Participant 5 and 19, decided to switch to work as ICT professionals as they did not have the resources to pursue employment in their previously trained professions.

2.3. Foreign Work Experience Recognition

Another barrier that has been extensively discussed was the non-recognition of foreign work experiences. Alboim and McIsaac note that "research that looks at the return on foreign work

¹³⁰ David Tilson, *supra*. note 128.

¹³¹ Guida Man, *supra*. note 121 at 141.

¹³² *See*, my interview data with Participants 2 and 13 in Chapter VI, and with many other women participants, such as Participants 8, 11, 15, and 20.

¹³³ *See*, for example, my interview data with Participant 16 in Chapter V.

experience and education has shown that the foreign work experience is particularly discounted by the labour market.”¹³⁴ Buzdugan and Halli also state that the “lack of Canadian work experience is an important factor determining entry to the labour market”.¹³⁵ Research attributes one possible reason for not hiring skilled foreign workers to Canadian employers’ difficulties judging the value of overseas work experiences acquired in a foreign labour market.¹³⁶ Another possible reason that Carey’s research alludes to is that employers have less incentive to evaluate foreign work experience when they have a sufficient supply of skilled workers in Canada.¹³⁷ In this research, the empirical data that I collected explicitly mentioned the increased motivation of Canadian employers’ to validate and evaluate immigrants’ previous work experience only when they have an urgent need to fill the positions.¹³⁸

To deal with this situation, many professional immigrants try to attain the necessary Canadian experience through volunteering while they are making a transition into the Canadian labour market. Nonetheless, when considering the skill level that the volunteer jobs require and how this skill level is not the same as those in their chosen highly skilled careers, researchers have questioned whether immigrants’ volunteering work is truly voluntary.¹³⁹ Additionally, these immigrants tend to be more willing to accept low wages, to endure long hours of working in poor

¹³⁴ Naomi Alboim & Elizabeth McIsaac, “Making the Connections: Ottawa’s Role in Immigrant Employment” (2007)13:3 Institute for Research on Public Policy 1 at 5.

¹³⁵ Cited from Usha George & Ferzana Chaze, “Discrimination at Work: Comparing the Experiences of Foreign-trained and Locally-trained Engineers in Canada” (2014) 46:1 Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal 1 at 4; Raluca Buzdugan & Shiva Halli, “Labor Market Experiences of Canadian Immigrants with Focus on Foreign Education and Experience” (2018)43:2 The International Migration Review 366-386.

¹³⁶ OECD (2014), “Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children: Developing, Activating and Using Skills”, in International Migration Outlook, OECD, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/international-migration-outlook-2014/labour-market-integration-of-immigrants-and-their-children-developing-activating-and-using-skills_migr_outlook-2014-5-en, https://doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2014-en.

¹³⁷ See, David Carey, “Making the Most of Immigration in Canada” (2018) OECD Economics Department Working Papers, No.1520. online:< <https://doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.1787/6813672e-en.>>

¹³⁸ See, my interview data with Expert 1.

¹³⁹ Stacey Wilson-Forsberg & Bharati Sethi, “The Volunteering Dogma and Canadian Work Experience: Do Recent Immigrants Volunteer Voluntarily?” (2015) 47:3 Canadian Ethnic Studies 91 at 97.

conditions, or to give up certain employment rights.¹⁴⁰ However, my empirical data showed that these coping strategies did not fundamentally improve the employment status of this marginalized group, and there was no real solution for them to soon return to their previous levels of employment.¹⁴¹ In this research, I document participants' experiences using Dorothy Smith's Institutional Ethnography methodology to examine this social phenomenon as a product of institutionalized discursive practices. Whilst these barriers influenced all skilled immigrants, my research continues further to investigate how highly skilled Chinese immigrant women have been particularly impacted by the institutional arrangements that limited their career options.

3. Language Barriers

In my interviews, almost every single participant reported that language proficiency is the biggest problem that influences all aspects of their daily Canadian experience. China has always been among the top 3 source countries of permanent immigrants from 2008 to 2019, accounting for about 9% of total permanent immigrant admission.¹⁴² Chinese immigrants suffer particular language barriers because, unlike immigrants from the other two top source countries (India and the Philippines), they have fewer opportunities to be exposed to an English-speaking environment. Previous research in the domain of economics has frequently mentioned the linkage between immigrants' language proficiency and their economic performance in the English-speaking

¹⁴⁰ See, Ken Clark & Stephen Drinkwater "The Labour-Market Performance of Recent Migrants" (2008) 24:3 Oxford Review of Economic Policy 594-516.

¹⁴¹ See, for example, my interview data with Participant 2.

¹⁴² Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada, "Facts and Figures 2017: Immigration Overview -Permanent Residents" online:<<https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/082f05ba-e333-4132-ba42-72828d95200b>> ; Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada, "2018 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration", online: <<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2018/report.html>>; Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada, "2019 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration", online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2019.html>>.

destination countries,¹⁴³ which assists me to further analyze the reported experiences of these immigrant women. The specific ways that highly skilled Chinese immigrant women were impacted by their language proficiency have been understudied. The effectiveness of corresponding measures to alleviate the impacts derived from these barriers has also been understudied. My research contributes to revealing how highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's inadequate language skills jeopardized their professional employment opportunities. I also investigate why highly skilled Chinese immigrant women refused to attend the government-funded language classes, and turned to private resources for help to improve their language skills.

Immigrants' language proficiency and their labour market performance have drawn attention from many researchers both in Canada and worldwide, as this is a common social problem that is prevalent in many immigrant-receiving countries. In short, English (or French) language skills are a determinant of immigrants' labour market success.¹⁴⁴ Canadian research shows that greater proficiency in one of the two official languages enhances earnings in the Canadian labor market.¹⁴⁵ Research on the UK experience also reports that English language proficiency increases employment probabilities and earnings of immigrants.¹⁴⁶ Correspondingly, Leslie and Lindley have also found that poor English skills lead to higher unemployment rates and lower economic activity rates of ethnic minority immigrants.¹⁴⁷ Situating this research topic in a US context, Rivera-Batiz reveals that "language deficiency acts to depress the wages of immigrants

¹⁴³ Christian Dustmann & Arthur Van Soest, "Language and the Earnings of Immigrants" (2002)55:3. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 473 at 473; Hoyt Bleakley & Aimee Chin, "Age at Arrival, English Proficiency, and Social Assimilation among US Immigrants" (2010) 2:1 *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 165-192.

¹⁴⁴ Ken Clark & Stephen Drinkwater, *supra*. note 140

¹⁴⁵ Barry Chiswick & Paul Miller, "The Complementarity of Language and Other Human Capital: Immigrant Earnings in Canada" (2003)22:5 *Economics of Education Review* 469-480.

¹⁴⁶ Christian Dustmann & Francesca Fabbri, "Language Proficiency and Labour Market Performance of Immigrants in the UK" (2003)113 *Economic Journal* 695-717.

¹⁴⁷ Derek Leslie & Joanne Lindley, "The Impact of Language Ability on Employment and Earnings of Britain's Ethnic Communities" (2001) 68 *Economica* 587-606.

substantially below what other human capital endowments...[and] suggest [s how much] they should earn in the US market”.¹⁴⁸ More recently, a study based on Australian experience indicates that language proficiency has a significant positive effect on wages and decreases the perceived risk of job loss.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, Guven and Islam’s research further points out that the effect of language proficiency on wages is more significant among highly educated immigrants compared to those less educated, lower-skilled immigrants.¹⁵⁰

Aside from the economic impact of language proficiency on employment opportunities, inadequate language proficiency also influences immigrant women’s capability to participate in social activities. For immigrants who do not intend to work, language proficiency could still be a crucial factor influencing their capability to participate in social activities. Nah observes that the ability or inability to speak the host country’s language greatly influences the process of resettlement and adaptation to the new culture.¹⁵¹ Hrick points out, “being unable to communicate in English or French tends to keep women isolated, powerless, and vulnerable to abuse”.¹⁵² In addition, Werge-Olsen and Vik argue that “weak language skills might cause problems related to the lack of cultural and social integration”.¹⁵³ By contrast, having sufficient language skills enable them to develop survival skills, such as greeting neighbours and buying groceries.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Francisco Rivera-Batiz, “English Language Proficiency and the Earnings of Young Immigrants in U.S. Labor Markets” (1992) 11:2 Policy Studies Review 165 at 173.

¹⁴⁹ Cahit Guven & Asadul Islam, “Age at Migration, Language Proficiency and Socio-economic Outcomes: Evidence from Australia” (2013) IDEAS Working Paper Series, online:< <https://www.monash-edu.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/business/economics/research/publications/2013/1813migrationguvenislam.pdf>>

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* at 13

¹⁵¹ Nah, Kyung-Hee, “Perceived Problems and Service Delivery for Korean Immigrants” (1993) 38:3 Social Work 289 at 289.

¹⁵² Pam Hrick, “A Dangerous Step Backwards: The Implications of Conditional Permanent Resident Status for Sponsored Immigrant Women in Abusive Relationship” (2012) 21 Dalhousie J. Legal Stu 21 at 4.

¹⁵³ Inger Brit Werge-Olsen & Kjersti Vik, “Activity as a Tool in Language Training for Immigrants and Refugees” (2012) 19 Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy 530 at 530.

¹⁵⁴ Amy Beeler & Julie Murray “Improving Immigrant Workers’ Economic Prospects: A Review of the Literature” in Fixed, Securing the Future: US Immigrant Integration Policy. Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, 107-123.

Driven by Canada's long-standing commitment to providing language training for immigrants, Canada has developed and implemented a series of language assessment, referral, and training measures in order to assist immigrants in acquiring language skills as quickly as possible.¹⁵⁵ Some language training programs are employment-focused, which aim to bridge skilled immigrants into the Canadian labour market promptly.¹⁵⁶ Some programs acknowledge the importance of providing language training for non-employment-related purposes.¹⁵⁷ Aside from teaching the official languages, classes might also be important meeting places where immigrant adults have their "first sustained contact with the new society".¹⁵⁸ A government report, which highly praises the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, indicates that the LINC training is of very high quality in teaching, assessing, administration, and all aspects.¹⁵⁹ In addition, the government text also claims that the LINC program was designed to and has also managed to meet both the needs of new immigrants and the priorities of the federal government.¹⁶⁰ However, in this research, my qualitative data revealed experiences that counter these official narratives, my research participants criticized the LINC program noting that it did not address their needs. In Chapter V, I will analyze how this dominant public discourse does not correspond with highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's actual experiences, and discourages their participation in funded language services.

¹⁵⁵ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Research and Evaluation Branch, "Evaluation of the Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training under the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA)" December 2012), online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/strategic-plan-settlement-language-training-under-canada-ontario-immigration-agreement-coia/summary.html>>.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Suzanne Springer & Laura Collins, "Interacting Inside and Outside of the Language Classroom" (2008)12:1 Language Teaching Research 39 at 40.

¹⁵⁹ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program" online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/language-instruction-newcomers-canada-2010.html>>. at 14.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* at 11.

Although earlier research has revealed that formal language training helps new immigrants to acquire language skills more quickly,¹⁶¹ a significant number of immigrants in my research expressed considerable doubts about the effectiveness of these government-funded language training programs, with some withdrawing from the LINC program.¹⁶² After dropping out of the LINC program, these immigrants eventually sought to improve language skills elsewhere, for example, learning from English-speaking colleagues at the workplace. Indeed, some studies mentioned that immigrants can gain language skills outside the formal training program by interacting with friends, neighbours, and colleagues.¹⁶³ Still, the data I collected from the interviews allowed me to investigate the mismatch between highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's focused language learning needs and the Canadian government's double mandate of language training and settlement.¹⁶⁴ I will further discuss why this mismatch exists and how to address the particular language learning needs of these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in Chapter V.

¹⁶¹ Barry Chiswick & Paul Miller, "The Endogeneity between Language and Earnings: International Analysis" (1995)13 *Journal of Labor Economics* 246 at 250.

¹⁶² See, for example, my interview data with Participants 2, 15,16, 19, 22 and 23.

¹⁶³ Frank Van Tubergen & Matthijs Kalmijn, "A Dynamic Approach to the Determinants of Immigrants' Language Proficiency: the United States, 1980–2000" (2009)43:3 *International Migration Review* 519 at 521.

¹⁶⁴ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program" online: <<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/language-instruction-newcomers-canada-2010.html>>. at 13.

Chapter III Theoretical and Methodological Framework

This chapter introduces the theoretical and methodological framework employed by this research followed by a detailed description of specific research steps to explore highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's situation in Canada. Part I analyzes the conceptual linkage between Benhabib's weak version of postmodern feminist theory and Institutional Ethnography (IE) methodology developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith. Part II illustrates how I use this weak version of postmodern feminist theory and IE methodology in my feminist and intersectional research to investigate highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's discursively constructed experience.

1. Part I Postmodern Feminist Theory and Institutional Ethnography Methodology

This research adopts a version of postmodern feminist theory for two major reasons. First, postmodern feminism embraces diversity. A premise of postmodern feminism is to criticize monolithic understandings and representation of individuals, in order to avoid ignoring the complexity and differences that multiple identities, such as race, ethnicity, immigration status, and social class, add to the subject of women.¹⁶⁵ Postmodern feminism challenges the uncritical application of universal truth to all women in our society. Postmodern feminism aims to bring the margins into the mainstream by embracing and affirming the differences that exist amongst women.¹⁶⁶ Many postmodern feminists have endorsed this view. Scott highlights the importance of recognizing individual woman's gendered and diverse experiences.¹⁶⁷ Minow argues that

¹⁶⁵ Joan Scott, *supra.* note 84 at 33.

¹⁶⁶ Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989) at 217–224.

¹⁶⁷ Joan Scott, *supra.* note 84.

postmodern feminism's strength is in considering women's experiences in all their variety instead of adopting a particular feminist angle as the authentic view for all women.¹⁶⁸

Second, postmodernism rejects essentialism.¹⁶⁹ Postmodern feminism is inclusive in a sense that it embraces diversities and pluralities, but takes a different approach from other feminist theories situated in modernity because of its innovative way of understanding women's subjectivity as being constructed by discursive practices rather than a fixed status.¹⁷⁰ Drawing upon Foucault's analysis, postmodernism views language, knowledge, and power as interconnected to explicitly or implicitly convey normalized messages that transmit in and through discursive practices.¹⁷¹ Applying this view in a feminist context, postmodern feminism rejects the notion of a fixed essence of women and rejects the view that gender identity is a fixed status.¹⁷² Eichner argues that the subjectivity of women emerges from discursive practice in our everyday activity.¹⁷³ Smart argues that women become "a gendered position which legal discourse brings it into being".¹⁷⁴ Discursive practice gives meaning to our concept of the woman through the knowledge produced by the particular registers and genres used in language.¹⁷⁵ Postmodern feminism rejects uncritical engagement with a rigid understanding of the gender binary because a unifying category of women determined by biological characteristics conceals the ongoing constituting process of an individual's subjectivity within discursive practices.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁸ Martha Minow, "Feminist Reason: Getting It and Losing It" (1988) 38:1 J. Legal Educ 47 at 50.

¹⁶⁹ Kristina Wolff, "Postmodern Feminism" in *The Backwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (February 15, 2007).

¹⁷⁰ Martha Chamallas, *Introduction to Feminist Legal Theory* 3rd ed, (Wolter Kluwer Law&Business, 2013) at 121.

¹⁷¹ Philip Barker, *Michel Foucault: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998) at 25.

¹⁷² Martha Chamallas, *supra*. note 170.

¹⁷³ Marxine Eichner, *supra*. note 83 at 6.

¹⁷⁴ Carol Smart, *supra*. note 82.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

There are diverse opinions about to what extent subjectivity is inseparable from discursive practices, or whether subjectivity is entirely or partially discursive within postmodern feminist scholarship.¹⁷⁷ The debate on maintaining or abandoning the subjectivity of women between Benhabib and Butler marks a paramount moment within postmodern feminist contentions. Benhabib's feminist approach recognizes that there is a pre-existing subject and this subject needs to be situated in the context of discursive practices.¹⁷⁸ In other words, it does not deny the woman subject that is traditionally used in Western philosophy to raise women's visibility and to further advocate for women's empowerment.¹⁷⁹ By contrast, Butler's approach contends that the subject of women is not a self-evident and fixed category; rather, the subject is an effect of a dynamic of power that is enacted by a "repeated confirmation of relations of value regarding the body";¹⁸⁰ the subject should be left "permanently open, contested, and contingent" throughout the constructing process.¹⁸¹ This debate highlights the diverse opinions within postmodern feminist scholarship. As Ebert suggests, we should think of postmodern feminism "not as a monolithic discourse but as an ensemble of conflicting discourse."¹⁸² Patricia Cain's summary of the two approaches employed by feminist scholars reflects the different stances of Butler and Benhabib:

*"... perhaps the category 'woman' ought to be abandoned completely, allowing individual women to concentrate on individual self-definitions; Yet, for many feminists, the category 'women' is central to their analysis and critique of what is real for women in the present."*¹⁸³

¹⁷⁷ See, Seyla Benhabib, *supra*. note 63 at 20.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Antita Brady & Tony Schirato, *Understanding Judith Butler* (London: Sage Publication Ltd, 2011) at 12.

¹⁸¹ Seyla Benhabib, et al, *supra*. note 63 at 41.

¹⁸² Teresa Ebert, "The 'Difference' of Postmodern Feminism" (1991)53:8 *College English* 886 at 887.

¹⁸³ Cain, Patricia, "Feminism and the Limits of Equality" (1990)24:4 *Ga. L. Rev* 803 at 807.

Between these two versions of postmodern feminism, I follow Benhabib's weak version of postmodern feminist theory¹⁸⁴ to explore the lived experience of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. This choice was naturally made as my research progressed. Subjectivity has been pre-existed since the beginning of the recruitment process: I select my research participants based on self-identification. At the initial stage, the participants typically were very sure of their gender and ethnic identities. However, when asked about other categories of identities, these immigrant women often had some questions about how to identify themselves in other categories, such as whether they can be classified as highly skilled immigrant women and what criteria are used to define their immigration status. In response to their questions, I guided them to review my recruitment criteria, which drew upon the relevant definitions set up by governmental text to assess who the appropriate participants are for this research.

This interaction between me and the potential participants primarily explained the processes where these immigrant women asked, considered, questioned, and determined whether the social meanings of "highly skilled immigrants" fit them. These processes reflected how they first saw themselves as highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, and how they internalized external text-mediated power relations assigned to them. In this way, these research participants found their own standpoint to describe their experiences and to position themselves in language discourse. Further analysis of this research also revealed that dominant discourse also influenced these women participants' understandings and experiences in an unconscious way. For instance, some participants took working in non-professional jobs as a "normal" step for new immigrants, and these immigrants believed that being constrained in positions that do not match their skills and qualifications are common because this would bring benefits to their children. This understanding

¹⁸⁴ Seyla Benhabib, et al. *supra*. note 63 at 20.

was not objective knowledge that can be verified by consulting a large sample of immigrants; rather, it was generated from individualized experiences that are particular to these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, and the reason for them to consider the situation as normal is discursively constructed in subjective ways. This recruitment process corresponds to Benhabib's postmodern feminist theory, which argues for the necessity of maintaining subjectivity as a site for marginalized women to struggle for the advancement of their situation.¹⁸⁵ Benhabib thinks that the subjectivity of these women should be situated in linguistic, social, and discursive practices.¹⁸⁶ I followed this weak version of postmodern feminist theory in this research because it explains the concerns of my participants best and traces the social relations that constructed these women participants' experiences.

Meanwhile, following Benhabib's weak version of postmodern feminism also allows me to use the IE analytical tool developed by Dorothy Smith to navigate postmodern feminist contentions on subjectivity and discourses. Smith is a Canadian sociologist who developed her feminist research strategies, initially, out of Marxism and feminism.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, her later analysis also goes beyond Marx's materialism and overlaps with postmodern feminist thought because it probes deeper into several key concepts that link empirical experience to conceptual analysis. Her research promotes the importance of investigating practical experience rather than purely leaning on conceptual analysis. The following paragraphs in Part I highlight these key concepts.

¹⁸⁵ Seyla Benhabib, et al, *supra*. note 63 at 20.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Liz Stanley, *Dorothy Smith, Feminist Sociology & Institutional Ethnography: A Short Introduction* (X Press: Edinburgh, 2018) at 10.

1.1. Subjectivity & Standpoint

The focus of Smith's feminist research on an individual's "experience of their own doings"¹⁸⁸ points to the core postmodern debate about maintaining or abandoning the pre-existing subject of women within a discursively constructed society. Throughout Smith's academic career, she made it clear that feminist sociology must "begin with actual subjects situated as they actually are".¹⁸⁹ In another book, she affirms that "there is an actual subject prior to the subject constituted in the text".¹⁹⁰ Smith challenges the purely discursive fabrication of the subject as it weakens the feminist struggle for women to speak from their own experience and to have their voices acknowledged.¹⁹¹ Smith's resistance to the deconstruction of a pre-existing subject is also reflected in her design of IE methodology: a very important step of IE research is to identify the women's standpoint and to inquire from women's own stance.¹⁹² According to Smith, maintaining the subjectivity of women is necessary for IE research because this allows researchers to precisely locate the standpoint of women.¹⁹³ As such, these women can "look up from where [they] are" and researchers can study their situated and embodied nature of knowing.¹⁹⁴ IE researchers must "ensure that people remain the subjects, the knowers or potential knowers".¹⁹⁵ Smith argues that "the standpoint of women situates the sociological subject prior to the entry into the abstracted conceptual mode."¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁸ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 64 at 183.

¹⁸⁹ Dorothy Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990) at 32.

¹⁹⁰ Dorothy Smith, *Texts, Facts, and Femininity, Exploring the Relations of Ruling* (New York: Routledge, 1990) at 5.

¹⁹¹ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 64 at 52.

¹⁹² Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 64 at 9.

¹⁹³ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 40.

¹⁹⁴ Dorothy Smith, *Institutional Ethnography as Practice* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006) at 5.

¹⁹⁵ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 64 at 52-53.

¹⁹⁶ *See*, Dorothy Smith, "Chapter I: Women's Experiences as a Radical Critique of Sociology: in Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 189.

Smith's IE methodology shares understandings with Benhabib's weak version of postmodern feminist theory. Benhabib recognizes the existence of a pre-existing subject.¹⁹⁷ The subject only needs to be situated, rather than being constituted, in the context of various social, linguistic, and discursive practices.¹⁹⁸ Benhabib does not completely reject our traditional understanding of selfhood in Western modernity, which contends that there is a "real" subjectivity with an ontologically pure essence that is not the consequence of cultural fabrication.¹⁹⁹ Benhabib also acknowledges that feminism and postmodernism represent "an uneasy alliance" because getting rid of the subject would, as many other postmodern feminists asserted, "undermine the very possibility of feminism as the theoretical articulation of the emancipatory aspirations of women".

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Smith's firm support of maintaining subjectivity as a site to fight for women's empowerment has made IE an appropriate tool to explore Benhabib's postmodern feminist theory.²⁰¹ Smith's work has been closely aligned with other feminists who support "standpoint theory" to challenge universal knowledge.²⁰² This stance also makes IE incompatible with the strong version of postmodern feminism because Butler views subjectivity as a position being constructed exclusively during the constructing process.²⁰³ Butler's feminist argument undermines Smith's efforts of locating women's standpoint from empirical work and studying women's lives outside of mainstream discourses.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Seyla Benhabib, et al, *supra*. note 63 at 20-21.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁹ Nancy Fraser, "False Antithesis," in Benhabib et al, *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995) at 59.

²⁰⁰ Seyla Benhabib, et al, *supra*. note 63 at 20-21.

²⁰¹ Dorothy Smith, "Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology" (1974)44:1 *Sociological Inquiry* at 9.

²⁰² *Ibid*.

²⁰³ Seyla Benhabib, et al, *supra*. note 63 at 41.

²⁰⁴ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 40.

1.2. Discourse: Conceptual vs Practical

Smith's IE approach shares interests with postmodern feminist studies in discussing the notions of text, language, discourses, and power relations; meanwhile, some central differences are particularly significant for empirical research. To briefly explain the differences, postmodern feminism adopts a "psychoanalytically oriented, semiotic approach" to understand discourses with reference to text and language,²⁰⁵ whereas Smith develops her analysis of discourses based on the actual experience of people in everyday life.

Smith distances herself from the postmodern understanding of discourses as an underlying deep structure of the human mind that governs particular social relations;²⁰⁶ rather she studies discourses as an organizer of people's actual experience while maintaining her analytic interest in keeping the actual knower.²⁰⁷ DeVault and McCoy distinguish Smith's understanding of discourse from Foucault's definition, saying:

*"In Foucault's work and in work taking up his approach...the notion of discourse designates a kind of large-scale conversation in and through texts... For Smith, discourse refers to a field of relations that includes not only texts and their intertextual conversation, but the activities of people in actual sites who produce them and use them and take up the conceptual frames they circulate. This notion of discourse never loses the presence of the subject who activates the text in any local moments of its use."*²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Patricia Clough, "On the Brink of Deconstructing Sociology: Critical Reading of Dorothy Smith's Standpoint Epistemology (1993) 34:1 The Sociological Quarterly 169 at 169.

²⁰⁶ Rianer Diaz-Bone, et al, "The Field of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis: Structures, Developments and Perspective" (2008)33:1 Historical Social Research 7 at 10.

²⁰⁷ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 40.

²⁰⁸ Marjorie DeVault & Liza McCoy, "Institutional Ethnography: Using Interview to Investigating Ruling Relations", in James Holstein & Jaber Gubrium, eds, *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* (CA:

To further explain the similarities and differences, this section traces back to the theoretical roots of Smith's materialist understanding of discourse, and then compares this stance with the postmodern understanding of discourse drawing upon Foucauldian analysis.

Smith's exploration of social relations is informed by Marx's materialist understanding of social structure. In Marx's book *The German Ideology*, he calls his materialist understanding of social phenomenon an approach that "ascend(s) from earth to heaven" as opposed to Hegel's idealist approach to "descend from heaven to earth".²⁰⁹ He writes,

"we do not set out from what men imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, or imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process."

Marx lays out a foundation for developing a philosophic view that sees the actual as the fundamental constituent of the conceptual. This was considered a ground-breaking idea when putting into a historical context; this view contradicts Hegel's pervasive view because it contends that history is determined by material conditions rather than being driven by an individual's consciousness or ideas. To quote Marx's famous statement, "life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."²¹⁰ Marx states that the ideas and consciousness that

Thousand Oaks Sage Publication, 2002) pp 751-76. Cited from Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 40.

²⁰⁹ Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology" in Imre Szeman & Timothy Kaposy, eds, *Cultural Theory: An Anthology* (MA: Wiley-Blackweek, 2011) at 165.

²¹⁰ Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, cited from "Historical Materialism: Marx and Engels:Jaurès in Fritz Stern, ed, *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present* (London: Palgrave, 1970) at 145.

people are capable of forming are dependent on their social and economic conditions.²¹¹ He contends that ideas and consciousness express social relations, but also suppress the presence of underlying relations that organize the actual activities of people.²¹²

Informed by Marx's materialist approach, Smith also recognizes the actual material interaction as the ontological ground of social science.²¹³ Marx and Smith both understand social relations as a series of processes that emerge from people's material interactions and engage people in relations organizing our interactions.²¹⁴ However, Smith criticizes Marx for his acceptance of these social relations as "presupposed without being analyzed".²¹⁵ Seeing these underlying relations as the real determinants of actual experience, Smith proposes to deepen our understanding of social relations by inserting the "practical activity of actual living individuals" between sociohistorical process and consciousness.²¹⁶ She further contends that discourses emerge in social relations and can be investigated as "ongoingly organized in and by the activities of actual people."²¹⁷ People play a crucial role as they are not passively produced by social relations, but are active and creative agents that give power to social relations.²¹⁸

Given this context, Smith develops a research methodology that is appropriate for exploring "how things are actually put together" and "how it works".²¹⁹ IE allows researchers to approach

²¹¹ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977). online: <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>> access on January 21, 2020.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ For an interpretation of Marx's ontology congenial to this point, please see Carol Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 1975) particularly in the first chapter on the ontology of society. Cited from Dorothy Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990) at 38.

²¹⁴ Dorothy Smith, *supra.* note 189 at 34.

²¹⁵ Dorothy Smith, *supra.* note 189 at 36.

²¹⁶ Patricia Clough, "On the Brink of Deconstructing Sociology: Critical Reading of Dorothy Smith's Standpoint Epistemology" (1993) 34:1 *The Sociological Quarterly* 169 at 170.

²¹⁷ Dorothy Smith, *supra.* note 190 at 160.

²¹⁸ Dorothy Smith, *supra.* note 190 at 161.

²¹⁹ Dorothy Smith, *supra.* note 194 at 1.

discourses from people's actual experiences in everyday life. Specifically, IE research begins with understanding the everyday experiences of the research subject, and treats this experience as the "problematic" of an "entry point of investigation".²²⁰ It makes sense of how these experiences are tied together in order to reveal the social relations of that coordinate an individual's experience.²²¹ An important aspect of IE research is to uncover ruling relations, which derives from the idea that an individual's experience is organized, connected to, and shaped by larger power relations.

By contrast, postmodernists develop their concept of discourse on considerations that are radically different from Smith's perspective on the ontology of social life.²²² Postmodern feminists find their theoretical roots in Foucault's discourse analysis, which begins with the text, and probes into the dynamic through which language is underpinned by power relations constructing people's understanding of daily experience.²²³ Postmodernists understand language as a medium that shapes an individual's understandings of the social system subjectively rather than being neutral and objective.²²⁴ Postmodern theory denies the existence of universal, stable reality, and contends that the discursive practices underpinned by imbalanced power relations fundamentally construct people's understanding on the conceptual level.²²⁵ If we adopt this strong version of postmodern feminism to see the subject as merely a position emerging from language, the traditional foundation of struggling for women's equality would be undermined.²²⁶ However, Benhabib's opinion that maintaining the subject while recognizing the influence of discourses bridges this conflict and offers an option to link postmodern feminism and Smith's IE research methodology

²²⁰ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 47.

²²¹ *Ibid.* at 17.

²²² Dorothy Smith, "Telling the Truth after Postmodernism" (1996) 19 3 *Symbolic Interaction* 171 at 175-178.

²²³ Maxine Eichner, *supra*. note 83 at 7.

²²⁴ Jean-Jacques Lecercle, "Postmodernism and Language" in Roy Boyne & Ali Rattansi, eds, *Postmodernism and Society* (Macmillan, 1990) at 76-96.

²²⁵ Maxine Eichner, *supra*. note 83.

²²⁶ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 64 at 52.

together. They share common interests in criticizing the discursive practices of Western modernity for assigning meanings to a traditional, fixed gender binary.²²⁷

The postmodern definition of discourse overlaps Smith's interests in exploring social relations beyond what individuals know and do.²²⁸ The effect of discourse on individuals, as Smith interprets, is "some aspects of [individuals'] lives are organized outside what they can know about from being there in the everyday world of experience".²²⁹ IE researchers bear in mind that an individual could only have a limited view of the whole social system from his or her own standpoint.²³⁰ Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond the individual's experience and to situate the individual's knowledge about their everyday work in a larger context of discursive practices. To gain a more complete and in-depth understanding of how the social system works, IE researchers also verify the accounts of these individuals with stakeholders from trans-local settings in order to gain a relatively complete understanding of the social system.²³¹

1.3. Text

IE research methodology also compliments postmodern feminism in understanding how texts and language function to reflect social relations. Postmodern theory emphasises the importance of language in representing power relationships in a textual form.²³² In the postmodern paradigm, language functions to shape our understanding of reality "to such a degree that is impossible to

²²⁷ Nancy Fraser, "False Antithesis," in Benhabib et al, ed, *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995) at 59.

²²⁸ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 60.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Roberta Sands & Kathleen Nuccio, "Postmodern Feminist Theory and Social Work" (1992)37:6 Social Work 489 at 490.

understand reality outside of them.”²³³ As Hawthorne states, “all that we can know is what we say about the world – our talk, our sentences, our discourses, our texts”.²³⁴ In regards to the relations between language and social relations, researchers also note that “language came into being the same way that society came into being”.²³⁵ As Fawcett argues, the descriptions of the empirical world through language are inevitably produced within the power relations of human society.²³⁶ This being said, people use textual language that is rooted in our social relations to reference things around us, which further shapes our understanding of social relations in reality.

IE shares a common understanding of text and language with postmodernism in seeing social relations behind the day-to-day operations of social organization as manifested in a text-based form. Our social organization is coordinated by a series of text-mediated working processes and courses of action.²³⁷ According to Smith, text mediates our relations of ruling, and is “an essential constituent of our institutional organization”.²³⁸ Individuals serve as the text’s agent by interpreting and responding to the text, which also activates the text and allows power to be exercised.²³⁹ The text helps individuals within social relations to anticipate what to do and how to interact with others.

²³³ Otto King, “Postmodern Understandings of Language and Power-Explanations and Refutations” (February 1, 2019) The Postil Magazine online: <<https://www.thepostil.com/postmodern-understandings-of-language-and-power-explanations-and-refutations/>>

²³⁴ Cited from, Sarah Harasym, ed, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall) at 17.

²³⁵ Le Huy Bac & Dao Thi Thu Hang, “From Language to Postmodern Language Game Theory” (2016)7:6 *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 319 at 319.

²³⁶ Barbara Fawcett, *Practice and Research in Social Work: Postmodern Feminist Perspectives* (Routledge, 2000) at 25.

²³⁷ Dorothy Smith, *supra.* note 194 at 17.

²³⁸ Dorothy Smith, *supra.* note 189 at 149.

²³⁹ Liza McCoy, “Activating the photographic text” in Marie Campbell & Ann Manicom, eds, *Knowledge, Experience, and Ruling Relations: Studies in the Social Organization of Knowledge* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) at 181-192.

From a feminist perspective, postmodern feminism and Smith have both criticized the male-dominant characteristics of texts, which is represented by “a strange disappearance of people from mainstream sociological discourse”.²⁴⁰ Texts have treated women as the objects of conceptual categories because the historical and systematical exclusion of women from the texts expresses men’s concerns.²⁴¹ However, seeing women as a purely discursive position produced by the text and language faces challenges when we question the missing women from our mainstream text. Smith addresses this problem by arguing that texts are created by people who have lives outside the texts; these people contribute to governing the lives of other individuals whose subjectivity will not be fully captured by the textual account.²⁴² Smith’s critique argues that texts mainly reflect a men’s perspective and leave women “outside and subservient to this structure”.²⁴³ In other words, “women have recognized the alienating effects of our participation in language that does not express our experience”.²⁴⁴

Smith’s point on the experience of women outside the mainstream text challenges the strong version of postmodern feminism which understands the subject of women as constructed exclusively through the reiteration of text, language, narrative, and discourse conjoined by a dynamic of power relationships.²⁴⁵ The pure reliance on language and discourse of this branch of postmodern feminism leaves no opportunities to develop understandings of women falling outside the mainstream discourse. However, Smith resonates with the weaker version of postmodern feminism because, on the premise of maintaining a subjectivity, they both recognize that text is an important medium that expresses relations of ruling. Hence, Smith proposes an alternative

²⁴⁰ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 64 at 52-53.

²⁴¹ Liz Stanley, *supra*. note 187 at 16.

²⁴² Dorothy Smith, “Women’s Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology” (1974)44:1 *Sociological Inquiry* at 9.

²⁴³ *Ibid*.

²⁴⁴ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 189 at 31.

²⁴⁵ Seyla Benhabib et al. *supra*. note 63 at 41.

sociology, which uses text as an entry point to investigate the ruling relations that are present but concealed in the working of the organizational process.²⁴⁶ Rather than taking the text for granted, Smith encourages people to investigate how our daily practices activate the text in exercising institutional power on individuals.²⁴⁷ Following this step, studying text-mediated knowledge and discursive practices provide us with insights into the larger structure of ruling relations.²⁴⁸ An example in my research is that, when I learned these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women were not able to find highly skilled jobs in their trained areas due to language barriers, I focus my attention on the textually mediated recruitment process that is prevalent in the Canadian labour market. I analyzed different types of recruitment forms for highly skilled and low-skilled positions. I also analyzed the language skills needed during an actual job application process to demonstrate how the recruitment system systematically disadvantages certain highly skilled immigrant women. With regard to other relevant factors (e.g. lacking support for immigrant women to attend the government-funded classes to improve their skills), I analyze how dominant social discourse has constrained these immigrant women in low-skilled occupations.

1.4. Feminist Goal

The fundamental reason for using IE to explore feminist questions is to point to the larger historical context of the feminist movement under which Smith has developed this research methodology.²⁴⁹ Smith's early work was informed by the general feminist assertion that women's voices are "almost entirely excluded" and "recognized as no more than marginal voices".²⁵⁰ IE

²⁴⁶ Liz Stanley, *supra*. note 187 at 57.

²⁴⁷ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 33.

²⁴⁸ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 194 at 33.

²⁴⁹ See Dorothy Smith, *Feminism and Marxism: A Place to Begin, A Way to Go* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1977) at 1

²⁵⁰ Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1987) at 1 and 17.

was created in the context of feminist sociology and thus inherently carries the goal of uncovering women's subordinated experience in a patriarchal society where dominant discursive practices assign meanings to the role of a woman.²⁵¹ In this sense, IE is an appropriate analytical tool to investigate feminist questions, but, as Diamond states, it is not exclusive to investigate women's experiences.²⁵² According to Smith, her personal experience in the 1970's feminist movement has heavily influenced her scholarly activities in developing the IE methodology.²⁵³ Smith's observation of women's experience in local activities begins from her own experience as a single mother.²⁵⁴ Her IE exploration first focuses on how the dominant discursive practices within educational institutions only recognize the traditional forms of parenthood as normal and treated single parenthood as different.²⁵⁵ For instance, Smith contends that the patriarchal social system excludes the single-parent family from the mainstream social discourse and creates inequalities for single-parent families.²⁵⁶ IE methodology resonates with at least some branches of postmodern feminist theory because they both criticize the subordinated status of women as being perpetuated by patriarchal social values and recognize the need for feminist reconstruction.

In the following years, the application of IE methodology was expanded from addressing women's problems to exploring the experience of more diverse subordinated groups. On this point, IE still shares common ground with postmodern feminism in revealing women's subordinated status, but also joins broader postmodern scholarship by going beyond the gender dimension of

²⁵¹ See Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 249 at 19.

²⁵² Timothy Diamond, "'Where did You Get the Fur Coat, Fern?' Participant Observation in Institutional Ethnography" in Dorothy Smith, ed, *Institutional Ethnography as Practice* (Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, 2006) at 48.

²⁵³ Grainne Kearney et al, "Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology of Discovery – in Conversation with Dorothy Smith" (2018)16:3Social Theory& Health 292 at 294.

²⁵⁴ Dorothy Smith, *supra* note 189 at 11.

²⁵⁵ Dorothy Smith, *supra* note 194 at 127.

²⁵⁶ Dorothy Smith, *supra* note 194 at 2.

subordination and by seeking its application to a wider range of subordinated groups. Smith initially called IE a “sociology for women”²⁵⁷ and later expanded the application of IE to the study of a much wider range of people. IE could be regarded as sociology for all who are subordinated within a society where social relations are producing power to shape an individual’s behaviors. Whilst gender is one of the constructed identities, IE research also examines how the other subordinated identities are constructed and subordinated in dominant discursive practices.²⁵⁸

The general feminist goal of my research explores the barriers against highly skilled Chinese immigrants from accessing highly skilled employment opportunities in Canada. This feminist issue can be explored from different approaches. I follow the weak version of postmodern feminism and the IE methodology to analyze the constituting process of these barriers in the Canadian immigration system. Contextual information demonstrates that the visibility of immigrant women has risen since the 1960’s;²⁵⁹ research on gender and migration has also expanded since then.²⁶⁰ The increased engagement of women in global migration has posed enormous challenges to immigration governance. Many immigrant women have been reported to suffer from neglect, exclusion, and discrimination in their migration process.²⁶¹ Some literature points the reasons for these immigrant women’s disadvantages to the intersection of each single identity, such as their race, ethnicity, nationality, and immigration status.²⁶² However, the postmodern feminist approach

²⁵⁷ Dorothy Smith, *supra* note 194 at 1.

²⁵⁸ Liz Stanley, *supra* note 187 at 100.

²⁵⁹ International Labour Organization (ILO), “Preventing Discrimination, Exploitation, and Abuse of Women Migrant Workers: An Information Guide, Booklet 1 – Introduction: Why the Focus on Women International Workers ” online: (June 01, 2003)

<http://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Instructionmaterials/WCMS_116358/lang--en/index.htm> at 9.

²⁶⁰ Elizabeth Grieco & Monica Boyd, “Women and Migration: Incorporating Gender into International Migration Theory” Florida State University, Center for the Study of Population. Working Paper WPS 98-139 ISSN 0740-9095; Stephanie Nawyn, “Gender and Migration: Integrating Feminist Theory into Migration Studies” (2010) 4:9 *Sociology Compass* 749 at 750.

²⁶¹ Jennifer Hainsfurther, “A Rights-Based Approach: Using CEDAW to Protect the Human Rights of Migrant Workers” (2008-2009)24 *Am. U. Int'l L. Rev.* 843 at 845.

²⁶² Yvonne Riano, Nadia Baghdadi & Doris Wastl-Walter, *supra*. note 32 at 8.

gives me an inclusive view to keep feminism as a necessary component for my research, but also examines the overall influence of discursive practices on individuals with multiple identities. I focus on the interactions between identities and discursive practices to reveal the knowledge of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women about migration to Canada is constructed in discursive practices.

1.5. Limitations of Applying the Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Identifying the divergences and connections between the theoretical and methodological frameworks provide me with a solid foundation for understanding highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's experiences from a discursive view while maintaining the subject of women during my analysis. There are criticisms raised against postmodern feminist theory, which inspires me to carefully consider why I follow Benhabib's weak version of postmodern feminist theory and IE methodology for this research. A major critique of postmodern feminism is that this theory is too abstract and its rejection of essentialism offers "no basis for collaborative political action".²⁶³ To illustrate, postmodern feminism raises the issue of gender as a contributing factor for inequality, but it understands gender as a discursively constructed identity within social relations.

Benhabib's feminist approach has some reservations about postmodern feminist theory. Her feminist approach criticizes the patriarchal social structure that is constructed through discourse, but it does not deny the subject of women that is traditionally used to raise women's visibility.²⁶⁴ Benhabib recognizes that there is a pre-existing subject and this subject needs to be situated in discursive practices.²⁶⁵ This view does not completely reject our traditional understanding of

²⁶³ Rosemarie Tong & Tina Fernandes Botts, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2016) at 207.

²⁶⁴ Benhabib, Seyla et al. *supra.* note 63 at 20.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

selfhood in modernity because it recognizes the necessity of articulating a “more adequate, less deluded, and less mystified version of subjectivity” for the consciousness-raising of a certain group of people.²⁶⁶ In regards to the methodological framework mentioned above, Dorothy Smith also firmly supports maintaining the subject of women as a site to fight for women’s empowerment.²⁶⁷ Whilst Benhabib and Smith both notice that postmodernism can offer grounds for feminist advocacy, they do not ally with some postmodernists who argue for completely abandoning the ontological basis for feminist advocacy. This reserved approach shielded them from the criticisms that are commonly aimed at postmodern feminist theory. Instead of choosing between postmodern approaches and modernist commitments, Benhabib’s weak version of postmodern feminist theory and Smith’s IE methodology leave more room for blending postmodern and modernist thoughts by “[going] back and forth” and “selectively appropriating elements of each.”²⁶⁸

2. Part II Postmodern Feminist Theory and IE in My Research

In this section, I compare the key concepts that inherently connect Benhabib’s weak version of postmodern feminist theory with Smith’s IE methodology. The significant linkages and minor divergences in the aforementioned concepts have provided me with the theoretical and methodological foundation. According to Katharine Bartlett, a broad and basic definition of the feminist study refers to answering the questions “in some way to the subject matter of women”.²⁶⁹ Sharing the ultimate goal of uncovering women’s subordination within the patriarchal social

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Dorothy Smith, “Women’s Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology” (1974)44:1 *Sociological Inquiry* at 9.

²⁶⁸ Margot Canaday, “Promising Alliances: The Critical Feminist Theory of Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib”(2003)74:74 *Feminist Review* 50 at 51.

²⁶⁹ Katharine Bartlett, “Cracking Foundations as Feminist Method” 8:31 *J. of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* 31 at 32.

system, my research focuses on a particular aspect – the advancement of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s career opportunities in their post-migration lives in Canada

To be more specific, in Chapter IV, I reveal that, regardless of the discursively constructed immigration categories that many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women were admitted through, most of them intended to use their skills in the Canadian labour market, and they commonly encountered barriers to their highly skilled career restoration. Following this, I discuss how the inadequate English or French skills of Chinese immigrants impede these Chinese immigrant women from being considered for highly skilled jobs in Chapter V. The next chapter investigates how the government-funded employment-related services distance these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women from highly skilled employment opportunities. Studying these interlinked factors allows me to make a comprehensive analysis of the barriers faced by these women participants against their highly skilled career restoration in Canada.

This research is intersectional and feminist because it adopts a feminist perspective, but does not focus exclusively on the gender aspect. It also investigates the interplay of gender identity with Chinese ethnicity as a racial minority and immigration status as an incomplete membership in Canadian society. These marginalized identities jointly function to reinforce this group of women’s marginalization. Yet, rather than emphasizing the impact of one or each dimension, this research explores the collective constituting of these identities in discursive practices. I situate these identities in the constituting process of forming, defining, and reproducing in and through discursive practices. In other words, this feminist research reveals how discursive practices have constructed marginalized identities that jointly install barriers for highly skilled Chinese immigrant women.

Postmodern feminist legal theory is an excellent tool to investigate the above-mentioned themes from a discursive perspective. Discursive practices in everyday life have already strategically categorized women into different groups. Based on our conventional impression, at the mention of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, one might immediately associate these racialized immigrant women with a vulnerable situation, such as lacking sufficient language skills²⁷⁰ and underemployment.²⁷¹ One might also have contesting knowledge of these immigrant women as a relatively privileged group because their economic competitiveness is usually noticeable.²⁷² Rather than investigating how these contesting characteristics co-exist, this research adopts a postmodern view to argue that all the knowing and understanding derived from fixed and rigid identities are in fact fluid. This research shifts people's attention away from the existence and maintenance of pre-determined identities and explores how discursive practices influence the way people present their difference in a variety of social settings. In my analysis of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's lived experience, I focus on how dominant discourse in the immigrant-receiving society exerts influence on individual immigrants. The discourse constitutes their understandings, and also brings their personal identity into existence through the constituting process.

Not only has postmodern feminist theory allowed me to examine the construction of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's labour market experiences from a conceptual level, but it has also informed the specific research process that I followed in this research. For instance, in the

²⁷⁰ Kilbride et al, "Reclaiming Voice: Challenges and Opportunities for Immigrant Women Learning English."(2008)CERIS-The Ontario Metropolis Center Working Paper, CERIS Working Paper No.72.

²⁷¹ Stephanie Premji &Yogendra Shakya, "Pathways Between Under/unemployment and Health Among Racialized Immigrant Women in Toronto." (2017) 22L1 *Ethnicity & Health* 17–35.

²⁷² IOM & OECD, "Harnessing Knowledge on the Migration of Highly Skilled Women" (2014) online:<<https://publications.iom.int/books/harnessing-knowledge-migration-highly-skilled-women> > at 14.

recruitment process, my participants were recruited based on their self-identification as highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. I value these women's own understanding of their identity and recognize the way they prefer to present themselves in Canadian society, instead of assigning a meaning to the named group of women that I study. In the data analysis process, I pay attention to the socially constructed meaning of being a highly skilled Chinese immigrant woman. Exploring their lived experience allow me to explain how they see and understand their activities under the influence of various forms of discursive practices in society. Throughout my research, I refer to the postmodern feminist theory to record highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's experiences, to understand their disadvantages, and to analyze their situation from a systematic view.

In terms of the methodological approach, I follow the IE research guide to navigate the feminist contentions and to answer my research questions. Interviews were the major method for data collection for this research. Women participants' specific experiences in local settings become the foundation for me to explore further the social relations extra-locally.²⁷³ To explain this methodology, I will first quote a summary of IE research by Smith herself and an explanation by researchers following her research strategies. Smith has described the IE research methodology as:

*“Working from people’s experience of their own doings, knitting different perspectives and positions together, and exploring the text-based forms of organization to provide means of constructing a representation of how things work...”*²⁷⁴

DeVault and McCoy further explain the three essential steps of IE research, saying:

²⁷³ Liz Stanley, *supra*. note 187 at 18-19.

²⁷⁴ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 189 at 183.

“(a) identify an experience, (b) identify some of the institutional processes that are shaping that experience, and (c) investigate those processes in order to describe analytically how they operate as the grounds of experience.”²⁷⁵

2.1. Research Process

2.1.1. Research Question

This research asks the following questions: whether there are barriers in Canada for highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to develop highly skilled careers? and if so, how are these barriers constructed and impact these immigrant women from returning to a pre-migration career?

2.1.2. Literature Review

Before my field research, I conducted a literature review of over 800 documents in English to understand the personal and institutional conditions of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. Canada’s official bilingualism makes literature in French equally important to that in English; however, this literature review mainly covers literature in English because the majority of Chinese immigrants in my study, like me, only learned English before coming to Canada. As mentioned in Chapter II, I reviewed literature that covers the following topics: immigrant women’s labour market marginalization, and inadequate language skills. Reviewing this literature familiarized me with basic contextual knowledge that is necessary to embark on this research journey.

2.1.3. Ethical Clearance

The well-being of participants is the primary consideration of this research project; therefore, ethical approval is needed in order to initiate this research. I submitted my first ethical application

²⁷⁵ Marijorie DeVault & Liza McCoy, *supra.* note 208 at 755.

on February 4th, 2019. Reviewers returned with modifying suggestions on March 1st, 2019. Suggestions include selecting participants from a larger number of candidates, specifying the length of interviews, using snowball sampling recruitment strategies, obtaining consent over the telephone, protecting participants' privacy in future publications, ensuring consistency in the forms, as well as some detailed information in the consent forms. Following the submission of my modified application on March 15, 2019, a new response was received on March 15, 2019, which required me to revise some information on the forms and to reduce the number of preventative measures for this minimal risk research. After revising and submitting the modified application a second time on March 22, 2019, this research received the certificate of ethical approval on March 25, 2019 valid through March 24, 2020. From then on, the interviews with women participants were arranged and conducted. I renewed the certificate of ethical approval on March 24, 2020, and the new certificate is valid until March 24, 2021.

2.1.4. *Identify Women Participants*

I first began my interviews in Ottawa, Ontario. Interviews with 30 immigrant women in this stage provided me with an overall impression of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's experience in Canada. Following this, I conducted 15 interviews in Edmonton, Alberta, where I encountered more young immigrant women who provided me with different data. In the end, I returned to Ottawa to interview 1 more immigrant woman to collect complementary data on the topics that I have already identified from previous interviews.

I selected the interviewees purposefully based on all the following criteria:

- Age 18 or older, self-identified as a woman;
- Temporary residents, permanent residents or citizens in Canada;

-
- Having at least one-year work experience at the skill level of O, A, B in accordance with the National Occupational Code (NOC)
 - Currently living in Canada
 - Having Chinese nationality originally; and
 - Being able to read and converse in English or Mandarin

The very first step was to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 30 highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. The reason for choosing Ottawa as the first city to begin my research was that I have lived and studied here for five years. Therefore, I have personal contact with a significant number of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who might agree to participate. I began with this targeted population by creating a list of these immigrant women whom I have known for some time. My interviews with some of these immigrant women led me to other participants in a snowballing effect. During the interviews, I asked my participants whether they would like to distribute the recruitment text to other potential participants who meet all the eligibility requirements. Some participants distributed my recruitment text to their friends and acquaintances. Their extended network helped me to identify more women participants. Recruiting interviewees from personal networks turns out to be the most effective method for my recruitment.

Another complementary way to recruit participants in Ottawa was to post my recruitment information in relevant institutions that have connections with highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. The major institutions from which I recruited include the Chinese language school, Ottawa Chinese Community Service Center, Chinese cultural centers, and private immigration agencies. After obtaining permission from the principal administrators of these institutions, I distributed my

recruitment text in the following two ways. One way was to send out my recruitment posters electronically in online discussion groups. I followed this method when I recruited through Chinese cultural centers and some private immigration agencies. I sent information online rather than hanging posters on bulletin boards because social media was the most efficient and reliable tool to contact participants. Contacting potential participants in a way that is familiar to them increased the chances of successful recruitment. Another way to recruit participants began from an initial face-to-face introduction, and was followed up by email, message and/or phone call. In the Chinese language school, I got permission from the principal administrator to announce my research recruitment in a staff meeting. In the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Center, the program director suggested I speak briefly about my project in front of students in three language training classes. I explained the purpose and procedure of my research and left my contact information. Immigrant women who expressed their interest in participating wrote down their names and telephone numbers in order for me to contact them later on.

After my 30 interviews with women participants in Ottawa, I also conducted 15 interviews in Edmonton, Alberta. I chose this city because I have personal connections with some highly skilled immigrant women that can sustain my research with a sufficient number of participants. Some women participants in Edmonton were directly invited through me. From these initial contacts, snowball sampling was relied upon. Throughout my research in Edmonton, I recruited and contacted participants by myself with referrals made by some of my research participants. During my stay in Edmonton, I have also interviewed 1 woman from Victoria over the telephone. These immigrant women that I interviewed in Edmonton learned about this research from their personal networks.

The remaining part of the interview was conducted with 1 immigrant woman from Ottawa to complement previous feminist accounts. She was referred through persons in my personal network who knew that her story would contribute to this research. Generally speaking, IE researchers primarily value the diverse experience of research participants rather than the demographic categories that they fall in. Therefore, the geographical sites were chosen only to increase the diversity in the accounts by participants.

Women participants were determined on a “first come, first served” basis. Initially, this research received approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Ottawa for a maximum number of 25 participants. With these 25 participants, I have gained a relatively complete overview of these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s situation, but the data have not been saturated. However, the data saturation has not been fully reached for my initially designed research questions because other relevant themes continued to emerge, such as the lived experience of senior highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. To further study the emerging themes, I applied to increase my immigrant women participants from 25 to 45 to the REB on May 13, 2019. In addition, I applied to add two sets of research questions in order to address the concerns emerged from previous interviews. The modified application received May 25, 2019 covered under the previous certificate valid until March 24, 2020. With this increased number, I completed the other 5 interviews in Ottawa before traveling to Edmonton for the following research. More than expected numbers of women participants approached me in Edmonton. As a result, my approved number of 45 became insufficient again for me to complete all the scheduled interviews. To address this problem, I applied to increase my women participants again to the REB to 60 on Sep 6, 2019, and the modification was approved again on October 1st, 2019. By the end of this research, I have interviewed 31 immigrant women in Ottawa, Ontario, 14 women during

my stay in Edmonton, Alberta including one telephone interview with a young woman residing in Victoria, British Columbia.

2.1.5. *Interview Process*

The lengths of my interviews with women participants range from 20 to 120 minutes. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in comfortable and private rooms at multiple locations, including the researcher's home, the participant's home, the researcher's office, the participant's office, meeting rooms in a public library, classrooms in educational institutions, basements at the participants' workplace, and participant's vehicles. The locations were chosen at the interviewees' convenience. Meanwhile, the chosen location must meet the criteria described in my ethics application – a private and comfortable place that guarantees the privacy of participants. I conducted some interviews on the telephone. I called the interviewees at the time that was convenient for them.

Prior to the interview, I gave participants a copy of the consent form to read. To make sure the information on the consent form in English was understood, I also read and explained the information in Mandarin and asked whether the participants needed further explanations on any particular issue. While reading and explaining the consent form, I usually highlighted the aspects of research purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and voice recording. After confirming with the participants that their concerns had all been addressed, I asked them whether they agreed to participate in the research and to be voice recorded. For interviews conducted face-to-face, I usually asked the participants to sign two copies of the consent form on site, and each of us kept one copy. For some participants who preferred to sign it electronically, I attached the consent form in an email and asked them to return the signed consent form to me after the interview. For participants who were interviewed over the telephone, I explained the consent form the same way

as I did for face-to-face interviews and ensured that all the information has been covered. After this, I obtained oral consent with a voice record.

Next, I asked interview questions based on the REB-approved interview guide that I had developed earlier. All the interviews with immigrant women were conducted in Mandarin. The interview guide had a list of several central questions and several associated questions. The central questions were used as a starting point in each session to explore the highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's experience. The associated questions expanded the central questions in several aspects and also summarized the deeper conversation at the end. The questions roughly covered the following aspects of these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's lives: motivations of migration, immigration process, family relations, employment history, children's education, parents and grandparents' migration. To provide details of interview questions, I attach the interview guide for women participants below.

Interview Guide with Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women

Title of the Study: The Migration of Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women in Canada

Interviewer: Chen Wang

Interviewer's Affiliation: Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa

Introductory Statement:

The purpose of this research is to study the respondent's experience as a highly skilled immigrant woman in Canada. The respondent will be asked about the migration experience under Canada's immigration laws and policies, career options in the Canadian labour market, and family relationships before and after immigrating to Canada. The interview will be conducted at the venue preferred by the respondent. The interview will last 60-90 minutes. The interview will be recorded by a digital recorder.

Interview Questions:

Question 1: Tell me about your migration history (When and through which immigration program did you come to Canada? What are your goals for migration to Canada? What do you hope to achieve to migrate? How would you describe your experience in Canada since arrival?)

Question 2: Tell me about your employment history in China and Canada (What do you do for a living in China? Are you working in Canada? If so, how long did it take for you to get this job and how did you get this job? What are the most helpful things you did to get this job? Do women and men have same experience in finding employment in Canada?)

Question 3: Tell me about your family (Did your family come with you to Canada? If so, who are they? Who initiated the immigration process in your family? What are the most/least helpful things your family did for you? Do you feel migration affect men and women differently?)

Question 4: Tell me about your migration status (How long did you take to go through this immigration process before receiving your current immigration status? Did the immigration process you went through, at any point, shock you and interrupt your immigration plan? In what way do you feel the immigration process affects your life in Canada? If you could suggest a change to the immigration rules that influence you, what would be the most important part you want to change?)

Question 5: Tell me your stories about combating difficulties in migration process as an immigrant woman.

The interview questions mainly explored three topics. One of the topics that women participants showed great interest in discussing is about highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's opportunities to access intended jobs in the Canadian labour market. Experiences of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women indicated that they commonly suffered from prolonged unemployment or underemployment by working in positions that did not match their qualifications. Their work typically concentrated in certain positions where women were over-represented, which led to a gender gap in occupations, wages, and precariousness. These Chinese

immigrant women arrived with professional skills and hoped to use them in the Canadian labour market. However, the reality of not being able to restore their career status even after years of effort to enhance their qualifications constituted a loss for both these immigrant women and Canada.

Next, my research participants also brought the gendered family role of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to my attention. Existing literature has identified many immigrant women as dependent spouses who have secondary careers or experience negative impacts of gaps in their work histories.²⁷⁶ The migration process sometimes intensifies skilled immigrant women's family responsibilities, and highly skilled immigrant women's career development is particularly influenced when they are still in the primary role of taking household responsibilities.²⁷⁷ In addition, my women participants also reported considerable financial pressures imposed on immigrant families in the first few years after arriving in Canada, these immigrant women sometimes must not only act as primary caregivers defined by traditional gendered family roles, but must also accept temporary, low-paying jobs that they were over-qualified for. Accepting these kinds of jobs brought immediate income for them to pay for their family expenses, but impeded them from professional development opportunities that could potentially lead to better career outcomes. The majority of my women participants accepted this situation as a necessary step they needed to take. With a few exceptions, the immigrant women I interviewed typically described their experiences of delaying pursuing their own professional career development during the first few years in Canada as "normal" "necessary" or "mandatory".²⁷⁸ The dual burden of working both

²⁷⁶ See, Margaret Linehan & Hugh Scullion, "Senior Female International Managers: Empirical Evidence from Western Europe" (2002)14 Human Resource Management Review 433-448.

²⁷⁷ Guida Man & Elena Chou, *supra*. note 46 at 345.

²⁷⁸ Note: Most of my women participants accept this view for a number of reasons. For instance, Participants 2, 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 22, and 23 prioritize the childcare work over their own professional development; Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12, 16, 19, and 23 save the best resources for career development for their husbands. Only a few immigrant

in domestic and public spheres on highly skilled immigrant women contributes to a gendered migration phenomenon.²⁷⁹

In addition, my research explores whether discursively constructed immigration categories affect highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's migration experience. Empirical data reveals that the immigration categories are fluid because the categories that immigrants come through may not reflect immigrants' overall qualifications. Immigrants may strategically choose the category that most quickly leads to being able to apply for permanent residency. Although many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in this research were admitted through different immigration categories, most of them intended to use their skills in the Canadian labour market and encountered similar barriers to their highly skilled career restoration.

After interviewing 25 immigrant women from Ottawa, issues touching upon immigrant children's education and family sponsorship for parents and grandparents emerged as important questions to explore. Therefore, I applied to the REB to add two questions below. These questions were widely used for later interviews.

Question 6: Tell me about your children's experience at school (How do you communicate with teachers at your children's school? How did you help your children to resolve problems at school, if there is any?)

women, such as Participants 7 and 29 did not compromise their own career development in order to support other family members.

²⁷⁹ Alma Vega, "The Time Intensity of Childcare Provided by Older Immigrant Women in the United States" (2017)39:7 *Research on Aging* 823–848.

Question 7: What's the attitude of your parents/grandparents about immigrating to Canada? How is their lived experience in Canada? What you have done/ will do to help them know more about Canadian society?)

Data about these two aspects were collected at the interview stage, but were not reflected in the final version of my doctoral thesis. I wrote this thesis in compilation with the requirements set out by the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at the University of Ottawa. The reduction means to keep this thesis from becoming too voluminous. I will write these issues in short articles that I plan to publish after completing this doctoral thesis.

2.1.6. Identify Key Informants

Narratives of my research participants led me to seek out information from key informants, whose knowledge complemented and verified these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's accounts. The essential criteria are that the key informants had direct professional experience of working with highly skilled immigrant women in general, and those with a Chinese background in particular. These key informants can assist me in understanding the power relations behind the reported everyday life of these highly skilled immigrant women from the perspective that these immigrant women do not have. Key informants for this stage of data collection were chosen as the interviews with women participants proceeded.

I began from a purposive sampling method based on the analysis of data from women participants, which directed me to the key actors that influence the migration process and integration experience. These key informants provided information about the missing details of how social relations work in the local setting. Different perspectives were essential because this level of data collection went beyond what people in the local setting see and do. In other words,

the ideology behind these data collection methods was that informants cannot fully see the primary relations behind the complex social phenomenon.²⁸⁰ For these considerations, I interviewed more key informants who could tell how the phenomenon has been produced, organized, and ruled from other perspectives. These key informants included immigration lawyers and community immigration service providers, who could help me learn more about the topic.

The primary method for me to reach the key informants was through professional networks. For example, the immigration lawyers with whom I am already familiar recommended other immigration lawyers and consultants to me. I followed the snowball sampling method to ask whether they could kindly refer me to their colleagues or acquaintances who have insights into my research question. Next, I followed up with their referral to further arrange the interviews. In this situation, the person being connected to me informed me what process I should follow to seek permission from principal administrators.

In addition to this method, I also sent emails to directors of the targeted organizations to seek permission to recruit participants from them. I also visited the organizations in person to contact the administrators about the recruitment. In this case, basic information about the study was provided. I asked if they have existing policies or practices that prohibit them from 1) allowing employees or volunteers at the organization to become potential participants or 2) referring clients that had used their services that are appropriate for this research study. For the organizations that have no prohibitive regulations, I left my recruitment text with the secretary at the front desk, and the secretary assisted me in distributing the recruitment information to relevant administrators. For those organizations that have provided me with a positive response about participation, I contacted

²⁸⁰ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 60.

further administrators at these agencies by telephone or email to pre-arrange the face-to-face interview.

2.1.7. *Interview Process*

Interview with experts followed similar steps to those mentioned for women participants. I conducted 8 expert interviews in total, with 6 interviews being conducted face-to-face in the participant's office and 2 interviews over the telephone. I obtained consent from these key informants prior to the interviews. For the face-to-face interviews, I gave key informants a copy of the consent form to read. If they have any questions, I explained their questions in English and ensured that all their concerns had been addressed. After this, I asked these experts whether they agreed to participate in the research and to be voice recorded. These participants had the choice of signing the consent form on paper or electronically. For the expert who was interviewed over the telephone, I explained the consent form over the phone and ensured that all the information on the form has been covered. After this, I obtained oral consent with voice records, and followed up by sending them the consent form in the electronic version.

The lengths of interviews with key informants varied, ranging from 46 minutes to 111 minutes. 5 interviews with key informants were conducted in English and 3 interviews were conducted in Mandarin at the preference of the experts. I asked interview questions based on the REB-approved interview guide for key informants that I had developed earlier. Some of the interview questions asked the same content for all the key informants, but I also asked different in-depth and follow-up questions for key informants with expertise in different areas. The core questions are listed below:

Interview Questions:

Question 1: Whether or not you have direct experience with Chinese highly skilled immigrant women, what are your personal thoughts?

Question 2: Whether or not you have seen the hardships faced by these Chinese highly skilled immigrant women? If so, what were these hardships?

Question 3: What are the goals that Canada want to achieve by having current highly skilled migration schemes?

Question 4: Do Canada's highly skilled migration schemes generate effects felt equally by men and women? If not, what were the differences?

2.1.8. *Field Note*

I also took field research notes after conducting each interview. I usually reviewed the Interview Guide an hour before every scheduled interview in order to maintain an ideal flow of our conversation. The order of my central questions and several associated questions might switch depending on the particular interests of each immigrant woman. Getting familiar with interview questions beforehand assisted me in switching between different parts of questions while maintaining the integrity of the whole study. After the interview, I usually set aside around an hour to note down my corresponding thoughts about what I felt and how I believe the informant felt. These notes inspired me to reflect on future data analysis.

2.1.9. *My positionality*

As a member of the researched group, I have gained some insights into highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's migration journeys and their major concerns about restoring highly skilled careers after coming to Canada. My positionality inevitably affects my research project in terms of identifying research participants, shaping research questions, and conducting data analysis. Meanwhile, I must acknowledge that my understandings of the post-migration career paths for

highly skilled Chinese immigrant women are limited. I have only experienced the Canadian migration processes as an international student on temporary status, and therefore I lack understandings of other highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who immigrated under different circumstances. Although my research topics are related to my personal experiences, I understand highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's labour market experiences from their narratives.

My background as a member of this group brought me an advantage in accessing a sizable number of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women within approximately six months, as well as in accessing experts assisting Chinese immigrants at the community-based service centers. These participants' answers to my interview questions effectively clarified how highly skilled Chinese immigrant women navigate employment opportunities in the Canadian labour market and how they discover and overcome the challenges for their highly skilled career restoration. However, being a member of this group might have also made some women participants refrain from talking about family issues even though I informed them of guaranteed confidentiality prior to the interviews. To avoid this problem, I proactively recruited highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who were less familiar with me. I relied on those Chinese immigrant women who were familiar with me to refer other qualified participants through the snowball sampling method.

Transcribe Interviews Most of the interviews were audio-recorded with the exception of 3 women participants and 2 key informants expressing their unwillingness to be recorded. For the majority of participants who agreed to be recorded, I used two digital voice recorders to double-record the interviews. After the interview, I transferred the digital files to USB storage for the exclusive use of this research. I named the digital files with numbers only to ensure the protection of the personal information of my participants. For those who disagreed to be recorded, I took

notes on my laptop. One of the three women participants read my notes, made modifications, and returned the modified version on the same day of the interview.

All the interviews with immigrant women were conducted in Mandarin. I am capable of transcribing interviews in Chinese languages into English text. I transcribed the audio files word-to-word into Chinese texts, so that I could gain the highest level of accuracy when transcribing interviews. I closely observed the recorded data through repeated and careful listening, and selected the essential information for further interpretation.²⁸¹ For the parts that I would need for a direct quotation, I first transcribed the interviews in their original language and then translated the Chinese text into English. For the interviews with key informants, as the majority of the interviews were conducted in English, I transcribed these audio files word-to-word into English texts. The other three interviews with key informants conducted in Mandarin were transcribed in the same way as those with women participants.

2.1.10. *Data Analysis*

After collecting data from these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, I gain a complex and rich picture of their everyday experience in local settings. The analytic goal of IE research is to identify, trace, and describe the social relations that extend beyond the boundaries of individuals' knowledge.²⁸² To illustrate the IE data analysis processes, in this section, I introduce some key concepts that I use to guide my research. These terms map out the essential steps that IE researchers take, especially because IE methodology requires a shift in our ordinary habit of thinking. This section provides a consolidated explanation of these key concepts that are

²⁸¹ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra* note 65 at 98.

²⁸² *Ibid.* at 90.

particularly relevant to the discussion in this research, which allows me to create some common ground for moving smoothly to the substantive discussions in the following chapters.

IE research typically begins with identifying the standpoint of the research subjects. Standpoint is integral to the IE method of inquiry because “it does establish a subject position for institutional ethnography as a method of inquiry, a site for the knower that is open to anyone.”²⁸³ IE researchers use the concept of standpoint to “create the space for an absent subject” within the discursive practices.²⁸⁴ As a technical and conceptual term, the standpoint is an empty position from where IE researchers can get to know the research subjects’ position and from where they could explicate or map out the institutional relations beyond the local actuality in everyday experiences.²⁸⁵ In comparison, the standpoint is different from a specific perspective or worldview that reflects research subjects’ particular attitude towards their local experiences, which represents their specific viewpoint or opinion.²⁸⁶

I analyze the narratives from these women participants’ standpoint to explore the discursive organization which is much larger than what they can know and understand from their local experiences. The experiences of these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in local sites include what they actually do, how they do it, and what they think and understand from their local experiences. IE researchers use the term “problematic” to refer to “the translation of an actual property of the social relations or organizations of people’s ordinary doings into a topic for

²⁸³ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 189 at 10.

²⁸⁴ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 250 at 105-106.

²⁸⁵ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 189 at 10.

²⁸⁶ *Note:* Dorothy Smith’s notion of standpoint is different from earlier versions of feminist standpoint theory. In Smith argues that “the standpoint of women situates the sociological subject prior to the entry into the abstracted conceptual mode” in Chapter I of her edited book: *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*; however, the feminist standpoint theory contends that research focusing on power relations should begin with a specific focus on the marginalized group’s own perspective. Gender is one of the multiple facets that researchers cite to analyze the struggle within marginalized lives in the earlier versions of feminist standpoint theory. More relevant information can be seen from: <https://iep.utm.edu/fem-stan/>.

ethnographic research.”²⁸⁷ Problematic provides me with an entry point of inquiry, from where I can study the ruling relations from the particular experiences lived by the women participants. The concept of “problematic” is used as a bridging tool to weave the individual’s actual experiences into the larger fabric that is invisible from participants’ everyday lives. It is also a guiding tool that points out the direction of inquiry towards the ruling relations at the extra-local level. For instance, in Chapter V, I document a problematic: that many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women withdrew from the government-funded language training program which is free of charge and easily accessible, and from there I inquire into the ruling relations that tell us why the learning needs of these immigrant women were not met in the government-funded language training programs.

IE researchers begin by explicating a particular problematic and proceed beyond the research participants’ knowledge in local settings. My investigation of the ruling relations began from the issues, concerns, or problems that emerged from these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s everyday experiences and situated their experiences within institutionalized discursive practices. Ruling relations are important aspects of investigation for IE research because they extend researchers’ attention to the power relations outside the research subject’s experience from local settings. For instance, I analyze how Canada provided funding for immigrant service providers to develop language training and employment-related services for immigrants, but many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in this research felt that the ways they were expected to be involved in these government-funded services could not help them to resolve the most pressing settlement needs. According to Smith, ruling relations mean the institutional complexes that “coordinate the everyday work of administration and the lives of those subject to administrative

²⁸⁷ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 189 at 39.

regimes”²⁸⁸ In this research, I analyze how the service-providing processes that are external to highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s knowledge in the local settings shape their options towards finding highly skilled employment.

Smith has made it clear on several occasions that text is an important constituent of social relations.²⁸⁹ She argued that texts “are forms of writing, speaking or imaging that are replicable and hence can be read, heard and watched by more than one individual, in different places and at different times” having the capacity to “suture modes of social action organized extra-locally to the local actualities of our necessarily embodied lives.”²⁹⁰ When individuals act in accordance with the requirement outlined by the textual information, these individuals’ experiences are influenced by the power relations behind the texts. IE researchers aim to map out text-based social relations to understand how an individual’s experiences are ruled by the power relations that are not visible for local sites. Analyzing individuals’ actual experiences and textual information provides me with an opportunity to investigate social relations.

Text is important for an IE analysis not only because it is essential for guiding an individual’s pre-arranged actions in concert in daily actuality, but also as it is visible and useful for individuals with little knowledge of how the much larger institution operates.²⁹¹ Text is the only tangible medium that carries determinations of many social activities,²⁹² which opens up to an empirical investigation to how power operates in extra-local levels that is usually hidden. In this research, highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s experiences are connected in pre-determined ways despite not being clearly visible from individuals’ local sites. For instance, in Chapter V, I compare

²⁸⁸ DeVault, Marjorie, “Ruling Relations” in *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (15 February 2007).

²⁸⁹ Dorothy Smith, *supra* note 190 at 211.

²⁹⁰ Dorothy Smith, *supra* note 189 at 165-166.

²⁹¹ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 32.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

two types of job application forms for highly- and low- skilled jobs respectively later in this chapter. Power relations coordinate these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's activities in the local settings through these textually mediated forms as they must follow these textually mediated processes to explore employment opportunities in Canada.

Treating social relations as an object of inquiry often “gives rise to interpretational issue and puzzles”.²⁹³ According to Smith, puzzles are discursive formulations that are latent in the actualities of the experienced world,²⁹⁴ which could be linked together through a systematic inquiry into ruling relations from the identified problematic. IE researchers bring in IE's theorization about the relations between institutionalized ruling relations and individuals' activities when describing research participants' activities, which makes it possible to glimpse into the ruling relations from these puzzles.²⁹⁵ For example, in Chapter V, I introduce three puzzles in relation to language barriers that prevent my women participants from accessing highly skilled jobs in the Canadian labour market, starting from these immigrant women's standpoint.

This section provides a brief summary of research processes informed by IE. How data was analyzed for the topics discussed in each chapter will be reported in detail in the following chapters.

²⁹³ Liz Stanley, *supra* note 187 at 18.

²⁹⁴ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 250 at 91.

²⁹⁵ Janet Rankin, “Conducting Analysis in Institutional Ethnography: Guidance and Cautions” (2017) 16 :1 International Journal of Qualitative Methods 1 at 8.

Chapter IV Immigration Categories

1. Introduction

1.1. The Fluidity of Immigration Categories

Canada has presented itself as a nation built on immigrants.²⁹⁶ In Canada, a series of immigration legislative, policymaking, and socially-dependent processes that are increasingly and pervasively textual and discursive repeatedly confirm the use of immigrant categorization as a reference point to coordinate immigrants' everyday life.²⁹⁷ At the legislative level, textual information, represented by the *Citizenship Act*,²⁹⁸ *Immigration and Refugee Protection Acts (IRPA)*,²⁹⁹ and *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (IRPR)*,³⁰⁰ constructs and reproduces various categories to draw distinctions among immigrants and to associate different rights and entitlements for immigrants in different categories.³⁰¹ Decisions of Canadian courts also provide important references for how rights and entitlements are conferred on immigrants based on these legally constructed categories.³⁰² Additionally, policies released on the website of IRCC to a large extent shape individuals' experience under the Canadian immigration system because they serve to implement and interpret immigration law and to guide the administration of specific

²⁹⁶ Bob Birrell & Elizabeth McIsaac, *supra*. note 27.

²⁹⁷ Maykel Verkuyten, "Immigration Discourses and Their Impact on Multiculturalism: A Discursive and Experimental Study" (2005) 44 *British Journal of Social Psychology* 223 at 224.

²⁹⁸ *Citizenship Act*, RSC., 1985, c. C-29.

²⁹⁹ *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, S.C 2001, c. 27.

³⁰⁰ *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations*, SOR/2002-227.

³⁰¹ Bridget Anderson, "Migration, Immigration Controls and the Fashioning of Precarious Workers" (2010) 24:2 *Work, Employment and Society* 300 at 307.

³⁰² See, for example, *Lavoie v Canada*, [2002] 1 S.C.R. 769, 2002 SCC 23; *Andrews v Law Society of British Columbia*, [1989] 1 SCR 143.

immigration procedures.³⁰³ This textual information is replicated and distributed across time and location, which reflects a material form of ruling relations that can be used to explore institutional arrangements within Canada's immigration system.

One of the most common ways to classify immigrants in Canada is to divide them based on their categories of admission, which includes both temporary and permanent forms of economic immigrants, family class immigrants, refugees, students, and others.³⁰⁴ This mode of classification has given rise to a substantial body of migration research that studies particular categories of immigrants in Canadian society, with economic class immigration receiving considerable research attention.³⁰⁵ However, the immigration categories that immigrants were admitted through may reflect an incomplete picture of these immigrants' qualifications because they could have met the eligibility criteria that are needed to fit in other categories. While immigrants may strategically choose the category that most quickly leads to being able to apply for permanent residency, they often understand this pathway instrumentally, as a way to get their foot in the door, rather than as a category that accurately reflects their qualifications and experiences. To give an example, in this research, Participant 14 and 16 both chose to apply as dependent spouses of their husbands, but

³⁰³ For example, IRCC poses Ministerial Instructions respecting invitations to apply for permanent residence under the Express Entry system. The minimum CRS points needed for receiving an invitation actually determines whether or not the candidates can be selected for immigration. *See*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/mandate/policies-operational-instructions-agreements/ministerial-instructions/express-entry-rounds.html>. To give another example, IRCC provides more specific guidelines on how the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program works based on the paragraph 186(w) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations [IRPR], which is an important source of information for international students to know how long their work permit would be, *ee*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/study-permits/post-graduation-work-permit-program.html>

³⁰⁴ Statistic Canada, Classification of Admission Category of Immigrant, online: <
<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=323293&CVD=323294&CLV=0&MLV=4&D=1>>.

³⁰⁵ *See*, for example, Vikram Rai, "Labour Market Information for Employers and Economic Immigrants in Canada: A Country Study" (May 2013) CSLS1-42; Robert Vineberg, "Improving Canada's Selection of Economic Immigrants" (2019)12:2 The School of Public Policy Publications 1-15; Ana Ferrer, Garnett Picot & William Riddell, "New Directions in Immigration Policy: Canada's Evolving Approach to the Selection of Economic Immigrants" (2014) 48:3IMR 846-867.

they were actually highly-skilled foreign workers who would have met the eligibility criteria as principal applicants on their own, and they perceived no differences between them and other principal applicants in their job search processes.

From another dimension, citizenship and immigrant status are used to classify immigrants into groups of non-citizens (including temporary residents and permanent residents) and naturalized citizens.³⁰⁶ A foreign national who ultimately intends to stay in a host society may go through various immigration statuses: from temporary to permanent residents and to naturalized citizens. The transition from one type of immigration status to another can be more complex and diverse in immigration practice. Immigrants may keep certain immigration statuses and not advance to more stable immigration statuses or give up permanent statuses and regain temporary statuses.

This demonstrates that immigrant categorization can be fluid and changeable because it does not “permanently fix immigrants into certain singular status, but rather continue to evolve over time”.³⁰⁷ Some scholarly research argues for more fundamental thinking through “status-making” as a way to problematize preconceived immigrant categories and to reflect on the discursive construction of these immigrant categories.³⁰⁸ In other words, immigrants are categorized and distinguished by different “statuses”, which should be understood as discursive outcomes that are produced across fluid legal, political, social, and cultural boundaries.

³⁰⁶ *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, S.C 2001, c. 27, s. 9(1), 24(1).

³⁰⁷ Shanthi Robertson, “Status-making: Rethinking Migrant Categorization” (2019)55:2 *Journal of Sociology* 219 at 221.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.* at 229.

1.2. Highly Skilled Chinese Immigrant Women in Different Categories

Statistical data from Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) shows that Canada plans to steadily increase the overall admission of immigrants between 2019 and 2022.³⁰⁹ Economic immigration is the main pathway for foreign-trained skilled workers who intend to become permanent residents of Canada, which accounts for the largest share of the immigration plan every year.³¹⁰ Existing data indicate that economic immigrant inflows can address Canada's labour market challenges to facilitate its economic growth.³¹¹

In Canada, economic immigration is administrated at the federal and provincial levels. At the federal level, Canada has established three highly skilled immigration programs, namely the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP), the Canadian Experience Class (CEC), and the Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP).³¹² To further explain, FSWP favours experienced workers with high human capital, while the CEC selects inland foreign workers with Canadian work experience in highly skilled occupations. In 2015, Canada introduced the Express Entry system to manage the admission of foreign workers through the aforementioned three highly skilled immigration programs, as well as a proportion of provincial nominee programs (PNP).³¹³ At the provincial level, various PNPs are developed primarily for the purpose of "attracting skilled workers to

³⁰⁹ Government of Canada, "CIMM- Immigration Levels Plan 2020-2022", online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/committees/march-12-2020/immigration-levels-plan.html>>.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² Government of Canada, online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/eligibility/federal-skilled-workers.html>> and online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/eligibility/federal-skilled-workers.html>>

³¹³ Government of Canada, "Immigration Through Express Entry", online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry.html>>.

contribute to the provinces' economic objectives",³¹⁴ and later also "incorporate additional objectives, such as regional development and population growth".³¹⁵

On one hand, the admission of economic immigrants is prioritized in Canada's immigration system because economic migration allows Canada to gain foreign-trained professionals with high human capital that can contribute to Canada's economy.³¹⁶ The women participants in my research had the opportunity to benefit from this immigration regime as they are all highly-educated professionals. On the other hand, although economic immigration programs are designed to attract highly-skilled foreign-trained workers, in practice, these workers might not apply for immigration through economic immigration programs. This is because other pathways of immigration co-exist for skilled immigrants in Canada's immigration system allowing them to strategically choose the pathway that best meets their goals. For example, Chinese immigrant families usually choose the family member with the most qualified work experience and best English/French skills to be a principal applicant; therefore, in some cases, immigrant women could be either principal applicants or dependent spouses depending on their qualifications.

Based on the data from this research, among 46 highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, 9 participants received permanent residency as principal applicants under the economic immigration streams (Participants 1, 3, 6, 9, 17, 21, 24, 29, 42), and 9 participants migrated as dependent spouses of skilled workers (Participants 2, 7, 8, 13, 14, 16, 19, 22, 35), who are also counted as economic immigrants. In addition, 14 participants arrived as international students (Participants 5,

³¹⁴ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Research and Evaluation Branch, Evaluation of the Provincial Nominee Program (2011), online:<file:///Users/chenwang/Desktop/Thesis/2012+Evaluation_of_the_Pr+Date=[2021-04-17].pdf> at iii.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ See, Ayelet Shachar, "The Race for Talent: Highly Skilled Migrants and Competitive Immigration Regimes" (2006)81:1 New York University Law Review 148 at 148; Jeffrey Reitz, "Tapping Immigrants' Skills: New Directions for Canadian Immigration Policy in the Knowledge Economy" (2005)11:34Law and Business Review of the Americas 409-432.

18, 30, 34, 36-41, 43-46). Participants 12 and 23 arrived on temporary visas as spouses of international students and Participant 4 arrived as the fiancée of an international student in the 1980's. There are also 4 immigrant women who immigrated to Canada through marrying Canadian citizens or permanent residents (Participants 10, 11, 15, and 20) and 6 through parents/grandparents' sponsorship programs (Participants 25-28, 31 and 32). Participant 33 arrived on a tourist visa, but she came to Canada mainly to take care of her grandchildren. Regardless of the immigration programs they were admitted through, most of these immigrant women wanted to use their skills to work and earn income in Canada, but they found barriers to obtaining the desired employment and the settlement services they received after coming to Canada to be inadequate for finding highly skilled jobs in their trained fields.

1.3. Highly Skilled Chinese Immigrant Women' Employment-Related Experience

Canada actively cultivates an excellent reputation globally for welcoming skilled immigrants and providing them with exciting job opportunities that would bring immigrants high standards of living in Canada.³¹⁷ The positive portrayal of coming as an economic class immigrant, especially as principal applicants in the economic class, helps highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to make migration decisions. To cite from the 2018 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration,

“The economic performance of all immigrants increases with time spent in Canada. Average employment earnings reach the Canadian average at about 12 years after landing. Principal applicants in the Canada Experience Class and Provincial Nominee Program exceed the Canadian average within the first year of landing.”³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Bob Birrell & Elizabeth McIsaac, *supra*. note 27.

³¹⁸ Government of Canada, “2018 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration”, online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2018/report.html#message>;

This language discursively constructs highly skilled immigration candidates' understanding of post-migration lives in Canada – leading them to believe they will be able to achieve the standard of living that is comparable to Canadian-born workers. This information presents a promising future for skilled immigrants who are interested in establishing their careers in Canada. Many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in my research thought that this description mapped out their career development path after immigration, which is aligned with their expectations about finding highly skilled jobs in Canada.³¹⁹ For example, Participant 6 had once believed that she would continue her job in toxicology because Canada's immigrant selection policies listed her professional area as one of the most urgently needed occupations that were eligible for immigration.³²⁰

However, despite this rhetoric, my research data reveals that highly skilled Chinese immigrant women encounter significant barriers to continuing their highly skilled careers in Canada. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 12, and 16 mentioned that their families experienced financial challenges as they quit jobs in their home country and encountered challenges in finding new jobs in Canada during the transition period. The pressure of securing stable income compelled some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, in my research, such as Participants 2, 3, and 16, to first learn the basic skills to work in low-skilled positions, and delayed their plan to explore professional career opportunities that matched their skills. Participants 2, 3, 9, 12, 13, 14, 20, 23, and 36 also mentioned that post-migration lack of familial and social support for childcare

³¹⁹ Note: Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 29, 36, 36-44, 46 all expressed that they would be satisfied when they find a highly skilled job at least.

³²⁰ Note: Participant 6 applied for Canadian permanent residency as a university professor (NOC 4011) through the Federal Skilled Worker Program. Before the launch of Express Entry in 2015, Canada typically released a list of eligible federal skilled worker occupations and announced the quota for each occupation. This policy makes Participant 6, whose occupation is usually on the list, believe that Canada needs foreign workers with skills in her field.

compelled them to change their career aspirations. They gave up efforts to obtain highly-skilled positions, and accepted their role as primary caregivers for other family members. Furthermore, Participants 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 16, 20, 30, 37, 38, 41, 44 also mentioned various kinds of barriers that kept them from advancing to commensurate jobs in the Canadian labour market, such as reduced opportunities to access certain jobs due to their non-citizenship status, onerous procedures to accredit their professional qualifications, and insufficient language skills to undertake jobs in their professional fields. There is a disconnect between highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's employment experiences and how the Canadian government advertises the prospects of starting a new life in Canada for immigrants with their skills.

Similar situations for immigrants in general are also documented in existing literature: many skilled immigrants arrive with a sense of optimism and hope and believe that their career development would continue to grow;³²¹ however, research shows that many highly skilled immigrants were unable to find employment that is commensurate with their previous education and experiences.³²² Research has pointed out that Canada is not using the skills of these highly educated immigrants to the greatest extent.³²³

2. Analyzing from Highly Skilled Chinese Immigrant Women's Standpoint

This chapter follows Benhabib's weak version of postmodern feminist theory and Smith's Institutional Ethnography (IE) methodology. Smith's IE methodology suggests a bottom-to-top approach to understand social organization as "arising in people's activities and through the

³²¹ Ivy Lynn Bourgeault et al, "Brain Gain, Drain & Waste the Experiences of Internationally Educated Health Professionals in Canada" (October 2010) Ontario Health Human Resource Research Network at 56.

³²² A.E. Challinor, "Canada's Immigration Policy: A Focus on Human Capital" (September, 2011) Migration Policy Institute, online:< <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/canadas-immigration-policy-focus-human-capital>>.

³²³ Steven Globerman, "Highly Educated Immigrants Economic Contributions and Implications for Public Policy" (2019) Fraser Institute at 2.

ongoing and purposeful concerting and coordinating of those activities.”³²⁴ Among interviews with 46 highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in this research, I highlight the stories of Participants 6,14, and 30 in this chapter, whose experiences demonstrated that highly skilled Chinese immigrant women actively explored employment opportunities that could maximize the use of their professional skills regardless of the immigration categories they came through. I take up their standpoint to explore ruling relations, as they look up to part of, but not all of, the ruling relations governing their immigration status in Canada. These highly skilled Chinese immigrant women are experts in illustrating what they have done and experienced.

Story No. 1

Participant 30 first came to Canada around 2014 - 2015 when she visited her older daughter, who was studying in a Canadian high school at that time. In 2019, her divorce from her ex-husband encouraged her to learn new skills in order to begin a new life. She finally decided to come to Canada as an international student herself, and she also came with her younger daughter who studied in a Canadian school.

As an immigrant and a single mother, Participant 30 needed to manage a lot of responsibilities that were crucial to bringing her and her daughters a life that was similar to or better than before immigration. In addition to the onerous housework and childcare that many women have, as an international student herself, Participant 30 also needed to complete the requirements of her educational program in a local college. She enrolled herself in the ESL (English as a Second Language) training programs first, and then applied to study Baking and Pastry Arts in the local

³²⁴ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 27.

college. This study plan was carefully designed based on Participant 30's learning needs and her new career goals in Canada.

Before Participant 30 came to Canada, she worked in a number of managerial positions, and she had even owned an advertisement company in China. However, she cut off all ties with her professional network in China after immigrating to Canada. As a woman with rich business experiences in her forties, she thought that she would have been able to make use of her skills and experiences. She was in urgent need of making more money to cover tuition fees for her and her two daughters' education, living expenses for the household, and other unexpected expenses in Canada. However, her temporary immigration status as an international student in the ESL program did not allow her to work at all, and she could work for only 20 hours per week once she began to take the baking and pastry arts courses.³²⁵ She felt that her ability to use her skills to make money was greatly restricted in Canada.

“A child can rely on families to support him or her in Canada, but for us, we mainly relied on my income from China to cover all our expenses in Canada. I lost my income from China since I came to Canada. Now, I need to work, and I can't legally have a job or any income here. Can you imagine the pressure that I have?... I want to earn money because I can work. I am not asking money for free... This is what I don't understand.”

Not only did *IRPR* limit the time she could allocate for paid work, Participant 30 also felt that *IRPR* lacked specific instructions on what kind of work she could engage in. Participant 30 always

³²⁵ Note: the IRCC website explains that ESL students taking courses for self-improvement are ineligible for the off-campus work permit program. “[T]hey are registered in a general interest program of study that does not meet the definition of an academic, professional or vocational training program”, please see online: <<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/study-permits/campus-work.html>>.

proactively explored work opportunities within the legal framework with the hope that she would be well prepared when the opportunities come. She also initiated several exploratory and experimental business projects.

For example, Participant 30 opened a private school teaching traditional Chinese art under the name of her daughters. She was the person who actually did administrative work, organized class schedules, hired qualified teachers, and recruited students. Her two daughters sometimes helped with the work, but essentially earned valuable experience by running the business with her. However, due to the constraints in her ability to work as an international student, she could not claim that it was her who completed all these important tasks to maintain the smooth running of the school. She had to blur the boundary of who actually did it between her and her daughters. Participant 30 said,

“The school is not under my name. It’s under my daughters’ names. I am only here to watch what’s going on. I have no income from here. I got nothing from this school.”

Aside from this school, Participant 30 also found another partner, who is a Canadian citizen, to open a restaurant. According to Participant 30, she had much more business experience than the partner, and she gave very important advice on how to grow their business. However, she only reported the work that a part-time employee would normally do instead of everything that an owner would take care of. This was because her study permit only allowed her to work for 20 hours per week. Even though the partner wanted to pay her based on her actual contribution, they had a hard time understanding how to do this within the legal framework.

“I work in his restaurant every day, but I can’t ask for even one dollar. Even if we make money and he wants to pay me, we don’t know how to do it properly.”

Participant 30 had always been worried about breaching the law by working outside the permitted hours or in an unpermitted manner. *IRPR* policies clearly state the hours that international students can engage in remunerative activities each week, but it does not provide clear explanations on constant work that a business owner might have, which can hardly be counted and paid by the hour. This ambiguity made Participant 30 avoid asking for the remuneration that matched her contribution at work. To resolve this problem, Participant 30 is now actively looking for opportunities to apply for Canadian permanent residency. However, before she transitions into a permanent resident, she chose to accept these disadvantaged situations even though she does not know how much longer she needs in order to update her immigration status.

Story No. 2

Participant 6 applied to immigrate as a principal applicant under the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP). After her application was approved, her family landed in Vancouver in March, 2012 and moved to Ottawa in October, 2012. Before she came to Canada, she was a highly-educated researcher with a doctoral degree and good work experience in toxicology in a Chinese research institution.

After immigrating to Canada, the first job she had was to continue her career in toxicology as a post-doc researcher in Canada. However, after she completed the postdoc project, she faced enormous challenges in finding another toxicological position because there were not many employment opportunities in this field. As I will mention in Chapter VI, Participant 6 found career counselors at the community-based settlement services center, hoping that they would revise her resume and cover letter, and possibly refer her to employers. However, she eventually figured out that career counselors were unfamiliar with her professional areas, and thus were not able to

comment on her job application materials. She finally gave up applying for jobs in toxicology and began to apply for jobs with the government because she wanted a stable job.

Story No. 3

Participant 14 landed in Canada with permanent resident status in 2005. Her husband applied to immigrate as a federal skilled worker and she came as the dependent spouse of her husband. Before they immigrated to Canada, Participant 14 had already worked as a team leader in the field of computer science for about 7-8 years. After they immigrated to Canada, Participant 14 and her husband quickly accepted the fact that they needed to return to school and get a Canadian degree in order to enhance their competencies in the Canadian labour market. Participant 14 was very realistic. She applied to study in a Bachelor's program with co-op opportunities. Although she already had a Bachelor's degree in China, she didn't try to take the English language proficiency test and apply to programs at the graduate level. Participant 14 explained the reasons being that she got pregnant at that time and didn't want to create additional anxiety for herself; and she was also worried about delaying her career development too much, so she chose a program that she was over-qualified for as a beginning point.

Participant 14 applied for several co-op opportunities to accumulate experiences for securing a stable job during her study. She had a sound educational background as she received extraordinarily higher grades than other students who were competing for the co-op opportunities at the same time. Additionally, she had years of work experience in this field, which could reasonably qualify her for a senior managerial position as opposed to the current basic position. Participant 14 was at her prime age for work because her several years of work experience made her a mature professional, who was able to undertake job responsibility as soon as being hired.

However, her job application processes did not always go smoothly. Participant 14 was able to tell that she was less preferable to some employers as she received a lot fewer invitations to interview than her Canadian classmates did. Participant 14 said, *“when I applied for the co-op positions. My Canadian classmates received 15 calls for interviews, while I only had 2.”* After being rejected by the two governmental departments that called her for interviews, her chances finally came when a private firm decided to interview her for a co-op position. She was grateful that there was an opportunity for her in the competition, but she also thought that she needed “a little luck” to secure the position.

“You see? If I didn’t have the co-op experience, my job hunt in the labour market would be even more difficult. At least, I was lucky that I finally got a co-op, which allowed me to gain a period of transition...”

3. Identifying the Problematic from Women Participants’ Underemployment or Unemployment Experience

As mentioned in previous research, immigrant women with higher rates of labour force participation (defined as more than 50% in this cited research) prior to immigration are more likely to be “career-oriented” and have high expectations of their career development in receiving societies. Women’s labour force participation rate in China is as high as 70%,³²⁶ which underpins many Chinese immigrant women’s tendency to consider their career restoration to be an integral part of their post-migration life. In this research, my women participants all worked in highly skilled positions before they arrived in Canada, and most of them (except for some senior Chinese immigrants above 70 years old) intended to continue working, ideally in their trained professions.

³²⁶ Frank Kristyn & Feng Hou, *supra*. note 61 at 8.

However, exploring from the standpoint of Participants 6, 14, and 30, I found that the delay in finding sought-after highly skilled jobs is a common experience shared by most of my women participants (including Participants 1-16, 19-25, 30-35, and 45). These immigrant women all mentioned a “difficult” and “unavoidable process” that lasted between two years and a lifetime, during which considerable barriers existed, constraining them in situations of underemployment or unemployment. Some of these women participants (e.g. Participants 4, 9, 16, 17, 22, and 29) managed to ultimately return to their intended professions, whereas some women participants (e.g. Participants 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20, 23, and 24) faced significant challenges in their career restoration and were never able to return to their previous level of employment. Although these Chinese immigrant women all worked hard for their career restoration, their job search outcomes were often influenced by a series of institutional arrangements that were beyond their control. My analysis begins from these immigrant women’s common experiences of prolonged underemployment or unemployment in their post-migration, and probes further into how these experiences were shaped by institutional discourses.

These immigrants’ underemployment or unemployment situation appears to be inconsistent with Canada’s efforts to attract productive skilled immigrants and its subsequent commitment to improving “the economic outcomes of entering immigrants” after admitting skilled immigrants to Canada.³²⁷ This disconnection helps me to identify the problematic in this analysis: why do these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s career experiences differ so greatly from their expectations set before immigrating to Canada? The problematic arises from the women participants’ daily experiences, and “tracks from people’s experiences of the local actualities of their living into the relations present in and organizing but at best only partially visible within

³²⁷ Ana Ferrer, Garnett Picot & William Riddell, *supra*. note 305 at 848.

them.”³²⁸ This problematic directs my research attention to the juncture of “embodied specificity and ideological abstraction”, and to open the “organization of social life to analytic scrutiny.”³²⁹

4. Exploring the Ruling Relations: Various Immigration Options and Unsatisfied Career Expectations

To further explore the problematic, I rely on the term “puzzles” or “puzzling events”, which refer to certain sets of individuals’ activities that open the window to glimpse into ruling relations, and researchers are obliged to describe and explicate these puzzles.³³⁰ As mentioned by DeVault and McCoy, “the aim of institutional ethnograph[y] is to explore particular corners or strands within a specific institutional complex, in ways that make visible their points of connection with other sites and courses of action”.³³¹ The discovery of puzzling events is supported by Goldring and Landolt’s work; these scholars revealed that there are various levels of non-citizenship that can be “comprised of several legal status categories”, including the “relatively secure status of permanent residents” and less secure status of temporary residents.³³²

In this chapter, I describe two puzzling events: 1) how does official immigration information released by the Canadian government and private information by immigration agencies advertise an incomplete picture of post-migration life in Canada and construct the migration choices of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women; 2) why are the career expectations of highly skilled

³²⁸ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 189 at 38-39.

³²⁹ Marjorie DeVault, “Bifurcated Consciousness, Line of Fault” *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*.

³³⁰ Janet Rankin, *supra*. note 295 at 7; Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 47.

³³¹ Marjorie DeVault & Liza McCoy, “Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations” in Dorothy Smith, ed, *Institutional Ethnography as Practices* at 17.

³³² Luin Goldring & Patricia Landolt, “The Conditionality of Legal Status and Rights: Conceptualizing Precarious Non-Citizenship in Canada.” in *Producing and Negotiating Non-Citizenship: Precarious Legal Status in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) at 5.

Chinese immigrant women unsatisfied due to being constrained in prolonged unemployment or underemployment.

4.1. Puzzle One: Immigration Pathways Advertised to Immigrants

Highly skilled Chinese immigrant women enter Canada's immigration system when they begin to navigate immigration pathways and imagine their post-migration life in Canada. During this process, these immigrant women's understandings of Canadian life are shaped through textually mediated information that promotes positive prospects of starting a new life in Canada and multiple immigration options to make their migration possible. In this research, my women participants reported that they frequently relied upon commercial advertisements that are posted by private immigration agencies to make migration decisions. I interviewed a Canadian immigration lawyer and a Chinese-born immigration consultant. They both advertise to attract clients who are interested in immigration to Canada, and also assist these clients with their application preparation and submission.

The Canadian immigration lawyer adopts rhetorical strategies similar to those being used in the Canadian government-released text – mapping out the promising future to take up new employment opportunities in Canada. For example, in my interview with Expert 1, she mentioned that she often represented clients referred by companies that can identify foreign workers and provide employment opportunities for them in Canada.

“It was mostly company transferees...so they were working for a branch of the company in China, and then they were transferred here to work for the branch in Canada.”

Expert 1's account also indicates that there are various immigration options that immigration candidates can adopt to qualify for Canadian permanent residency. It's possible to meet the

requirements of some economic immigration programs solely based on human capital factors, such as language skills, educational backgrounds, and work experience. Additionally, more immigration options will be available if the immigration candidate can secure support from Canadian employers,

“IRCC is going to be satisfied that the person can effectively work in Canada, and language is part of that. But if the employer is supporting them, the employer wants to go to all these lengths to keep them”

As for the Chinese immigration consult, Expert 8 reported that she has spent significant effort in promoting her immigration application services. Her account explains how immigration opportunities could sound appealing to Chinese immigrants. According to Expert 8,

“Immigration agencies mainly run by Chinese consults or lawyers often present the benefits of living in Canada, comparing to what Chinese people cannot get in China... for example, free education and free medical care.”

Immigration agencies write and list various types of benefits of immigrating to Canada based on their years of direct work experience with numerous Chinese clients. The discursive strategy used is to mention briefly the benefits that the clients normally cannot get from China, and make no mention about the downsides and challenges embedded in the migration process. By doing this, the textual advertisement echoes strongly in the clients’ minds that immigrating to Canada would benefit their families in all aspects.

Different players in the Canadian immigration system produce textually mediated information to guide highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to make immigration decisions. As some women participants (Participants 1, 6, 9, 14, 17, 21, 29, 42, 43, 44, 46) reported, they

immigrated to Canada as they believed that living in Canada would bring them better opportunities than staying in China in many aspects, with employment opportunities being one of them. Immigration candidates usually strategically choose the most convenient way to immigrate, but the immigration categories that these immigrant women were admitted through might not reflect how they perceived their own identities. For example, Participant 14 and her husband were both eligible for economic immigration applications, but the fact that she chose to apply as the dependent spouse did not prevent her from actively developing her professional career in the same way that other principal immigration applicants did. The migration discourse highlights promising economic opportunities associated with immigration to Canada, which corresponds to the desire of many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to continue their professional career development in Canada.

4.2. Puzzle Two: Barriers Against Career Restoration in Post-Migration

Highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's common experiences of underemployment and unemployment reveal that the information conveyed to them through the aforementioned public and private sources does not reflect the whole picture of post-migration life, particularly the challenges for their career development that they will encounter in Canada. Many immigrants decided to move in the absence of sufficient knowledge of what hardships they might encounter in their post-migration lives. These immigrants rarely had the chance to reflect on whether or not their migration decisions were made based on partial information. Many highly skilled immigrant women had to eventually realize and deal with hardships after they immigrated to Canada. This made some of my research participants feel unprepared to deal with the barriers against career restoration in Canada. Many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women eventually realized that they were compelled to live and work differently from what they had expected, and sometimes

had to radically revise their employment expectations and develop new coping strategies to improve their career status.

Structural Exclusion

Structural exclusion occurs “where participation in decision-making is restricted to a narrow range of structural perspectives and interests”.³³³ The ruling relations systematically influence patterns of immigrants’ social activities by encouraging certain choices while discouraging others, impeding certain groups from fully participating in social activities for reasons beyond their control.³³⁴ In this research, many women participants reported that they could not use their skills, knowledge, and experience to their full capacity in the Canadian labour market.

In the case of Participant 30, she arrived in Canada as an international student with temporary status, but she was in fact a mature student with extensive business experience. She was eager to use her skills and experiences to make money to cover her family expenses in Canada. While she initiated several business projects, she was always worried whether engaging in these exploratory and experimental activities conformed to immigration regulations. Her experience reveals that Canadian policymakers and legislators assume international students to be young, dependent people who primarily rely on parents for financial needs in Canada and only work part-time to earn extra money or to gain some hands-on experience. This discursively constructed understanding does not take into account the experience of an international student who lived a life of more variety than a typical international student due to the multiple roles that she had as a strong and independent single mother, senior professional manager, and successful

³³³ Audra King, “Structural Exclusion and Just Development” (2015)6:2 *International Journal of Technoethics* 14 at 14.

³³⁴ *See*, John Pierson & Liz Ross, “Tackling Social Exclusion” (2002)7:4 *Child & Family Social Work* 326-327.

businesswoman. The ways that this kind of international student hopes to use their skills and experiences in the Canadian labour market differs from Canadian policymakers and legislators' assumptions about international students.

Participant 6 was admitted as a principal economic immigrant. Participant 14's immigration was affiliated with her husband's application for their whole family, and immigration authorities only checked the principal applicants' qualifications against the immigration requirements. Although there is literature concluding that principal applicants typically have higher qualifications than dependent spouses,³³⁵ in my research, Participant 6 was unable to pursue her career in toxicology, whereas Participant 14 managed to continue her career growth as a financial analyst. Although these two participants were assigned different types of identities under the economic migration regime, they both had the intention of restoring careers in their trained after immigration to Canada. For example, they both mentioned great disadvantages in competing for certain government jobs before transitioning from permanent residents to Canadian citizens, which resulted in a "lost chance" for them to work in their intended positions. Participant 6 also mentioned that she had significant difficulties in passing the security check, which challenged new immigrants as few agencies want to conduct a security check for immigrants who have arrived in Canada for less than five years.³³⁶ Finding commensurate work remains at the core of these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's concerns after immigrating to Canada. As skilled immigrants, these immigrant women typically need to rely on their labour market skills to find jobs in Canada to support their livelihood, but structural barriers exist to impede them from accessing employment

³³⁵ Kenise Kilbride, *supra*. note 270 at 1.

³³⁶ *Note:* As Participant 6 explained, although there were no concrete evidence showing agencies definitely refuse to do security check for new immigrants, her actual experience reveals that agencies tend to choose qualified candidates from those who have lived in Canada for more than five years. This is because, if the checked person had resided outside Canada within the past five years, part of the security check has to track back to their original country of residence, which significantly increased the work of agencies.

opportunities in their professional fields. These immigrant women face similar challenges for career restoration regardless of the immigration streams that they were admitted through.

5. Summary

In this chapter, I examine two puzzling events to reveal that Canada's immigration promotion focusing on new economic opportunities for immigrants constructs highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's career expectations in their post-migration. However, these immigrant women commonly experience prolonged underemployment or unemployment, which contradicts their set career expectations during the migration processes. This research reveals that, despite the fact that skilled immigrants could benefit from Canada's various immigration programs (not only under the economic class) to come to Canada, the way they understand themselves as skilled economic immigrants raises questions for how Canada should facilitate these immigrant's integration to the local labour market. Considering the structural barriers that exist to impede highly skilled Chinese immigrant workers' job search outcomes, more supportive settlement policies for immigrants with marketable skills should be developed, as maximizing the use of these immigrants' skills benefit both Canada and immigrants.

Chapter V Language Training Settlement Services

1. Introduction

Existing literature has demonstrated the importance of local language proficiency; showing insufficient language skills can lead to greater difficulties in re-establishing their careers in the host country.³³⁷ In this chapter, I focus on the linkages between language barriers and highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's difficulties in finding highly-skilled jobs that are commensurate with their qualifications in the Canadian labour market.

Empirical data of this research reveals two kinds of language barriers that reduce highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's employment opportunities in the hiring processes in Canada. First, an actual language barrier manifests when Chinese immigrants' language skills do not reach the actual level of language skills needed to perform *bona fide* job responsibilities. The lack of sufficient local language skills excludes these immigrants from certain job opportunities especially during the first few years of their arrival. As previous research pointed out, immigrants with limited English or French language abilities struggle in the job market in spite of their post-secondary levels of education.³³⁸ Second, there is a perceived language barrier arising from employers' bias when employers introduce certain language requirements that may not be needed in order to fulfill job tasks. As stated in previous research, immigrants who do not proficiently speak the local language have difficulties in using language to demonstrate their existing skills efficiently in order

³³⁷ See, Wang Zhongmin & Jing Xinlin, "Job Satisfaction Among Immigrant Workers: A Review of Determinants." (2018) 139 *Social Indicators Research* 381-401.

³³⁸ Casey Warman & Christopher Worswick, "Technological Change, Occupational Tasks and Declining Immigrant Outcomes: Implications for Earnings and Income Inequality in Canada" (2015) 48:2 *The Canadian Journal of Economics* 736 at 737.

to gain an interview and then to land a job.³³⁹ In hiring processes, employers generally prefer to hire immigrant workers with a proficiency of local language skills akin to native speakers without distinguishing between the actual and perceived language proficiency required for the job itself,³⁴⁰ which might leave highly skilled Chinese immigrant women with weaker English or French skills at a disadvantage in the labour market. I highlight two different types of language barriers in the following analysis, and question to what extent employers' requirements for language proficiency reflect the actual skills needed to perform essential job responsibilities.

Improving language skills with the support of Canadian government-funded language training services is one of the most practical ways that many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women use before entering the Canadian labour market. Researchers widely agree in studying immigrants' settlement experiences that being able to speak the local language(s) with fluency is critical to a positive settlement experience.³⁴¹ Canada recognizes the importance of providing language training for immigrants in order to help them fully participate in Canadian society.³⁴² Local language proficiency is "crucial in achieving immigrants' full economic potential" and "integration on the job market has often been singled out as the most important aspect of immigrants' integration into their new society".³⁴³ As such, Canada provides funding to develop

³³⁹ See, Sherrie Kossoudji, "English language ability and the labor market opportunities of Hispanic and East Asian Immigrant Men" (1988) 6:2 *Journal of Labor Economics* 205–228.

³⁴⁰ See, Jens Hainmueller & Daniel Hopkins, "The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes Toward Immigrants" (2015) 59:3 *American Journal of Political Science* 529–548.

³⁴¹ See, for example, Monika Jezak & Enrica Piccardo, "Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens (NCLC) – Canadian Framework of Reference for Language in the Era of Glocalization" in Jezak Muse, ed, *Language is Key: Canadian Language Benchmark Model* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2018) at 7-30; Lindsay Johns (25 October 2011 at 06:20 EDT) online: <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2052958/Why-learning-English-key-integration.html>>, comment on, "Why Learning English is the Key to Integration" Mail Online.

³⁴² Calisto Mudzingwa, "The Quest for Standardization: The Canadian Federal Government and the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program" (2020)5:1BC *TEAL Journal* 55 at 55-56.

³⁴³ Catherine Ellyson, et al, "Language Planning and Education of Adult Immigrants in Canada: Contrasting the Provinces of Quebec and British Columbia, and the citizens of Montreal and Vancouver" (2016) 14:2 *London Review of Education* 135 at 136.

language training classes as part of its settlement services that assist immigrants with meaningful integration.³⁴⁴ The Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program is the most important language assessing and training support funded at the federal level since 1992.³⁴⁵ Provincial governments also share the responsibility of promoting new immigrants' transition and integration with the federal government, and thus also allocate funding to support language training for immigrants.³⁴⁶ As the research participants in this study criticized the federally funded LINC program, my analysis in this chapter focuses on language training provided by the federal department of Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in my research held negative opinions about IRCC-funded language training, and sometimes considered the language training to be ineffective as it did not prepare them for the professional job market in Canada. Specifically, some of the research participants found that the LINC program could assist them in entering the Canadian labour market, but not in finding jobs in their intended fields.³⁴⁷ Therefore, some women participants chose to quit the LINC program after trying a few months. Their choice to quit this program also influenced other highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in their social circles, because their opinions on this government-funded language training program spread across the community and may have discouraged other highly skilled Chinese immigrant women from participating.

³⁴⁴ Calisto Mudzingwa, "The Quest for Standardization: The Canadian Federal Government and the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program" (2020)5:1 BC TEAL Journal 55 at 55.

³⁴⁵ Alejandro Andrés Páez Silva, *The Cultural Integration of Adult Immigrants in Canada: The Role of Language Ability* (Master Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2018) [unpublished].

³⁴⁶ Government of Canada, The Constitutional Distribution of Legislative Power, online:<
<https://www.canada.ca/en/intergovernmental-affairs/services/federation/distribution-legislative-powers.html>>

³⁴⁷ See, for example, my interview data with Participants 16 and 23.

Among the 46 women participants in this research, 39 mentioned language barriers as the main obstacle to restoring their highly skilled careers after immigrating to Canada. Their experiences revealed the co-existence of two types of language barriers in their job search processes, which both prevented these Chinese immigrant women from accessing highly skilled employment opportunities in Canada. In this chapter, I document the experiences of these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women and explore the ruling relations beyond their experiences in local settings. Their experiences tell us that the discursively constructed job search processes create the dynamic for these immigrant women to join certain sectors, which are typically feminized sectors, easily while it's harder for them to join other sectors; additionally, the IRCC-funded language training programs continue this logic by offering insufficient training that does not necessarily meet highly skilled immigrants' particular needs.

With the interview data, I analyzed three puzzles (also called puzzling events) to reveal the ruling relations that coordinate these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's daily experiences.³⁴⁸ The first puzzling event examines how the heavy reliance on official language skills in highly skilled job application processes creates procedural barriers for highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in fully developing their potential in professional fields. The second puzzling event studies the language training services funded by the Canadian government, and reveals that the curriculum crafted around the standpoint of language experts failed to perceive these immigrants' most urgent needs of learning English primarily for particular employment

³⁴⁸ *Note:* Puzzles or puzzling events are technical terms in IE research. IE research begins with identifying a problematic arising in the everyday life of standpoint informants. IE researchers then describe the events that are ordinarily taken for granted in the standpoint informant's everyday life in local research settings. IE researchers' description of standpoint informants' activities opens a window to glimpse into the ruling relations. Standpoint informants often live in these puzzling events, whereas IE researchers bring in IE's theorization about the institutionalized ruling relations to understand their activities. *See more explanations in the book, Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, Mapping Social Relations: A Primer in Doing Institutional Ethnography* (Higher Education of University of Toronto Press, 2008) at 47; and in the article written by Janet Rankin, *supra*. note 295 at 8.

purposes. The third puzzling event further discusses why some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women chose to withdraw from the LINC program and used alternative means to improve their local language skills. IE provides me with a highly flexible tool to explore these puzzles from the standpoint of women participants. Analysis of these three puzzling events enables me to link all the puzzling events together to see a more complete picture of ruling relations that coordinate these immigrant women's activities in local settings.

2. Analyzing from Highly Skilled Chinese Immigrant Women's Standpoint

Following the research processes outlined in Chapter III, my research begins with identifying the standpoint of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. I started my research with only a general idea of the language difficulties they confronted in Canada. I provided opportunities for research participants to speak about their post-migration experiences at length. As these women participants had various personal circumstances and experiences, I asked all the women participants in my interviews how they combat particular types of difficulties in their migration process. Among all 46 women participants, 39 highly skilled Chinese immigrant women directly and immediately pointed to language barriers as their most concerning difficulty in Canada. For example, I asked all these women participants, "*What is the biggest barrier that prevents you from landing a good job in Canada?*", Participants 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 30, 35, 37, 38, 41, 44, 45 all gave me a short and firm answer by saying "*Language*". This pattern made clear to me that language barriers should definitely be an important analytical point in this research. From the narratives of these 39 women participants, I chose to profile Participants 4, 15, 16 because their experiences depict a relatively complete picture of the importance of language skills in highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's job search from two sides:

insufficient language skills restrict these immigrant women's employment opportunities, but improved language skills also bring new employment opportunities.

Story No.1

Participant 4 is now a senior software engineer working within the Canadian federal government. She first immigrated to Canada in 1991 as the fiancée of an international doctoral student who is now her ex-husband. Before she came to Canada, Participant 4 had earned a university degree in computer science engineering from a top-ranked university in China. She possessed strong professional skills and experiences to work in the field of computer science. She also acquired English skills mainly from her university education in China, which equipped her with strong reading skills that make her understand moderately complex English text and intermediate listening and speaking skills that enable her to respond to casual small talk and ask for explanations.

After arriving in Canada, Participant 4 soon realized that her limited English skills were insufficient as she was not able to satisfy Canadian employers' high expectations -- Canadian employers would ask about her qualifications and experiences in application forms and interviews, and Participant 4 felt that her conversational skills were not able to convey fully the extent of her extensive technical knowledge and her qualifications for the job. As she was not able to communicate with professional Canadian employers smoothly, she only looked for unstable jobs offered occasionally by Chinese restaurant owners where Chinese is the main language needed for communication. However, for her, working in a Chinese restaurant was never a satisfactory situation for a highly skilled engineer at all.

Participant 4 applied to study in a Canadian university in a Master's program in order to change this situation. The level of language skills needed for university admission required her to first

pass academic language tests to meet the university's language requirements, and then draft and submit all other application materials in English. Passing all these academic requirements posed higher requirements for her English skills than what other immigrants would have learned from English classes for new immigrants. However, in her following two years of study, Participant 4's labour market competencies enhanced overall, but her language skills still constituted a barrier that prevented her from finding commensurate jobs for quite a while.

Upon completing her Master's degree in this Canadian university, she managed to find a job as a computer technician in a hospital. She mentioned explicitly to me that the interview was the most challenging stage during her job seeking. Although there might be other factors beyond not being able to understand the interview questions that contributed to her repeated failure in the interviews, Participant 4 mainly saw the great impacts that her limited language skills have brought in her job search. Not being able to understand and respond to the interview questions quickly enough has clearly been a roadblock for her to get this highly skilled job. There were several times that the recruitment process terminated after the interview stage:

“My English was very poor... I had many job interviews, but I didn't understand the questions they asked. My job interviews became a process for me to practice English oral production.... I didn't know how to answer interview questions at first, so I practice (English) during each interview. I thought I would find a job one day if I don't give up.”

Participant 4 considered herself “lucky” because her strong background in computer science guaranteed that she received calls for interviews from time to time; her resume and cover letter met the standard requirements, and the employers did not know how much effort she has invested into refining the language used in her application documents. However, it was a challenge for her

to pass the face-to-face interviews because spontaneous conversation required her to respond while improvising.

Once she passed the resume screening and face-to-face interview processes for her first job as a computer technician at a hospital, she had the opportunity to demonstrate her overall skillset. At every subsequent position where she successfully passed the interview process, none of her employers dismissed her even though her conversational language skills were still imperfect. The language factor became a less important consideration once she was able to demonstrate her professional skills in the work environment.

Participant 4 described her career path since her first job as “great”. However, when I asked more about the possible positions she might be able to move to, she gave me a different interpretation of her great experience in the labour market. Although she is satisfied with her life right now because she has a stable highly skilled job that matches her education and skill level, she is also aware of the fact that the language barrier still constitutes a thick glass ceiling when it comes to managerial positions. As she saw no real solution to this problem, she chose to stop thinking about her career advancement:

“I knew that I can’t get a promotion to work as a manager because my language was still insufficient to manage people...Like other engineers, I changed jobs for doing more interesting projects and increasing my salary....If I tried to take the managerial positions, in two years or so, I would no longer be able to return to the positions in the technical stream... very few Chinese people had great career prospects in the managerial streams.”

Participant 4's career trajectory demonstrated that every step of her career advancement from an unemployed newcomer to a restaurant worker and to a professional in computer sciences was all tied to her language skills.

Story No. 2

Participant 16 is another highly skilled Chinese immigrant woman who had inspiring stories about how she managed to return to her profession after years of effort to improve her English skills after immigrating to Canada. In 1992, Participant 16 first moved from China to Japan with her husband, and they had a daughter during their stay in Japan. In 1998, Participant 16's husband applied to immigrate to Canada as a skilled worker, and listed Participant 16 and their daughter as dependents in his application. Participant 16 was surprised that her previous experience of migrating from China to Japan did not assist her more in adjusting to life in Canadian society. She expected that her migration from Japan to Canada would have been as easy as it was to migrate from China to Japan, but she was wrong. Learning English was much harder than learning Japanese for her. The impacts immediately became visible when she began to look for a job in Canada. Participant 16 had six years of work experience in China and eight years in Japan as an engineer. These years of experience made her very confident about finding a similar position in Canada. However, her valuable project management experience gained through working with a number of world-renowned Japanese companies did not help her find a similar job in Canada. She even canvassed employers by visiting them door-to-door with her resume in hand. Having a chance to talk to the human resource manager face-to-face made her realize how important language proficiency was for her job hunt.

"I knocked on the door of many companies and told them about the projects that I have worked on before. I thought my profile was extraordinary, but the employers didn't show much interest in

me. They all said they would hire me as long as my English was good. I knew myself very well. Nothing could prevent me from getting a professional job except for the language. I said fine. I would improve my oral skills.”

After realizing that language was the main roadblock for her to access highly skilled jobs, Participant 16 decided to enhance her language skills first, and she carefully analyzed what aspect of her English should be enhanced before applying for a highly skilled position. She was confident about understanding the technical terms used in her professional area, and the main problem for her was to master English that is useful for communicating work-related matters professionally. She found out that the language training programs for immigrants, which touched upon many conversational aspects of language skills, did not cater to her employment-driven learning needs. Instead, she decided to find a part-time job that would allow her to use English daily in an actual working environment. As highly skilled positions were not currently attainable for her, she compromised by undertaking a labour position that required workers to use the pricing gun to load labels on each product.

“What I expected from this job was not money, but the chances to speak English at work... In the beginning, my work as a labourer was a real struggle. The job seemed to be easy, but if you do it thousands of times, your hand would swell...But, ...I was lucky... I met an English-speaking supervisor there. She was very nice. I learned my English from her.”

Having intended to work for this family business on a short-term basis only, Participant 16 took every opportunity to learn English and eventually managed to speak English fluently. This improvement greatly assisted her in moving further towards finding professional positions. Her work experience at this small family business gave her time to improve her language skills while, at the same time, allowing her to get familiar with the North American standards of what

constitutes essential knowledge in her profession. Improving language skills was important because it increased the transferability of her professional skills. She finally managed to find a highly skilled position in the fourth year after her arrival. She did not hesitate to take this position, although it did not pay much more than her previous labour position.

Story No. 3

Participant 15 arrived in Canada in her forties in 2016 as a spouse of a Canadian citizen. Before her immigration, she held the position of senior manager in the financial department of a world-renowned company in China. Immigrating to Canada under the family class did not impose any mandatory requirements for her to provide proof of her language competency to the immigration department. However, we could gather the extent of her language skills from the university degree that she had earned from China. Like other university graduates in China in her age group, Participant 15 learned the majority of her English through various university-level English courses. Hence, her English skills upon arrival should roughly be the same as the other two women participants mentioned above, who also had university degrees from China.

Participant 15 reported that her insufficient English skills had definitely impeded her from accessing highly skilled jobs by slowing down her speed of reading the requirements for each job, as well as understanding the underlying meaning of the textual requirements. When she decided to prepare the application for a desired position, she needed extra time and assistance to structure the sentences, choose the appropriate words, and get proofreaders to correct her sentences. These efforts were necessary in order to avoid dissuading potential employers from contacting her for an interview. Having these minor mistakes could screen her out during the initial recruiting process and her qualifications for undertaking the essential job responsibilities would be less likely to be

further considered. Hence, it also cost her additional time to draft answers and to check grammatical errors before submitting each application:

“A very basic task is to ensure my sentences and words are written correctly, which really took a lot of time from my busy regular study schedule...”

After submitting the application, she also needed to keep track of all the institutional processes in which she was involved. Often, job applicants were not provided with the reasons why they were rejected, which made it even more difficult for the applicants to find out where the problems were. The job application results were determined by institutionalized hiring processes that functioned beyond what these immigrant women could see and know. Although Participant 15 understood that not all applications could lead to fruitful results, the considerable extra time and effort needed for her to complete each application frustrated her from time to time. It was a struggle even to apply for a job:

“I feel exhausted even to prepare one online application... There are truly too many questions. I have to spend one or two days to complete the online forms...I don't have much time for it... It costs me too long, and they probably won't respond to my application... The efforts that I have spent are rarely paid off... You know, I have already lost confidence in the online application.”

As Participant 15 explained, the heavy reliance on language skills to complete the online application posed significant challenges for her. Compared to native speakers, she needed significantly more time and effort to put her application forward. Her uncertainty concerning her success left her frustrated and doubtful about her hard work as she pursued highly skilled positions in Canada.

The stories of Participants 4, 15, and 16 reflected how these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women realized that various language barriers were the gatekeepers to their entrance into highly skilled jobs. Their knowledge about the importance of language skills was produced and confirmed through potential employers' feedback in the Canadian labour market. For instance, Participant 4's several unsuccessful interview experiences demonstrated that having sufficient listening skills to understand the interview questions and speaking skills to answer the questions were essential for her to obtain a job. Participant 16 was even told explicitly by the employers that English inadequacy was her only problem to fill the target position. Their experiences both indicated that Canadian employers were expecting a certain level of local language proficiency, which they did not have initially. Participant 15's story revealed another type of actual language barrier that many Chinese immigrant women encountered in the first few years of their arrival. These Chinese immigrant women's language skills might be insufficient for the language skills needed to perform the job responsibilities.

Considering this situation, many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women took improving language skills as their most important task after migration. These women realized that considerable efforts should be spent to improve their language skills as the first step for accessing a highly skilled job. Previous research points out that "one's decision to invest in language acquisition is based on potential future benefits and on the cost of acquisition".³⁴⁹ As such, these immigrant women were willing to proactively explore the possibilities for them to improve their language skills through alternative means. In the above stories, all three women participants were willing to take additional steps to improve their language skills by working and studying. Many

³⁴⁹ Maria Admuti-Trache, "Language Acquisition Among Adult Immigrants in Canada: The Effect of Premigration Language Capital" (2013) 63:2 *Adult Education Quarterly* 103 at 106.

other immigrant women (Participants 2, 15, 19, 22, 23, 24, 30, 35, 41) also reported their efforts to learn more language skills through various alternative ways in order to help with their career development. Aside from learning in the government-funded language training classes, these women also reported other supplementary ways of learning, such as learning from English-speaking colleagues at work, self-studying and writing language proficiency exams to test their improvement, and participating in a variety of social activities.

There was no guarantee that the effort could lead to fruitful results, and the cost of their effort rests with the immigrant women themselves before securing a highly skilled job. The government-funded language training programs are provided free of charge for immigrants, which take the financial cost of learning English or French into consideration.³⁵⁰ Nonetheless, there are other training costs that immigrant women must bear. For example, immigrant women often face the challenges of balancing spending time to improve language skills, finding temporary jobs to making quick cash, and performing childcare and household labour. They bear the opportunity cost of investing time and effort to learn local language skills, but this learning experience does not necessarily lead to the achievement of their job search goal. This explains why placing Participant 15 in a lower-level class, mentioned below, was unacceptable for her because starting from a lower-level LINC class would delay the delivery of her LINC certificate and deter her entry into the labour market.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ Shuguang Wang & Marie Truelove, "Evaluation of Settlement Service Programs for Newcomers in Ontario: A Geographical Perspective" (2003)4:4 *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 577 at 578.

³⁵¹ Note, for a more detailed description of the standardized LINC training model, please see Calisto Mudzingwa, "The Quest for Standardization: The Canadian Federal Government and the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program" (2020)5:1 *BC TEAL Journal* 55-74.

3. Exploring Ruling Relations from Women Participants' Perspective

Upon noticing that their inadequate language skills have impacted their opportunities in the labour market, some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women gained insight into the relations of the ruling: why did the migration system advertise welcoming highly skilled immigrants including families of economic class immigrants, but leave them in prolonged unemployment or underemployment in their intended fields after arriving in Canada (Participant 6)? They also questioned: why did hiring processes adopt a high requirement of language proficiency without giving them a chance to show their overall skillset (Participant 14)? Furthermore, they asked: why did the government-funded language training appear to be ineffective in helping them find highly skilled jobs in Canada (Participant 22)? These highly skilled Chinese immigrant women believed that they were able to competently perform the technical skills required for certain positions with basic verbal communication. Maintaining high language requirements in the hiring process only added excessive barriers against accessing jobs that matched their skills and experience.

The paragraphs above provide a brief overview of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's understandings of and their reactions to the challenges that language barriers have brought for them. To identify a woman's standpoint of this IE research, at this initial stage, I do not need to investigate each of their particular perspectives about the actualities that they have experienced. This is because the standpoint in IE research cannot be equated with a perspective or worldview.³⁵² Their different perspectives on their circumstances are a result of being engaged in deeper discourses on how language barriers influence their employment prospects in different aspects. These immigrant women seek highly skilled jobs and are pushed back for reasons relating to their language skills in different circumstances. As these immigrant women encounter language

³⁵² Liz Stanley, *supra*. note 187 at 19.

barriers, their perspectives are continuously confirmed, adjusted, and constructed in and through the discursive practices. Following IE steps, I step back to identify the located positions of these immigrant women, instead of focusing on their different perspectives. The common experience of these immigrant women is that various language barriers are roadblocks that impede them from accessing highly skilled jobs -- this is the knowledge constituted from the standpoint taken up by these immigrant women. To further explain the language barriers, I analyze three puzzling events in the following sections to nuance the meaning of the language barriers and how they weave into ruling relation to affect highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's professional opportunities within discursive practices.

3.1. Puzzle One: "I Feel too Exhausted to Apply" - Text-based Job Application Processes

Highly skilled Chinese immigrant women faced the challenges of rebuilding their highly skilled careers without an established career-oriented social network in Canada. Although these immigrant women understood the correlation between the social network and employment opportunities, existing research indicates that their local networks within ethnic communities may only help these workers settle, or even get a first job to fulfill their immediate needs; however, they seldom help them find professional employment.³⁵³ This trend is verified in my interviews. Participants 1, 11, 22, 23 reported the experience of being introduced by a social contact to an employer who offered them jobs at lower skilled levels than the employment they could normally expect with their qualifications; Participants 4, 5, 6, 9, 14, 17, 18, 36, who had successfully found highly skilled jobs, reported that applying through the textually-mediated online system was their primary way to enter the highly skilled labour market in Canada.

³⁵³ See Reza Nakhaie, "Ethnoracial Origins, Social Capital, and Earnings" (2007)8 *International Migration & Integration* 307.

To apply for highly skilled jobs, these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women typically needed to follow hiring processes that require extensive use of written local language at all stages, such as searching for job postings and relevant information, drafting online applications and preparing supporting materials, and submitting applications and following up with subsequent correspondence. Once being invited to an interview, the applicant also needed to have strong oral language skills to respond to the interview questions concisely, precisely, and simultaneously. As the hiring processes for highly skilled positions usually relied heavily on local language skills, these immigrants usually need to exert extensive effort to strengthen their language skills in order to meet or exceed employers' expectations in order to convince the potential employers to hire them.

This working practice exposes highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to two types of language barriers in their career restoration. Many women participants must first improve their language skills to meet the language skills required to complete the job responsibilities. They took action to overcome actual language barriers because their local language skills upon arrival were insufficient to reach the levels that the job required. After this stage, some immigrant women still needed to spend great effort in improving their language skills, even though they later realized that they could have been capable of performing the essential job responsibilities without putting in as much effort in polishing their language skills. This situation revealed another kind of perceived language barrier faced by these immigrant women: employers sometimes apply language requirements beyond the actual level of language proficiency required for the job itself during the job application processes. As mentioned in previous research, immigrants' marginalization in the labour market may be a result of "genuine skill differences" from local workers, but it could also be a result of "labour market inefficiencies" that prevent them from maximizing the utility of their

skills. In either case, more extensive and responsive language training may address both of these types of barriers.³⁵⁴

3.1.1. Actual Language Barrier

In this part, I first analyzed my interview with Participant 15, which revealed how the actual language barrier prevented her from applying for highly skilled jobs. As mentioned, Participant 15 arrived in Canada as a spouse of a Canadian citizen, and her English skills were not assessed before immigration. She had her English skills assessed for the first time when she tried to register in the LINC language training program. After following the LINC class for a few months, she switched to the English as a Second Language (ESL) classes funded by the provincial government to continue her English learning. She had her second English assessment two years later when she finished the ESL classes. She hoped that what she learned from ESL classes would be reflected in the LINC language assessment result. Participant 15's two placement test results both placed her at LINC Level 4. The LINC levels range from Level 1 for low beginner to Level 8 for high intermediate learners, and Participant 15's English level was considered intermediate within this scheme. The fact that her assessment results stayed stagnant meant that she didn't see a clear progression with her training in the ESL classes based on the LINC standards.

During the interview, Participant 15 mentioned the great difficulties that she had in finding highly skilled jobs in the textually mediated job application processes. In particular, she mentioned the form that she used to apply for a highly skilled position with the Canadian federal government. She used this form as an example to explain how heavy the workload was to complete the application forms using her best writing skills. Participant 15's experience explained the specific

³⁵⁴ Dawn Desjardins & Kirsten Cornelson, "Immigrant Labour Market Outcomes in Canada: the Benefits of Addressing Wage and Employment Gaps"(2015) Royal Bank of Canada at 1.

ways that text (i.e. job application forms) functions as a medium of power relations in the recruitment process that involves highly skilled Chinese immigrant women.

Before Participant 15 began filling out the online job application, the instructions posted on the website already signaled an arduous task of completing this application. It specified that submitting an online application is the only way to apply. Applicants needed to ensure that they had read the postings and instructions in full, answered the screening and text questions thoroughly, and conformed with the stipulated format in the online text boxes. It also explicitly stated that “it is not sufficient to simply state that the qualification is ‘met’ or to provide a listing of current or past responsibilities”, and “the applicants must provide concrete examples” to outline how each qualification is met.³⁵⁵

The requirements specified that filing an online application was the only way to apply, which meant that immigrants had no alternative options but to adapt to this text-based application process. Participant 15 had no choice but to face the challenge of using the local language skills in this job application. Furthermore, the employers’ instructions for beginning an online application sent the signal to applicants that reading the textual information carefully was important for them to understand the key aspects that applicants needed to work on in order to succeed in the job application. Two other (Participants 10 and 41) women participants in this research reported that they were at a disadvantage in comprehending the textual information as effectively as native speakers. For instance, Participant 41 said that she struggled with catching important points and nuanced messages conveyed in textual materials compared to Canadian colleagues whose first language was English. Additionally, the job application process necessitated the explanation of

³⁵⁵ See, for example, Government of Canada, GC jobs, online: <<https://emploisfp-psjobs.cfp-psc.gc.ca/psrs-srfp/applicant/page1800?poster=1003154&toggleLanguage=en>> .

applicants' qualifications and relevant experiences in great detail, which already required strong language skills. As Participant 15 mentioned above, to meet this expectation, she needed to put more effort in structuring the sentences, choosing the appropriate words, and editing her application materials than Canadian workers whose first language is English or French.

Participant 15 also mentioned that answering many long answer questions amounted to a significant amount of writing work. Although the requirements might be *bona fide* for government jobs, she was not able to complete the job applications forms without online translation tools and proofreading assistance considering her language skills upon arrival (LINC Level 4). The screenshot below provided a sample of screen questions in the online application, which allowed me to estimate how much reading and writing work is involved. In addition to some questions gathering basic information of applicants, this application included 21 questions and 15 complementary questions. These questions asked in great detail about the applicants' previous experience in many aspects, and applicants must elaborate on each question rather than simply indicating yes or no. Complementary questions even indicated a suggested length for good answers. With approximately 500 words for each of the 15 questions, applicants needed to write as many as 7500 words for this application. Although it was not mandatory to write to the word limit, writing the amount that adequately conveys the necessary information for employers to fairly assess applicants' qualifications was still a tremendous and challenging task for immigrant women with weaker English or French language skills. In the case of Participant 15, she reported that she wrote at least 100-200 words for each question. It was still a considerable amount of work to write thousands of words in high quality to describe her qualifications at full length in each online application. She tried to apply for some positions, but later decided to give up because there was



too much writing work involved in each application. She could not always find time to work on each application given other issues she needed to deal with in her life.

Question:	EX1. Do you have experience conducting research to validate or authenticate data*?
Answer:	Not provided
Complementary Question	In approximately 500 words or less, use concrete examples describing how you obtained the experience including where and as well as the period(s) in which you performed the functions of the position (s) (MM YYYY to MM YYYY).
Answer:	Not provided
Question:	EX2. Do you have experience in data* entry using a database system, such as Excel, Access, Oracle, GCMS, etc.?
Answer:	Not provided
Complementary Question	In approximately 500 words or less, use concrete examples describing how you obtained the experience including where and as well as the period(s) in which you performed the functions of the position (s) (MM YYYY to MM YYYY).
Answer:	Not provided
Question:	EX3. Do you have experience in providing client service?
Answer:	Not provided
Complementary Question	In approximately 500 words or less, use concrete examples describing how you obtained the experience including where and as well as the period(s) in which you performed the functions of the position (s) (MM YYYY to MM YYYY).
Answer:	Not provided

Aside from the word length requirements for answers, the application forms for the highly skilled government jobs also probed into applicants’ previous experience to anticipate whether the applicant could perform the functions of the advertised positions. The inquiry becomes more specific about whether the applicants are able to “validate or authenticate data” and whether they have actually used a particular data system needed for the position. These immigrant applicants had to be capable of describing their experiences in great detail in the official language. The high requirement of official language proficiency is embedded in formal job application processes.

The difficulties for highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to complete an online highly skilled job application can be better understood in comparison to the application process for low-skilled positions. To further explain, I provide another example of a low-skilled job application form mentioned by Participant 37. The following job application form was chosen and downloaded

from the website of a fast-food restaurant chain as two women participants (Participant 37 and Participant 19) mentioned it was where they have worked for a while. This company also had brief hiring processes that did not require extensive documentation. This company gave a simple and concise one-page application form for candidates to fill out. All the questions could be answered quickly and directly in a few words. Essentially, this form for low-skilled job applications asks no more than contact methods and availabilities of job applicants. Job applicants almost only need to tick the boxes and to fill out numbers, names, addresses in the blanks, which does not require strong language skills to complete. Highly skilled Chinese immigrant women have greater chances of completing this form on their own with their limited language skills. With some practice at home, highly skilled Chinese immigrant women typically do not find it difficult to complete the form. Additionally, the applicants can also get help from families, friends, or social service providers to work on it, which greatly reduces the difficulties for these immigrant women to access this kind of job.

▶ Date of application:  Date available to start: 

How did you hear about this opportunity?

If you were referred, please give the name of the team member that referred you:

MY AVAILABILITY & JOB POSITION (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)									
POSITION	STATUS	MY HOURS OF AVAILABILITY							
		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	
<input type="checkbox"/> Team Member <input type="checkbox"/> Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time	FROM	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
		TO	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
Pay Expectations: <input type="text"/>		Preferred number of hours per week: <input type="text"/>							
TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF									
First name: <input type="text"/>		Last name: <input type="text"/>							
Street address: <input type="text"/>									
City: <input type="text"/>			Province: <input type="text"/>			Postal code: <input type="text"/>			
Home Phone #: (<input type="text"/> #) <input type="text"/> #		Cell Phone #: (<input type="text"/> #) <input type="text"/> #		Email: <input type="text"/>					
Are you legally eligible to work in Canada? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>									
MY EDUCATION AND ACTIVITIES									
Please specify highest level of education completed: <input type="text"/>									
What hobbies and/or activities are you involved in? <input type="text"/>									

A comparison between highly- and low-skilled job application forms reveals the disparities in language skills needed to apply for different types of jobs. Job applicants need higher language skills to fill the application forms and to follow the hiring processes for highly skilled jobs. By contrast, the much easier way to hire workers for low-skilled positions provides them more opportunities to enter these low-skilled occupations. I acknowledge that requirements for extensive writing in English during the job application processes might be *bona fide* because, for example, some government jobs require workers to have excellent official language skills in order to complete the job responsibilities. However, empirical data in this research has also revealed more complex issues. Many women participants' highly skilled career restoration was significantly delayed because employers sometimes apply language requirements beyond the actual level of language proficiency required for the job itself during the job application processes, and these immigrant women only found that the language skills acquired for passing the interviews were actually unnecessary for working in these positions. In this sense, language barriers become gatekeepers that systematically encourage highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to take low-skilled jobs, while distancing them from highly skilled jobs.

Using the IE methodology, I explore how ruling relations coordinate highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's post-migration career path through the highly- and low-skilled job application processes mentioned above. When an immigrant woman begins the application process, she activates a complex procedure of agencies that reflects the ruling relations in the Canadian labour market. The application forms are the first piece of text that coordinate, guide, and instruct highly skilled immigrant women's local experiences. These immigrant women participate in the job search processes in a textually mediated form. The potential employer who receives the application dispatches the written applications to relevant hiring staff working in diverse settings, each with

specialized tasks. Much of how hiring staff assesses applicants is guided by information provided in the application form in a textual format. Hiring staff is trained to read and write the information in institutionally recognizable ways; they are trained to interpret what they can read from the form within professional discourses. Written records are produced and kept to inform the next staff involved. This hiring process depends heavily on textually mediated records to document how each hiring staff adds their voices to the process. The applicants will also be informed of the further steps in standard pieces of text – either a structured rejection letter, or an invitation for further assessment that could potentially lead to a textual employment contract in the end. The applications move from one step to the next through a number of staff who act to facilitate the ruling relations. The work of hiring staff in the recruitment process is not observable to immigrant women as job applicants. The recruitment decisions were performed throughout a sequence of actions informed by the discursively constructed hiring processes. Between the submission of the women’s job application and the receipt of a final hiring decision, it is the ruling relation that coordinates these immigrant women’s experiences.

Applying for jobs online or on paper is a conventional practice actively organizing the way in which an immigrant enters into processes of ruling by potential employers, and the Canadian labour market or social system at large. In this textually mediated hiring process, highly skilled Chinese immigrant women experience greater difficulties than Canadian workers or other immigrant workers whose first language is English or French due to their limited language skills. Although drafting applications for government jobs might be challenging for all job candidates, Chinese immigrant women typically needed to spend more time and effort to overcome the language barriers to describe their experiences and qualifications in order to succeed in the job applications.

3.1.2. Perceived Language Barrier

Many of my research participants also pointed out the problem that the expected level of language skills often exceeded the language skills that the jobs themselves required. This working practice compels immigrants to take additional efforts to improve language skills before having their overall skillset assessed. However, immigrants could have been capable of the jobs without putting in as much effort. In this case, it is worth exploring whether the language requirements set up by the employers are *bona fide* requirements.

Participant 4 and 16's experiences demonstrated how the perceived language barrier prevented them from obtaining access to highly skilled positions. These two immigrant women immigrated to Canada as dependents who did not need to provide language test results. They had good professional skills in their trained fields of computer science and engineering respectively; they were confident about their competencies to work in similar highly skilled positions for which they were previously trained. Furthermore, as learning English was part of their university degree requirements in China, they were also able to write resumes and cover letters, which were essential to embark on the journey of highly skilled job search. Nonetheless, they both experienced difficulties when they needed to communicate with employers face-to-face to discuss their competencies in job interviews. Participant 4 reported that she failed many interviews mainly because she was not able to understand the language used to formulate the interview questions and thus to provide appropriate answers to the questions. Participant 16 was even explicitly told by employers that she needed to improve her language skills first before applying for the highly skilled positions.

Given this situation, these two highly-educated Chinese immigrant women had to spend additional years to enhance their English skills by studying and working. Participant 4 enrolled herself in another Master's program in a Canadian university; this learning experience allowed her to better understand English used specifically in her professional area. Participant 16 chose to work in a low-skilled position temporarily for the purpose of learning work-related English from her colleagues. After several years of hard work that concentrated solely on improving language skills, these two immigrant women finally reached the level of language proficiency required to succeed in the job interviews and managed to return to their intended jobs.

Participant 4 and Participant 16 later gained more insights into the positive impacts of improved language skills because their constant effort had enabled them to return to their previously trained professions, whereas other immigrants who did not manage to improve their language skills still struggled to return to their former professions. While working in their intended positions, they discovered that the language skills needed to perform the job responsibilities were actually lower than the level they had strived to reach to pass the interviews. As Participant 4 stated, once she passed the interview stage and gained the opportunity to demonstrate her overall skillset to the employer, her employer was very satisfied and never wanted to dismiss her even though her language skills were still imperfect. Participant 16 also never experienced dismissal or any other kinds of interruption in her later career development after having her first highly skilled job. She was also promoted to managerial positions for her excellencies in performing her job responsibilities. Once she was able to demonstrate her professional skills in the work environment, the language factor became a less important consideration. In retrospect, these immigrant women felt the language skills needed for completing the given tasks were lower than what was required in the interview, and they could have been capable of the jobs without putting in as much effort.

Participants 4 and 16 later realized that the reason they were unable to obtain highly skilled jobs was not that they lacked professional skills, but because they lacked sufficient language skills to demonstrate their professional skills to potential employers. They found that Canadian employers expected them to have a high level of local language proficiency in the hiring process, but sometimes employers failed to identify the level of language skills that were actually needed to perform the job responsibilities. In some cases, Canadian employers asked for a level of local language proficiency that exceeded the requirements of the job itself and compelled these immigrants to take additional steps to improve their local language skills beyond *bona fide* requirements.

The hiring processes mentioned above not only made the local language proficiency an integral part of the hiring process, but also set it as a precondition for these job applicants to have their overall skillset be considered. Employers incorporated the requirements of language proficiency in their hiring process and perceived that all applicants (including immigrants who are not native speakers of English or French) should reach the required level in order to participate in the job applications. This hiring process favoured applicants with certain language skills, but these expectations made it more difficult for immigrant workers whose first language is neither English nor French. Although the textually-mediated job application processes are challenging for both Canadians and immigrants to prepare high-quality applications, the challenge is typically greater for immigrants whose first language is neither English nor French.

3.2. Puzzle Two: “The LINC Program was not Helpful” - Discursively Constructed

Learning Experiences

The above analysis demonstrates that language proficiency is an important factor for highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s success in highly skilled job applications. Academic research

has also suggested that investing in extensive language training for immigrants could be worthwhile.³⁵⁶ The Canadian government also recognizes the importance of providing resources to help these immigrant women overcome this language barrier. Maintaining access to government-funded language training programs for adult immigrants has long been an important policy concern in Canada. Canada first began to offer language training for immigrants in 1947,³⁵⁷ and a series of language training classes have been provided for immigrants at both federal and provincial levels since then.

At the federal level, the earlier language training program took an assimilationist approach to citizenship preparation and national building, which focused on “acquainting the immigrants into the habits, customs, and institutions of Canada”³⁵⁸ Since the late 1970’s, the government initiated several language training programs, which switched the main goal to “providing language training for adult immigrants ... who could not find employment because of their lack of proficiency in English or French” in the past decades.³⁵⁹ In 1992, the LINC program was introduced to replace all previously-existing language training programs.³⁶⁰ LINC is fully funded by the government of Canada and is provided at no cost to immigrants.³⁶¹ Currently, the LINC classes focus more on providing general training to ensure all immigrants are able to fully participate in Canadian

³⁵⁶ Dawn Desjardins & Kirsten Cornelson, *supra*. note 354 at 4.

³⁵⁷ Lynn McDonald, et al, *An Analysis of Second Language Training Programs for Older Adults Across Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) at 2.

³⁵⁸ Reva Joshee, “The Federal Government and Citizenship Education for Newcomers” (1996)25:2 *Canadian and International Education*108 at 113.

³⁵⁹ Yan Guo, “Language Politics and Programs for Adult Immigrants in Canada: Deconstructing Discourses of Integration” (2013) 45:1-2 *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 23 at 29; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program” (March 2010) online:<<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/language-instruction-newcomers-canada-2010.html>>.

³⁶⁰ Alejandro Andrés Páez Silva, *supra*. note 345.

³⁶¹ Shuguang Wang & Marie Truelove, *supra*. note 350 at 578.

society.³⁶² The LINC classes now cover a series of topics that are useful for immigrants to prepare for their work and life in everyday settings (e.g. communicating for grocery shopping and banking), but lack strong components for employment-related language training.

Immigration is a shared responsibility between the federal and provincial/territorial governments, and education comes under provincial jurisdiction.³⁶³ All Canadian provinces have signed bilateral agreements with the federal government regarding “immigration, adopted immigration policies, taken part in the selection of immigrants, and contributed to the establishment of various organizations promoting greater integration among newcomers”.³⁶⁴ Aside from this LINC program funded by the federal government, immigrants can also find language training classes at the provincial level. In Ontario, the *Ontario Immigration Act, 2015* specifies that “the Minister may, by order, establish or continue programs to promote the settlement and integration in Ontario of immigrants or other individuals specified by the Minister in the order.”³⁶⁵ In practice, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social services follows the provincial government’s overall plan to develop language training services with the goal of “protecting and improving the economic and social well-being of new and established Ontarians”.³⁶⁶ In the Annual Report 2019-2020, the Ministry of Children and Community and

³⁶² Government of Canada, Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada, online:<<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/language-instruction-newcomers-canada-2010/relevance.html>>

³⁶³ Government of Canada, The Constitutional Distribution of Legislative Power, online:<<https://www.canada.ca/en/intergovernmental-affairs/services/federation/distribution-legislative-powers.html>>

³⁶⁴ Cited from Catherine Ellyson, Caroline Andrew & Richard Clement, “Language Planning and Education of Adult Immigrants in Canada: Contrasting the Provinces of Quebec and British Columbia, and the Cities of Montreal and Vancouver”(2016)14:2 *London Review of Education* 134 at 140; originally published in 《La fédéralisation de l’immigration au Canada. Montreal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal》 (2016) en ligne: Site officiel du Commission royale d’enquête sur le bilinguisme et le biculturalisme<<http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.699863/publication.html>>.

³⁶⁵ Article 10(1), Ontario Immigration Act, 2015, S.O. 2015, c.8

³⁶⁶ Government of Ontario, Published Plans and Annual Reports 2019-2020: Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, online: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2019-2020-ministry-children-community-and-social-services?_ga=2.12926007.1618718641.1594130300-1378173553.1594130300>.

Social Services states that “through a comprehensive program review, the Citizenship and Immigration Division will reduce duplication with federal language training offerings, while modernizing service delivery for greater program efficiency.”³⁶⁷ In Ontario, the provincial government provides grants to school boards to support adult immigrants’ non-credit second language learning.³⁶⁸ The English as a second language (ESL) training in Ontario is also free to immigrants and refugees at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. There are also preliminary ESL classes that can help immigrants and refugees to improve their language skills for the workplace.³⁶⁹

This research mainly focuses on the federally funded LINC language training program as most of the immigrant women were placed in LINC classes at first, and only two women participants (Participants 3 and 15) specifically requested to take the ESL classes as an alternative option to the LINC classes. According to Experts 2 and 5, most of the immigrants are directly placed in LINC classes without being told about the ESL classes. These experts think LINC classes incorporate content about Canadian life and culture into basic language training, which would benefit immigrants who need general knowledge about Canada. Besides, LINC classes are free to immigrants, which are different from the ESL classes that immigrants usually need to pay. In many cases, immigrants are directed to LINC classes as the language assessors have the authority to decide which classes better fit their needs. Following this process, immigrants typically would accept this arrangement and rarely return to the language assessors to request a new placement to the ESL classes.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ Government of Ontario, Data Catalogue, Adult Non-credit Second Language Program Grants, online:<<https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/adult-non-credit-second-language-program-grants>>.

³⁶⁹ Government of Ontario, Improve our English and French, online:< <https://www.ontario.ca/page/improve-your-english-and-french#section-2>>.

Despite the great effort that Canada made to provide language training services, some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women (including Participants 15 and 16) reported that they finally chose to drop out of the LINC program after trying it for a few months. The incentives for them to participate in the LINC programs were the hopes of being able to find highly skilled jobs after studying in this LINC program. These highly skilled Chinese immigrant women organized their post-migration activities around the primary goal of restoring their career status in Canada. In this sense, these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's learning needs were not completely aligned with the learning goals set up by the LINC program. The LINC program is developed to fulfill the government's strategic goal of "ensur[ing] all immigrants are able to fully participate in Canadian society",³⁷⁰ which encompasses the goal of enhancing immigrants' language skills for employment purposes, but does not place it as the primary concern.

In this puzzling event, the "problematic" emerged as I discovered how these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's participation in government-funded language training services is at odds with the ways in which service providers expect them to benefit from the services. Service providers who do not occupy the immigrant women's position might find it difficult to understand the standpoint of these women participants. As Smith said, knowledge at the local level "remains poorly understood by people keeping other perspectives."³⁷¹ Drawing on this, the analytical point here is that, despite the good intention of the Canadian government in trying different methods to engage new immigrants in language training services, this government-funded LINC program does

³⁷⁰ Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program" (March 2010) online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/language-instruction-newcomers-canada-2010.html>>.

³⁷¹ Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 46-47.

not always function in a way that can actually benefit highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who intend to improve their language and to eventually find employment in Canada.

IE research commits to “knowing on behalf of those whose lives she studies.”³⁷² To further explain the ruptures between highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s choices and the government’s goals, I continue to recount the experiences of Participants 15 and 16 as they have both spent a substantial amount of time during our interview to explain their experience with the LINC programs. The following two stories further explain how immigrant women’s lived experience is disconnected from the discursively structured ruling relations.

Story No. 4

Participant 15 and her family used to consider learning English in the language training programs to be their highest priority. Participant 15 hoped to improve her language skills in the LINC program first and to restore her career next, and it was important for her that the transition period could be as short as possible. Even before Participant 15 arrived in Canada, her husband booked an appointment with the Language Assessment Center in advance in order to enroll her in the class as early as possible. Despite the fact that her flight arrived late at 5:00 am, her husband still dropped her off at the assessing center around 8:00 am before he went to work. They have clearly attached the highest level of importance to learning English and had deep trust in the LINC programs.

After an initial test for in-taking, Participant 15 was placed at the level of LINC 4.³⁷³ She followed the class for six months to LINC 6, and then began to realize that this class did not fit her

³⁷² Marie Campbell & Frances Gregor, *supra*. note 65 at 48.

³⁷³ *Note*, generally speaking, learners at LINC 4 can discuss familiar everyday topics of personal relevance when the context is clear and predictable and write simple descriptions of events with some errors that might possibly

needs. One of the reasons she gave was that teachers at different levels did not prepare their teaching activities in a well-organized way. The teacher at LINC 5 was more lenient towards the students, which made it hard for her to follow the class in LINC 6.

To change this unsatisfactory situation, Participant 15 proactively searched for other opportunities to learn English and managed to study in an English program for academic purposes in a college, which is supposed to be more advanced than the courses offered by LINC. After studying in college for a few months, she came back to the LINC class with great confidence and hoped to begin from where her level was at that moment. However, the results of the new assessment surprised her as it showed that she should still be placed at the level of LINC 4.

“I thought my level should at least be 6 because I was almost at the level of 6 or 7 when I left this program. You know what? Using their assessing method, my reading and writing results were not bad, but the way they tested my listening gave me much more trouble than last time. They let me listen to a sound clip and asked me to repeat the content. In this way, my test results indicated that my level was 3. I think the language assessing methods have very big problems. I was studying continuously. Why did you put me at LINC 3? This result truly cracked me down.”

She was not able to understand why the test results indicated that she didn't improve at all while she was constantly following the course designed by Canadian educational institutions step-by-step. Although she left the LINC program for a while, she actually took more difficult courses to learn English and her level should have advanced. Assessors commonly believed that immigrants can see a retrogressive result after taking a break from language instructions, but her situation was very different. She never stopped learning English; in fact, she studied more. Being confused and

impede the communication. For a more detailed description of the overall language ability at this level. Please see the online resource at <https://settlement.org/downloads/linc/LCG/OUTCM4.pdf>.

frustrated by this result, she found another reason that made her unhappy with the LINC program being the inconsistent assessment method used to test her language skills.

“I am pretty sure that my English has improved in all aspects. I didn’t expect that they used a new method to test me. I didn’t know the assessment process and my test results were even worse than the previous results that I received when first arriving in Canada. I think the assessment method is problematic, apparently.”

The systematically structured language assessing system has truly frustrated her, especially when she did not get a satisfactory score on the listening comprehension part. Participant 15 was unprepared for repeating the key points in listening materials from memory. In her listening assessment, the assessor played a sound clip and she was asked to repeat the key points of this sound clip. Participant 15 said that she understood the content, but could not repeat the key points because people at her age have deteriorating memory and find it hard to recall long text. The listening assessment tested her memory rather than language skills. She was not able to explain this situation to the language assessor with her limited English skills at that time. Even if she could explain, the structured assessing system did not allow her to be re-assessed. She was definitely frustrated about not being able to do her best.

Participant 15 wanted to return and complete the LINC classes because she saw many employers partnered with LINC administrators when they posted job opportunities, and they often required applicants to have a certificate issued by LINC. Although obtaining the LINC certificate is not the only way to prove their language skills, the LINC certificate is the most approachable and practical option for them. This is because Canadian employers are already familiar with the LINC certificate and prefer to use them, and other similar certificates require far more resources to obtain.

However, the test results placed her in a lower-level class and she would need at least another one-year effort to receive this certificate. By that time, the employment opportunities that she had intended to try in the beginning would have disappeared. The system had left Participant with no opportunity to facilitate her learning process because a second assessment could only be scheduled one year after this test. The rationale for structuring the test in this way was to give immigrants sufficient time to digest their learning. However, what has not been considered is that finding employment within the shortest time is their most urgent need.

In this story, Participant 15 explained several issues that she confronted when she participated in the LINC program. The apparent cause for her withdrawal was her frustration at being placed in a lower level of LINC class after years of effort to learn English from other institutions. This would have compelled her to take more years to study in the LINC program, and would have substantially delayed her from obtaining the LINC certification needed for a highly skilled job search. The outcome of continuing the LINC program was predictable but not acceptable. As mentioned above, accepting this placement result would increase her cost of studying and leave her in a prolonged stage of uncertainty about her future job search, especially considering that payment during the studying period is not provided by LINC. She thought that following the LINC classes gave her little hope of career success. Since then, her reflection on her experiences revealed more downsides of this program: inaccurate assessment method, moderate teaching quality, and rigid course structure.

3.2.1. Inaccurate Assessment Method

The assessment method in use to test these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's language skills significantly affected the result of their placement. Participant 15 did not expect

that the language assessor would use a new method to test her listening skills in her second placement test. While she was listening to the sound clip, she tried to understand the listening materials and remember as many key points as she could because she knew some key points would become short answers to questions that the assessor might ask afterwards. However, she was totally unprepared for retelling the whole story on her own when the language assessor asked her to do so. Although she was able to understand the general content and grasp the key points, she could not repeat or paraphrase the long sentences or phrases used in the listening materials. Participant 15 thought that the assessment method used was unpredictable and it failed to reflect her actual listening skills. Participant 15 hoped that the methods being used to test her could be more consistent between the two tests.

When an immigrant woman seeks language training services and scheduled an appointment with the Language Assessment Center, she enters into a procedure of agencies that are coordinated by the work of experts from extra-local settings. Language assessors follow their internal guidelines to test the immigrant women and to classify their language skills into different levels. Based on their performance during the exam, each immigrant woman has a test result indicating which level their English skills are and which level of class they need to attend. The test results appear in a textual form, which allows the assessors and teachers to interpret the results in an institutionally recognizable way that is invisible from immigrant women's perspective. This piece of text is of great importance as it determines which class the immigrant women would be placed in and how much longer these immigrant women would have to wait before receiving the LINC certificate for job search. A set of institutional procedures are all invisible from the situated position of the immigrant woman being tested. The language assessors fit immigrant woman's

language proficiency into the pre-determined levels; the test results directly impact immigrants' immediate learning plan and long-term employment opportunities.

3.2.2. Moderate Teaching Quality

Immigrant students' activities are coordinated by the discourse that guides instructors' teaching practices in the LINC program. When the test results reach the language teachers, these language teachers are trained to interpret the immigrant women's language learning needs based on the textual information within the discourse that governs LINC. Language teachers take account of understanding Canadian values, facilitating social integration, and learning for daily lives when they instructed the course content. Teaching activities are also designed in a way that meets different immigrant students' wide range of basic learning needs to an average level. Highly skilled immigrants must accept the pre-determined guidelines of what needs to be learned as new immigrants in Canada, whereas the particular learning needs of some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women concerning learning for highly skilled job search purposes are less considered.

Previous research reports that the teaching methods used in immigrants' language training services sometimes do not match "their needs and their opinion of how a teacher should provide knowledge",³⁷⁴ which contributes to some immigrants' negative impression about the subpar teaching quality within the LINC program. This statement has also been confirmed in my research data. For instance, Participant 16 complained that "*The teacher often used a long time to explain very simple sentence structures to students without English learning experiences before, and I felt it was too slow... I was not able to reach a high level fast enough.*" Participant 15 reported that

³⁷⁴ Monica Reichenberg & Girma Berhanu, "Immigrants' Job Expectations: A Study of What Predicts Immigrants' Job Expectations After Completing Language Training Programme" (2017) 32:2 International Journal of Special Education 355 at 380.

“Some teachers in my LINC classes did not have a systematic design of their course content, and their courses content had a gap with the courses at the next level, which confused immigrants like me”. Participant 23 said that “I am used to having a teacher use textbooks and provide instructions in class, and give assignment after class, but their teaching style is casual, and I didn’t feel they had a teaching plan”

During the classroom learning, the language training services were performed through a sequence of actions informed by the dominant discursive practices that govern LINC. Highly skilled Chinese immigrant women are informed of each step to follow in order to move from one occasion to another to facilitate the established ruling relations. If at a certain point, these immigrant women realized that following these steps does not lead to having their own priorities met, they would begin questioning whether the language training provided with the LINC program meets their specific needs as highly skilled participants.

3.2.3. Rigid Placement Method

The LINC program deals with a wide variety of immigrant experiences, and employment goals within a single pedagogical model. Within LINC, when a conflict of learning needs between differently situated language students arises, the pedagogical practices in place do not leave these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women with much flexibility to meet their own priorities. For instance, when Participant 15 felt that the test result did not reflect her real level of language proficiency, LINC administrators did not allow her a second chance to be re-evaluated within a reasonable period. She also had no choice but to accept the placement result and begin her studies at the required level. As she did not want to accept the test result, Participant 15 dropped out of the class and was then left without clear direction on how to continue her study of English.

Participant 15's experience illustrates Hirschman's concepts of "exit" and "voice" as two contrasting, but co-existing responses of members of organizations to what they sense as deterioration in the benefits they receive.³⁷⁵ "Exit" refers to the act of leaving, generally because an alternative service or benefit is believed to be provided by another organization; "voice" refers to the act of complaining or protesting "with the intent of achieving directly a recuperation of the quality that has been impaired".³⁷⁶ These two concepts aptly describe the choices of Participant 15 and many other highly skilled Chinese immigrants such as Participants 2, 19, 22, and 23 who chose to withdraw from the LINC programs and sought other resources, such as learning English from the real workplace, to improve their English skills. None of these immigrant women chose to "voice" their opinions because they feared it would have not made any significant change to the LINC program. The two concepts of "exit" versus "voice" "work at cross-purposes and tend to undermine each other"³⁷⁷ because research participants who were pressured to exit were less likely to formally express their complaints to the administrators. This research provides these women participants an opportunity to give voices to their dissatisfaction towards the assessment procedures they had to go through.

In entering into the assessment process, immigrant women activate a complex set of procedures controlled by LINC. They must accept the ways that discursively constructed ruling relations coordinate their experiences in order to access government-funded language training. These immigrant women have little control over the processes of testing, assessment and placement. As a significant part of these ruling relations are not visible from highly skilled Chinese immigrant

³⁷⁵ See, Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970).

³⁷⁶ Albert Hirschman, "Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic: An Essay in Conceptual History" (1993)45:2 *World Politics* 173 at 175.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.* at 176.

women's positions, they can rarely provide feedback on the ruling relations that govern the LINC program. Even when they feel that their situation does not fit into the default model created by LINC, they are still caught in the net of discursive practices. This explains why many immigrant women quit these free language training classes that include childcare and transport, and sought help from outside the institution, often choosing less convenient and more expensive options – they can choose to enter or quit the ruling relations created at LINC, but rarely have the power to adjust or change them.

Story No.5

Participant 16 speaks Chinese, Japanese, and English. Japanese and Chinese were the main languages that she used frequently since she completed her university studies and moved to Japan. After moving to Canada, she still remembered some English for science and technology that she had learned at the university in China, but never developed the skills for speaking English in everyday life. As such, Participant 16 was really hopeful that she could learn English in the LINC program. However, she only went there for three months because she wasn't able to learn what she needed from the class.

She mentioned that her class lacked an inspiring learning environment because students came with different learning purposes. According to Participant 16, some students only who went there to pass the time were not serious about acquiring English skills, and the teachers had to be understanding with these students because more students meant more funding next year. The teachers spent a considerable amount of time repeating basic sentences in order to concentrate these students' attention; therefore, Participant 16 could not progress further and faster to learn advanced English.

“I rest my hope on learning English from the LINC program, but after three months, I realized this is not the place that I want to stay. It was inadequate. I wasn’t able to acquire English skills there. The teachers were good, but the learning environment was subpar. There was no real English-speaking environment. The students came here to kill their time, rather than to learn English, which also affected the teacher’s speed of instruction. The school also had to design the class considering the needs of these students to maintain the number of students to receive funding.”

Participant 16 had learned English on a continuous track throughout her studies in China, so that she was capable of picking up the language faster than other students in class. With that being said, she also thought that studying in the LINC program held her back from finding highly skilled jobs as fast as she expected because the other students learned much slower than her. To quote her narrative,

“They didn’t even understand the basic sentence. For example, if you asked them, ‘do you come from China?’, they would not understand it. The teacher had to spend a long time talking about this simple sentence. I went there for only three months.”

While understanding the diversity in the class, she still hoped that the teachers could understand the real needs of skilled immigrants who required speedy access to improved English as a stepping stone to finding highly skilled jobs. It would have been more efficient if LINC organized skilled immigrants with the same goal of learning for employment purposes in the same class as they truly have similar learning goals.

“The level of those students was very low. I went there in the hope of picking up my language skills as quickly as possible. I had a good knowledge of English. Many students were coming to

the class only to spend some time. They were not skilled immigrants, and the school put all kinds of immigrants and refugees together. I wished they had put all the economic class immigrants together, and I wish they could do so in the future, because economic class immigrants generally have a solid foundation to learn English quickly. We just need to improve our oral skills.”

The learning needs of these immigrants were to quickly pick up the language skills that are essential to finding skilled work, which is fundamentally different from immigrants who learn English to meet the needs of their daily lives.³⁷⁸ Participant 16 felt that not progressing fast enough was a waste of her time. She needed to improve her English skills, but her ultimate goal would be to find a highly skilled job as soon as possible. Although Participant 16 tried to follow the LINC class, the course offered was inadequate for her. Therefore, Participant 16 decided to quit the LINC program and tried to find a job with her existing English skills.

“I decided to look for a job with my poor English skills, but, you know, surely that I can’t find professional jobs with my poor English skills.”

Participant 16 had to try anyway because the LINC program could not help her with her most pressing need for job search skills. Participant 16 was among the lucky ones who managed to return to highly skilled positions after she improved her English skills by working in low-skilled positions for years and learning from her colleagues outside the formal training regime at LINC.

3.2.4. Differences from Classmates

³⁷⁸ *Note:* the senior Chinese immigrant women included in this research reported other goals of participating in the LINC program, which was to learn English to carry on daily activities, such as seeing a doctor or doing grocery shopping.

Participant 16 mentioned that the direct reason for her dropping out of the LINC class was that she could not improve her English fast enough in this program; this reduced her chances of quickly finding a highly skilled job through this learning experience. Participant 16 had a very clear employment-driven learning goal because of her high level of education and extensive professional work experience in China and Japan. She studied in a top-ranked Chinese university when the admission rates for the university entrance exam in China were still very low in the 1990's, demonstrating her academic excellence. Her university admission and study distinguished her, in China, as having bright prospects for a successful professional career. Her later work experience as an engineer in several world-renowned companies in Japan also reinforced her belief that she would be able to find a highly skilled position with a good salary and high social status in Canada as well, in spite of the great difficulties in transferring skills in the transnational migration.³⁷⁹ Her previous success shaped her career goal of finding a highly skilled job that is equivalent to her previous position in China, and learning English in the LINC program was a stepping stone for her to achieve this career goal.

Participant 16's high level of education, previous career success, and professional background differentiated her from many of her classmates. Firstly, she had a clear employment-driven learning goal, whereas many of her classmates did not. For instance, some senior Chinese immigrant women came to LINC with the intention of attaining sufficient English to facilitate basic daily tasks such as buying groceries or seeing a doctor. These goals did not involve learning English for workplace communication.³⁸⁰ Secondly, she only needed some quick training to polish her English skills for employment-related purposes, whereas her classmates were more at ease

³⁷⁹ See, Najma Sharif, "Occupational Skill Attainment in Canada: the Role of Gender, Nativity Status and Ethnic Origin (2014) 25:5 International Review of Applied Economics 695-712.

³⁸⁰ See, my interview data with senior Chinese immigrant women Participants 26, 27, 28, 31, and 32.

with learning English for a wide range of topics at very basic levels. These reasons made her feel that learning English in the LINC program could not improve her English fast enough to achieve her career goal in Canada.

Participant 16 mentioned several more specific points in this regard. Firstly, the LINC program has to balance the learning needs of students from various backgrounds. Participant 16 found that her English level was much more advanced than other immigrants in her class, despite the placement test. Besides, her motivation to learn was stronger due to the pressure of finding a highly skilled job. Hence, the teaching progress of this class went too slowly to benefit her. Secondly, Participant 16 found that the program administrators tended to make the class easier to follow in order to cater to the needs of other immigrant students. This method helped to retain a larger number of students in this program. However, the voice of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women like her could not necessarily be heard. Thirdly, she also complained that other students who joined the program were not always as engaged as her, which created a subpar learning environment for other students like her who wanted to improve their language skills for the purpose of quickly finding highly skilled jobs. Consequently, she found the learning goal of the LINC program could not benefit her.

Using IE methodology enabled me to keep the institutional arrangements in view when analyzing individuals' experiences in local settings. When these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women enter into the LINC institution, they activated a complex set of procedures in a way that reinforces the established order of ruling relations. In the LINC program, these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's learning activities were coordinated by the external and textually mediated ruling regime with LINC. They were trained to become immigrants who were capable of dealing with shorter-term transitional issues in order to be able to participate in Canadian society

to a greater extent.³⁸¹ When these immigrant women had particular needs, such as finding a highly skilled job, that had yet to be perceived by the institution, it became very difficult for them to change the established order of ruling relations in order to meet their needs. When they could not fit themselves into the default model, these immigrant women rarely had the flexibility to find other solutions within the LINC processes. This led to the withdrawal of many of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women from the LINC program who participated in this research.

The experiences of Participants 15 and 16 explain how their learning experiences at the local settings ruptured from institutional arrangements. In addition, many other highly skilled Chinese immigrant women also reported similar issues that led them to drop out of the LINC program. I highlight some other representative quotations that support the points that I analyzed above, including complaints about poorly structured courses, inappropriate methods of assessment, unguided assignments, and an unsatisfactory learning environment.³⁸² These immigrant women were not all located in the same way within the institutionalized social relations. Their diverse experiences with common features allow me to see how they interact with the social relations from their personal sites.

Assessment Methods

³⁸¹ Government of Canada, Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program, online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/language-instruction-newcomers-canada-2010/relevance.html>>.

³⁸² *Note:* This part of the analysis gathered evidence from highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who still intended to work, ideally in highly skilled positions, to support their lives in Canada. The language classes also attracted many senior Chinese immigrants, who had different views from these younger Chinese immigrant women. However, there is a different level of learning needs between senior immigrant women and younger immigrant women who attend the classes for employment purposes. Senior immigrant women mainly went there to develop their social networks. Some senior learners knew basic sentences and expressions to buy groceries or see a doctor without getting help from family, friends, or social workers. I acknowledge the significant contribution of these government-funded classes in helping senior immigrants' social integration; however, the focus of this chapter is to understand the ruptures between language training services and the needs of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who intend to learn English or French to find professional employment in Canada.

<p><i>“The way they tested my listening skills gave me much more trouble than last time”</i> (Participant 15)</p>
<p>Misplacement in Levels</p>
<p><i>“I didn’t learn much English there. My improvement was slow because the course was not well-structured and it did not match my level.”</i> (Participant 15)</p>
<p><i>“Students were at different levels. The teacher didn’t have time to explain specifically to me.”</i>(Participant 23)</p>
<p><i>“The school differentiated the levels of their students, but to me, the differences were not clear. Many students didn’t understand the words used in class. I was among this kind of students.”</i>(Participant 23)</p>
<p><i>“I didn’t learn much at Level 4. I didn’t learn either when I moved to Level 5. After that, I felt there was no need to proceed.”</i> (Participant 20)</p>
<p>Course Content</p>
<p><i>“I think LINC did not meet my need.”</i> (Participant 16)</p>
<p><i>“I can’t learn anything new. It is much better to read and write at home...I can also find this kind of learning materials online”</i> (Participant 20)</p>
<p><i>“The learning goal was too general, without specific requirements”</i> (Participant 23)</p>
<p><i>“If they didn’t have or didn’t follow a teaching plan, it was all a waste of my time.”</i>(Participant 23)</p>
<p>Teaching Methods</p>
<p><i>“I memorized the vocabulary and did the reading exercises at home. It was all on me. There is no purpose of going to school.”</i> (Participant 19)</p>

<p><i>“I like the teacher-centered pedagogic method. I hope the teacher to teach based on a textbook and give us assignments. Their courses were loosely organized. I think they don’t have a plan.” (Participant 23)</i></p>
<p><i>“We were given random newspapers as learning materials... I was not familiar with what to learn from this random information without knowing what to get from this.” (Participant 20)</i></p>
<p><i>“There were no assignments for me. The teacher didn’t realize that students, like me, need assignments.” (Participant 23)</i></p>
<p><i>“The teacher asked me to provide our opinions, but I didn’t even know enough words, how was I able to give opinions?” (Participant 23)</i></p>
<p>Learning Purposes</p>
<p><i>“I went there mainly to network with classmates in order to find a job” (Participant 22)</i></p>
<p><i>“I realize that many students went there not to learn English, just to find something to do, so that they are entitled certain financial support.”(Participant 16)</i></p>
<p>Overall Comments</p>
<p><i>“I think it was a waste of my time. I went there for about six months, and I felt that I didn’t learn anything.” (Participant 8)</i></p>
<p><i>“I feel LINC didn’t help me. My English didn’t improve in that class.”(Participant 20)</i></p>
<p><i>“I followed the class for about one or two weeks. I was still very confused. I knew very little.” (Participant 23)</i></p>

“I think studying in the LINC program was a heavy burden for me.”

(Participant 23)

3.3. Puzzle Three: Inadequate Language Training Support for Highly Skilled Chinese

Immigrant Women - Insights from Key Managerial Stakeholders

In my research, five highly skilled Chinese immigrant women explicitly mentioned that they followed the “exit” option to drop out of the LINC class after learning for a few months. My research also asks what their experiences were after the withdrawal, and how they ensured the continuous improvement of their language skills in order to meet the requirements for applying for highly skilled jobs? These are critical issues to investigate in order to reduce the marginalization of these immigrant women in Canadian society. These inquiries guided me examine how private resources took over the language training services offered through the government-funded programs in these immigrant women’s lives.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, highly skilled Chinese immigrant women were fully aware of the importance of improving their local language skills. As such, when they realized the downsides of learning in the LINC programs, these immigrant women began proactively looking for alternative resources to continue their learning outside the funded framework. For example, Participant 16 chose to take on low-skilled jobs and consulting their work colleagues about language skills. Another women participant (Participant 20) chose to learn from English-speaking family members. The quotations below reveal the alternative measures adopted by some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to learn English.

<p><i>“Language comes from daily experience. If I pay attention to the language that I use in daily life, such as reading a newspaper, my English can improve. I don’t need to follow the teacher.” (Participant 20)</i></p>
<p><i>“I went to the English conversation group. I also browsed the internet forums that many Chinese immigrants visited. I checked this resource to learn the commonly-asked interview questions, and how to answer these questions” (Participant 18)</i></p>
<p><i>“Language learning can be done in an actual work setting. I can do some part-time jobs while learning English.” (Participant 30)</i></p>
<p><i>“I worked there not for money. I went there to speak English.”(Participant 20)</i></p>
<p><i>“The reason for me to work as a part-time sales representative is that I wanted to improve my English oral skills...I told myself that I should do what I am afraid to do. I was too shy to talk to Canadians at that time.” (Participant 37)</i></p>
<p><i>“My English skills significantly improved after I found my full-time job. I speak English for long hours when I am working. It made me improved a lot. Back to the time that I was still at school, I worked for some limited hours every week and I don’t speak English while I was not working...A full-time job forced me to speak English repeatedly every day and my English improved every day.”(Participant 38)</i></p>

While these women complained about the coordinated LINC program being structured in a way that does not take into account their primary employment-driven learning needs, they also admitted that self-directed learning in daily life may be even less effective. There is no guarantee that they will better their chances for highly skilled employment after quitting the LINC program.

If they dismiss the government-funded language class, they may have a higher risk of completely losing opportunities to restore their career. For instance, Participant 2 gave up the idea of improving English skills to find a highly skilled job after dropping out of LINC classes. She reported that

“My study reached a bottleneck, I didn’t work enough to overcome the difficulties. I didn’t study English after that period. I went to work in a grocery store and continued for 11 years since then”.

To give another example, Participant 20 also reported that she felt that LINC class did not teach her useful English skills, so she quit after studying at Level 4 and 5 and has worked in several restaurants as a cashier since then. She sometimes imagined what changes would have happened to her post-migration life if she continued her language study,

“I have thought about applying for a career-oriented training program at the local college if I could continue learning English with some good resources, but I gave up this idea”.

Their experiences demonstrate that abandoning the government-funded language training services might have further reduced her already limited ways to enter highly skilled sectors, especially because the hiring process in the Canadian labour market requires the extensive use of language skills for highly skilled job applications.

These insights guided me to identify the third problematic in this chapter: why highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who desire to improve language skills for employment purposes do not use these government-funded language training programs? This question reveals the point from where I begin my IE inquiry in this puzzling event. To provide a more complete picture of the

ruling relations, I inquire into the relevant features of social organization that must be traced to make sense of these immigrant women's experiences in the local setting. I interviewed language acquisition experts who are situated in different locations from the women participants within the LINC language training discourse. Among them, Experts 2 and 5 held key positions whose main responsibility was administrating the language assessment and training services for immigrants. Their accounts contrasted with the highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's opinions about the usefulness and effectiveness of the LINC program for highly skilled immigrants. To illustrate, Experts 2 and 5 understood the rationale of how the government designed the LINC program to help all immigrants, including highly skilled immigrants, in their transition and integration into life in Canada, whereas my research participants often interpreted the services as lacking consideration for their employment-driven settlement needs.

In this section, I mainly cite the narratives from Expert 2, who is a LINC program coordinator at a community-based immigrant services organization. She has also accumulated rich experience with providing language services to new immigrants because prior to her employment with LINC she worked in several important positions in different immigrant-serving organizations at the community level. My interview with her has three parts: it first began with a general introduction of the purpose of creating the LINC program; it then proceeded to the actual working process of organizing and administrating the language training classes for immigrants; finally, it covered the problems of LINC program pointed out by highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, and I invited Expert 2 to comment on the complaints that I gathered from them.

Expert 2 first explained why Canada established the LINC program and how the LINC classes are organized. According to Expert 2, these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women often fail to recognize the fundamental goal of the LINC program, which is to equip all new immigrants with

basic language skills that will help them explore more opportunities in Canadian society. The LINC classes are designed to teach a wide variety of immigrants the language they need to use in everyday life, rather than in certain specific fields. She describes immigrants' typical LINC learning experiences as,

“You learn a lot about Canada about the culture and everything else, and you try to fit in [Canadian society in the] best way possible through the language training.”

The LINC classes benefit new immigrants both with and without an intention to find jobs in the host country. The LINC course design blends in the broader goal of making new immigrants feel comfortable in their new country in a timely manner. In fact, Expert 2 justifies this course design by attaching more value to learning conversational English for integration purposes than solely learning specific grammar to prepare for highly skilled employment. The experts' explanation reveals that the LINC program was not strictly focused on language per se, but is also keenly focused on the facilitation of the overall social integration of new immigrants.

“If you are at the age that you are not looking for a job, it still gives you a chance to improve your English to the point where you feel comfortable in your new country.”

Whilst studying in LINC classes would improve immigrants' English skills in all aspects, it could also bring positive effects on immigrants' labour market integration. Improving language skills in order to access employment opportunities is aligned with the goal of government-funded language training classes. However, the lengths to which LINC would go to support skilled immigrants to pursue their highly skilled careers in Canada remains questionable. According to Expert 2,

“The goal of our language course is to make you, as a new newcomer, able to find a job and function in the society in the shortest possible time.”

This statement reflects that LINC can only assist immigrants to find “a job” and to “function in the society”, but LINC does not necessarily aim to equip immigrants with the language skills needed for finding a job that matches their skills and experiences. With many of Canada’s industrial sectors facing the challenges of labour shortage,³⁸³ the language training courses for immigrants are geared towards preparing them to enter the labour market, rather than assisting immigrants to find highly skilled jobs in their intended fields. This practice indicates that, no matter what immigrants’ previous skills and experiences are, LINC language acquisition experts take more interest in teaching immigrants basic English skills, which allows them to join the labour market as soon as possible without nuancing immigrants’ long-term learning needs and final career goal.

Level 8 is the highest literacy level that immigrants can reach in the LINC program. The fact that Expert 2 does not consider immigrants’ English to be fluent even with a high LINC level reveals the limits to government support for immigrants’ language training. Expert 2 states that,

*“LINC is a so-called ‘low-stake program’ ...Nobody in the LINC program is considered fluent even if you are at the level 7 or 8.”*³⁸⁴

This statement reveals that the support that the Canadian government commits to providing for immigrants is finite: the LINC program pays more attention to instructing basic language skills

³⁸³ See, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, *An Exploration of Skills and Labour Shortages in Atlantic Canada* (June 2019) at 3.

³⁸⁴ Note: Level 7 or 8 are very high levels in the LINC system. Detailed can be found in the report by Colleen Dempsey, Li Xue & Stan Kustec, “Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada: Performance Results by LINC Level” (June, 2009) online: < <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/research-stats/linc-results.pdf>>.

that mainly enables immigrants to explore their new environment, but does not support more advanced levels of language acquisition needed in particular fields. As such, highly skilled immigrants typically cannot rely on LINC classes to improve their language skills to the level that a highly skilled employer requires them to have.

Expert 2 acknowledges that the LINC program has more moderate and functional expectations for immigrants' learning outcomes than what private language training might provide. If immigrants want to be more fluent than level 8, they must have the economic resources to pay for private language training. For example, Participant 15 dropped out of the free LINC classes and paid for her study in the ESL program in a local college because she wanted a faster improvement. By contrast, Participants 16 and 23 did not have the financial resources to take private lessons, so that they had to work and learned English in a much less structured way at their workplace. As many immigrant families face financial constraints during the initial years of their arrival,³⁸⁵ immigrant women usually have great difficulties in securing resources for them to take private lessons, which makes advanced language acquisition a privileged activity that only immigrants with superior economic status can afford.

Insights from language acquisition experts explain how the LINC classes are organized from a differently situated position compared to that of my women participants. Canadian government support for new immigrants' language acquisition is discursively organized. When highly skilled Chinese immigrant women try to benefit from the LINC program, they interact with public institutions and activate a series of forces that perpetuate the invisible rulings relations that guide their learning experiences. These immigrant women have to conform to the learning steps

³⁸⁵ Taryn Tang, Keith Oatley & Brenda Toner, "Impact of Life Events and Difficulties on the Mental Health of Chinese Immigrant Women", (2007) 9 *Journal of Immigrant Minority Health* 281 at 287.

established by the LINC administrators, such as handing in assignments to meet the course requirements and receiving feedback on their assignments. These textually mediated activities coordinate, guide, and instruct these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's daily learning activities in local settings. LINC instructors use the specific LINC curriculum during class where the goal is to teach English while incorporating teaching new immigrants Canadian values, culture, and life.

However, prioritizing teaching conversational language over specific language for employment-driven purposes assumes all immigrants must learn basic English no matter what their previous learning experiences are. This arrangement overlooks the particular learning needs of some highly skilled immigrants in the LINC program. The women participants of this research were admitted to Canada under different immigration streams: some were principal applicants under the economic class; some were dependent spouses of economic immigrants; some were spouses of Canadian permanent residents and citizens under the family class. Regardless of the immigration streams they were admitted through, these immigrant women could always be highly skilled professionals who needed to develop new careers to earn their livings in Canada. Nonetheless, Canada's language training services for immigrants make assumptions about the role of these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women and do not leave them many learning options that are geared towards finding highly skilled jobs. Some of my women participants (Participant 15 and 23) even find that the practices and procedures of LINC impede them from finding highly skilled jobs quickly considering the opportunity costs: being constrained to only learning basic conversational English for general integration purposes delays their highly skilled job search.

The learning options that the highly skilled Chinese immigrant women have are coordinated with the work done by LINC program administrators, who are institutional representatives within

the professional language training discourses. If these immigrant women find that the conventional options are unsuitable for their needs, they are also not provided with many chances to improve their situation within the institutionally organized discursive practices. The most common practice for immigrant women who do not want to follow the learning steps established by the LINC administrators is to withdraw.³⁸⁶ However, considering the financial constraints, immigrants might lack the resources to pay for private classes in order to continue improving their language skills after withdrawing from the government-funded language training classes. The withdrawal may also increase their likelihood of being excluded from highly skilled employment positions with great difficulties in finding alternative free or inexpensive methods to continue learning.

4. Summary

Analyzing the three puzzling events enables me to reveal how various language barriers affect highly skilled immigrant women's job search outcomes and how the government-funded language training fails to catch these immigrant women's employment-driven learning needs. Puzzling events are important technical concepts in IE research that guide researchers to probe into the ruling relations. Starting from examining the actualities of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's everyday lives, I explain how these immigrant women's thoughts and actions are purposefully coordinated by ruling relations. There are disconnections between these immigrant women's post-migration experiences and how the institutional arrangements expect them to do.

The analysis in this chapter contributes to the understanding of the constituting processes of two types of language barriers that are reinforced by Canadian employers' common hiring practices, which make it much more convenient for immigrants to work in low-skilled than highly

³⁸⁶ *Note:* Participants 2, 11, 13, 15, 16,19,20, 22, 23 withdrew from the language training classes after trying to study in the LINC program

skilled positions. These discursively constructed hiring processes restrict highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's opportunities to fully use their skills and qualifications in the Canadian labour market. As a remedy, the Canadian government intends to offer language training classes to help immigrants overcome these barriers. However, these language courses are considered to be unsuccessful by many immigrant women because immigration authorities' assessment and teaching methods developed based on a formulaic way to classify immigrant women's levels of language proficiency are incompatible with these immigrant women's learning needs.

The discourse around Canada's government-funded language training services for immigrants needs to be critically examined. This discourse systematically assumes immigrants' language skills to be deficient and inadequate for certain employment opportunities. Additionally, the government-funded language training classes provided to immigrants continue to assume the level of language proficiency that immigrants need in order to enter the local labour market in a particular way. This institutional arrangement overlooks some skilled immigrants' more precise, employment-driven learning needs. Therefore, a more nuanced discourse is needed and appropriate services should be developed, and recommendations for policymaking will appear in the concluding chapter.

Chapter VI Employment-Related Settlement Services

1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the hardships that many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women confront in their career restoration in Canada, and proposes to the Canadian government to develop and maintain employment-related settlement services with these immigrant women's particular circumstances in mind. The ultimate goal is to connect these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women with more support and opportunities in order to provide effective and stable assistance for them to find highly skilled jobs that match their skills and qualifications in Canada.

In conducting the literature review, I found that quite a bit of research shows that female, racialized immigrants generally often have poorer employment outcomes compared to male, non-racialized, Canadian workers respectively.³⁸⁷ The marginalization of foreign-trained skilled workers (including racialized immigrant women) in the Canadian labour market despite their high levels of education, skills, and previous work experience has become a topic of considerable concern.³⁸⁸ Research reveals that skilled immigrant women “are losing their professional skills and career identity due to lack of employment and underemployment” in Canada,³⁸⁹ and they tend to end up in occupations below their skill levels indicates an unused economic potential for receiving

³⁸⁷ See, Eddy Ng & Suzanne Gagnon, “Employment Gaps and Underemployment for Racialized Groups and Immigrants in Canada: Current Finding and Future Directions (January 2020) online: < <https://ppforum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/EmploymentGaps-Immigrants-PPF-JAN2020-EN-Feb7.pdf>>

³⁸⁸ Kim Walker, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, “What Works: Labour Market Integration Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants in Canada” (November 2006) at 1. Online:< [file:///Users/chenwang/Desktop/2013+What_works+Date=\[2021-03-14\].pdf](file:///Users/chenwang/Desktop/2013+What_works+Date=[2021-03-14].pdf)>.

³⁸⁹ Dalon Taylor, “Flipping the Script for Skilled Immigrant Women: What Suggestions Might Critical Social Work Offer?” (February, 2018) Research Association for Interdisciplinary Studies 87 at 87.

countries.³⁹⁰ There is also a higher rate of underemployment among immigrant women than immigrant men and native-born women.³⁹¹ Research focusing highly skilled on Chinese immigrant women also reveals that various barriers exist to funnel highly skilled Chinese immigrant women into low-status and part-time positions in Canada.³⁹²

As such, Canada takes helping immigrants overcome barriers to their transition as an important strategy to realize the economic, social, and cultural benefits of accepting immigrants.³⁹³ In Canada, Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is the lead agency responsible for developing and implementing settlement policies, as well as the major funding provider that partners with community-based service providers to deliver settlement services for immigrants.³⁹⁴ Previous research mentions that “a Canadian model of settlement services for newcomers is usually delivered by local non-profit organizations and funded by the federal government.”³⁹⁵ Besides, provincial or municipal governments also provide funding to offer settlement services, such as language training, bridging programs, internships and mentorships, support for temporary foreign workers, and cooperation initiatives among key agencies.³⁹⁶ In municipalities that are

³⁹⁰ Yvonne Riaño, et al, “Understanding the Labour Market Participation of Skilled Immigrant Women in Switzerland: The Interplay of Class, Ethnicity, and Gender” (2007) 8:2 *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 163 at 166.

³⁹¹ International Organization for Migration: “Crushed Hopes: Underemployment and Deskilling Among Skilled Migrant Women” (2015), online:< <https://publications.iom.int/books/crushed-hopes-underemployment-and-deskilling-among-skilled-migrant-women> > at 15.

³⁹² See, Guida Man, *supra*. note 121 at 135 -148.

³⁹³ Government of Canada, “Settlement Programs”, online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/program-terms-conditions/settlement.html>>.

³⁹⁴ Note: Aside from IRCC, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) also provides funding support for employment-related assistance services at the federal level; these services might be available for immigrants, but many of them are not particularly designed for immigrants. Please see: Kim Walker, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, “What Works: Labour Market Integration Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants in Canada” (November 2006) at 18 and 25. In this research, I focus on the employment-related services funded by IRCC because both my women participants and experts participants mainly mentioned IRCC-funded settlement services.

³⁹⁵ Yidan Zhu, “Immigration Policy, Settlement Service, and Immigrant Mothers in Neoliberal Canada: A Feminist Analysis” (2016)48:2 *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 143 at 146.

³⁹⁶ Skylar Maharaj & Shuguan Wang, “Community Support for Newcomer Families: A Literature Review” (January 2015) Ryerson Centre for Immigration & Settlement, RCIS Working Paper No. 2015/1 at 5.

typically immigrant reception centres, the municipal government also made a conscious effort to reduce access barriers to city services for immigrants.³⁹⁷ In Canada, funding resources are mostly provided by the governments at various levels for the purpose of developing settlement programs to assist immigrants with their transition. Services funded through fundraising or private resources are usually not stable enough to maintain the services on a long-term basis.³⁹⁸ In this research, I mainly discuss the IRCC-funded employment-related settlement services for immigrants at the federal level because these services are frequently mentioned by my women participants and experts. Additionally, employment-related services consist of an important part of Canada's settlement services and receive the second largest share of funding from the IRCC after the LINC program that has been mentioned in Chapter V.³⁹⁹

This chapter continues to follow the Institutional Ethnography (IE) methodology. IE provides me with a method of inquiry from the standpoint of this particular social group. Narratives from 46 highly skilled Chinese immigrant women provide me with a detailed account of their everyday experiences of exploring highly skilled career opportunities in Canada. I select four representative stories to elaborate located experiences of these immigrant women. Analyzing the accounts of these immigrant women allows me to probe into the ruling relations. My research is motivated by investigating why, according to these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, it becomes a common practice to compromise the highly skilled development opportunities that they see in front of them to accept temporary, low-paying jobs after immigrating to Canada. This research also investigates why these women participants' can only improve their highly skilled employment

³⁹⁷ Navjeet Sidhu, *Accessing Community Programs and Services for Non-Status Immigrants in Toronto: Organizational Challenges and Responses* (Toronto: Social Planning Toronto, 2013) at 4.

³⁹⁸ Kareem Sadiq, "The Two-tier Settlement System: A Review of Current Newcomer Settlement Services in Canada" (November, 2004) CERIS Working Paper No. 34 at 19.

³⁹⁹ Shuguang Wang & Marie Truelove, *supra*. note 350 at 580.

opportunities to a very limited extent even after receiving the government-funded, employment-related settlement services. Interviews with these women participants direct me to ask what are the constraints for highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to fully develop their economic potentials in Canada and how the barriers are constructed.

I also conduct four interviews with frontline community workers who coordinate the IRCC-funded employment-related settlement services at three community-based organizations in Ottawa. These community workers are interviewed as intermediary actors because they play important roles in linking clients with institutional arrangements. Their accounts give me some direction to further explore why there are barriers to employment-related settlement services for these immigrant women. This research inquires into how the work of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in finding highly skilled jobs is coordinated with the work done by professional actors involved in institutional practices. Analyzing the ruling relations beyond the local settings enables me to make suggestions for policy and legal changes to address the barriers to highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's professional career development in Canada.

2. Analyzing from Highly Skilled Chinese Immigrant Women's Standpoint

As mentioned in Chapter III, women's standpoint is the starting point of IE exploration and discovery.⁴⁰⁰ I take up the standpoint of these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to study how ruling relations work to engage them in institutional arrangements beyond their knowing when they tried to develop their new careers in Canada. In this chapter, I mainly cite the experiences of four women participants, Participants 2, 3, 12, and 13. I also briefly mention certain aspects of Participant 6's experiences in this chapter to explicate why employment-related

⁴⁰⁰ Dorothy Smith, *supra*. note 194 at 1.

settlement services are still insufficient. Among the women participants who have provided insights into employment-related issues in this research, these immigrant women's experiences are representative of the lack of opportunities to access highly skilled positions are limited.

These research participants were all highly skilled professionals before immigrating to Canada. The experiences of Participant 2 and Participant 13 map out one narrative of how highly skilled immigrant women have been constrained into low-skilled positions for their entire careers in Canada. Their experiences shared similarities with those of Participants 8, 11, 13, 19, 20, 23 who rarely or never took advantage of government-funded settlement services and have remained in low-skilled positions that they were over-qualified for since their arrival. Highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who completely lost their professional careers accounted for a small proportion of interviews in my research, but their experiences guided me to discover important analytical points about the barriers against their access to professional jobs in Canada.

I also profile Participant 3 and Participant 12 who managed to return to highly skilled jobs with the support provided by government-funded settlement services carried out by community-based organizations. According to their narratives, they had several advantages over other immigrants in accessing settlement services because they worked at the community centers and had convenient access to find suitable settlement services from their colleagues. However, even with the assistance from these settlement services, these two immigrant women were still unable to return to the same type of positions that they had in China. Participant 6's experience further revealed the reasons why they had to remain in the positions that they were over-qualified for even after they had received assistance from settlement services and exited the service program. The underemployment experiences of these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women echoed with the majority of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in my study, such as Participants 6, 7, 8, 10,

11, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 30, and 34. These immigrant women managed to return to highly skilled positions, but they were at lower levels than the positions they had before immigrating to Canada. Furthermore, before they found these kinds of highly skilled positions that require fewer qualifications to access, they typically worked in low-skilled employment for many years in Canada.

Lessons learned from these experiences will also help more recently-immigrated Chinese women to reconsider the avenues of their career development in Canada. For instance, Participants 7, 10, 15, 24, 25, 30, and 34 arrived in Canada only a few months before they participated in this research, so their career prospects in Canada were not very clear. Nonetheless, experiences from the standpoint of earlier highly skilled Chinese immigrant women could influence the career path the new highly skilled Chinese immigrant women may follow. To explain the influence, social networks can be helpful for immigrants' economic incorporation because new immigrants can use coethnic social capital to find employment, especially the positions that primarily serve their own ethnic communities.⁴⁰¹ While circulating employment-related information, how earlier Chinese immigrants describe their local labour market experience produces a discourse that affects new immigrants' understanding of their career choices in Canada.

To begin my research by analyzing highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's daily actualities, I profile 4 women participants because their experiences are representative, which helps to demonstrate that it is important to have access to government-funded employment-related

⁴⁰¹ See, Maritsa Poros, "Migrant Social Networks: Vehicles for Migration, Integration, and Development" Migration Policy Institute (March 30, 2011), online:< <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migrant-social-networks-vehicles-migration-integration-and-development>>.

settlement services, but it is also insufficient to have services that do not address the specific needs of highly skilled immigrant women.

Story No. 1

Participant 2 was a quality manager in a pharmaceutical company in China before they immigrated to Canada in 2001. Participant 2 and her husband first learned some scattered information about the Canadian education system from their friends, and decided to immigrate to have their son educated in what they perceived to be Canada's less stressful educational system. As such, Participant 2's husband filed an application for the whole family and they soon obtained Canadian permanent residency. Since they landed in Canada in 2001, they have been courageous and hardworking to deal with all the difficulties so as to meet their original immigration goal.

The very first challenge for them was financial difficulty. Given the huge wage difference between China and Canada back then, they were unable to bring sufficient funds to support months or even years of transition period without Canadian incomes. Like many other Chinese immigrants, this couple had to find temporary jobs in local Chinese restaurants or grocery stores immediately after they arrived in Canada. Participant 2 worked in a grocery store and her husband worked in a Chinese restaurant during the first two years of their arrival. Over time, they realized that working in these low-skilled jobs would not allow them to improve their lives or to restore their career in Canada. As she said, "*We both worked in these labour positions for two years, and then realized that life completely went against our original expectation...we wanted to restore our previous living standards.*"

To improve their situation, they decided to send one person to study and the other remain working in grocery stores or Chinese restaurants to make money. They need at least one person to advance to a highly skilled job in order to improve their overall situation. The opportunity of

pursuing further professional development fell to Participant 2's husband. They could not afford to divide the already-limited resources between two people. Participant 2 thought that the traditional gendered family roles naturally required her to remain in these low-skilled positions in order to support her husband's study in professional areas. When I asked how the decision of sending her husband to school first came about, she said that, *"This is our tradition -- men managing external affairs and women internal. This controlling idea made me feel that I must support him first until his career establishes."*

Therefore, in the third year of their arrival, Participant 2's husband quit his labour jobs in a Chinese restaurant and began his study to earn a Canadian certificate in engineering, and Participant 2 continued to work as a shop assistant. She said that, *"I must keep working because we need an income to pay the basic expenses for our family."* Participant 2 worked in the same grocery store for eleven years after their immigration and finally retired in 2011 when her husband changed to a more stable professional job. When I asked her about her feelings at work, she frankly answered that it was never the life she enjoyed, but she had no other choice at that time.

"Are you happy with your work experience in Canada?"

"Not at all. How can I be happy?"

"Why did you work so long in these jobs?"

"I worked long. I didn't have other choices. I must do it to keep our lives going on."

"How did you feel when you went to work every day?"

"I felt that I had to do it."

"Could you explain it more?"

“To survive, I had to. I must work to ensure we had some income. I must do it like this.”

Participant 2 was unhappy while working as a shop assistant; talking about pleasant and joyful work appeared to have exceeded what she could normally and reasonably expect. She tried to learn English when her shop assistant work was not very intense, but she still could not find a better job. The reasons were multi-fold: 1) as mentioned in Chapter V, the English classes she was able to access due to time and monetary constraints did not effectively help her to improve her language skills to the level that could qualify her for a highly skilled job; 2) she became discouraged about improving her qualifications in order to find a highly skilled job after compromising for a few years to support other family members; 3) she could not take a break from her busy low-skilled work because they always needed money for purchasing a home in Canada, sending remittance to parents and relatives in China, paying for their son’s university education, and saving for emergencies. The lack of financial resources impacted Participant 2 first and foremost because she had to exhaust all her energy working from one job to another.

In retrospect, Participant 2 said explicitly that she was disappointed with her migration experience because their life in Canada was not as good as she expected before, especially considering her employment experience: *“we thought that, if we worked hard, we could live the same life as we had in China one day, but we realized that it was not true after these years. It was a bit upsetting. My husband might have restored his career in the end, but it was completely impossible for me.”*

Unfortunately, Participant 2 and her family did not know anything about the social services that were available to them at that time, such as job-bridging classes that help them prepare for the licensing or certification process or business support for immigrants who want to start their business. In retrospect, she sometimes regretted not knowing about the many resources available

for financial support. For example, when she first came to Canada, she never thought about taking loans to support her urgent development needs such as enrolling in educational programs or starting a small business. As she said, *“we were not aware of the policies to support new immigrants. I was very motivated to learn when I first arrived, but we experienced considerable financial difficulties...I was trapped in the circle of working long hours in labour positions and did not have time to acquire useful information or to study the policies...In fact, it was possible to take loans and to study, but I didn’t know this, nobody told me this...We were also influenced by our traditional ideology that considers taking loans or borrowing money as a shame.”*

Story No. 2

Participant 13 worked as an engineering inspector in a state-owned precision machining enterprise in China. She immigrated to Canada in 2001 as a dependent of her ex-husband who worked as an information and communications technology professional. Later on, the crash of the tech bubble made it extremely difficult for her ex-husband to find a job as a new immigrant in Canada. Therefore, Participant 13’s ex-husband went to school and she remained at home to take care of their 2-year-old daughter. When I asked how the decision was made, she answered,

“We didn’t even discuss it. We felt it should naturally have happened in this way. About 95% of our friends around us did it like this.”

“How did you feel about sending him to study first?”

“I didn’t even think about it. I let my ex-husband study and hopefully he could find a stable job. I would see what I could do after our daughter grew up.”

“Are you happy with this arrangement?”

“I had no other choice regardless of being happy or not. I had to accept it. All my friends were like this.”

“Did they all accept similar arrangements?”

“Accepted with no idea about how to change it.”

Participant 13 was quite unhappy during the first few years of her arrival. On one hand, their savings in Chinese currency were consumed so fast; on the other hand, they were not able to find jobs in Canada and she could only take care of her daughter at home. After caring for her daughter for another two years, she went out to find her first job as an assistant cook in a Chinese restaurant, and she worked in this position for several different restaurants in the following years. During her work in these restaurants, she had more chances to meet other Chinese immigrants and to exchange information with them. This network helped her to find other low-skilled jobs such as hotel housekeeper and senior-home caregiver, but could not help her to find professional jobs. She remained in these positions and never thought about advancing to professional jobs later on.

She said with regret that she did know the typical pathway of many Chinese immigrants to find a professional job in Canada, which was to study in a Canadian educational system first and then eventually find a professional job. She had never considered doing this and did not think it was possible either.

“I didn’t know much about studying. Now I know it was possible for both of us to study because we could have taken loans. If we were both working or studying at that time, we could have received some subsidy for daycare fees. I didn’t know this at that time.”

She mentioned explicitly that they missed opportunities because she had few ways to learn information that is useful for her. As mentioned in Chapter V, reading English or French textual

information might be difficult for some immigrants with limited language skills, so that these immigrants, such as Participant 13, mainly acquired information through oral communication. Nobody told her anything, and she didn't know where to get more information. Participant 13 learned useful information from other Chinese immigrants occasionally, but it was often too late for her to take advantage of it. The information did not come at the time that she could practically plan her studies and a professional career path because she was only about ten years away from retiring; it only came after she had worked in low-skilled positions for many years and she felt it was too late to start all over again.

“I didn't know anything about the support that we were eligible for at that time... We were not able to benefit from the free settlement support because our access to information was very limited. No one has told us about this.”

Participant 13 worked in these labour positions since she came to Canada and never returned to her profession before immigration. When asked whether she wanted to return to her profession, she said it would have been her wish if she thought about these things ten years ago. Now, in her fifties, she is close to retirement, and it is too late to think about restoring her professional career and she will remain in this labour position until she retires.

Participant 2 and Participant 13 both came as dependents of their husbands, and their husbands were principal economic class immigrants. Participant 2 and Participant 13 both were highly skilled professionals in China – Participant 2 was a quality manager and Participant 13 worked as an engineering inspector. They both gave up their professional careers after immigrating to Canada: their primary task was raising children and taking care of the household, and their secondary task was to work as much as possible to supplement family incomes. Whilst being

constrained in these caretaking tasks, they were too preoccupied to search for settlement services that were available and helpful for their career development.

The reported experiences of Participants 2 and 13 correspond to earlier research results indicating that the family responsibilities are shared in a gendered way that considers women as the primary caregivers to raise children, prepare meals, and do other unpaid housework within Chinese immigrant households.⁴⁰² The gendered division of labour in immigrant families compelled immigrant women to devote a significant proportion of their lives to unpaid domestic work, which clearly disadvantages these immigrant women compared to male family members whose work and lives are less constrained by family responsibilities.⁴⁰³ Participant 13's post-migration life followed this pattern as she stayed at home for the first two years to care for her daughter and do housework while her ex-husband was the only one who engaged in paid work.

This gendered division of family responsibilities becomes more impactful when immigrant families face great financial difficulties in their initial years of settlement. In this situation, immigrant women's time and labour are often directed towards supporting other family members' needs for career development, including finding temporary jobs to increase family incomes in addition to the unpaid housework they had already taken. Research shows that working outside the home does not reduce the household chores that immigrant women are expected to deal with.⁴⁰⁴ To quickly overcome financial difficulties, immigrant women accept low-skilled jobs that have much lower requirements for their qualifications. This kind of job gives them immediate income

⁴⁰² See, Marc Bornstein & Linda Cote, "Parenting Cognitions and Practices in the Acculturative Process" in Marc Bornstein & Linda Cote, eds, *Acculturation and Parent-Child Relationships: Measurement and Development* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2006) at 173–196; Yidan Zhu "Transnationalizing Lifelong Learning: Taking the Standpoint of Chinese Immigrant Mothers" (2020)18:4 *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 406–419.

⁴⁰³ Janeen Baxter, "Gender Equality and Participation in Housework: A Cross – National Perspective" (1997) 28:3 *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 220 at 220.

⁴⁰⁴ M.D.R. Evans & Tatjana Lukic, "The Impact of Resources and Family-Level Cultural Practices on Immigrant Women's Workforce Participation" (1998)16:4 *Gender Issues* 52 at 53.

to cover the family expenses and more flexible time to support other family members, but little room for improving their professional skills for further career development. Immigrant families choose this survival strategy that allocates limited resources to support male family members' professional development first at the cost of the female immigrants' professional career development. This explains why Participant 2 remained in the position of a shop assistant until her husband's career development became stable and secure.

For example, childcare services are provided sometimes in order to make it convenient for immigrant women with children to participate.⁴⁰⁵ Despite this kind of effort, Participant 2 and Participant 13 have never made good use of these settlement services to help them improve their employment status in Canada. Participant 2 had tried to take language courses for immigrants for a while, but the training did not seem to lead to a fruitful result for her, therefore she ended up dropping out of the language training classes. For Participant 13, she had never thought of improving her skills with the help of language training or employment-related services at all. Their experiences revealed that the government-funded settlement services remained far away from these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's lives.

Story No. 3

Participant 12 worked as a doctor in China. She first came to Canada because her husband was an international student in a Master's program in Canada. They applied for permanent resident status with their work experience from China and received this status while her husband was still a student. Whilst waiting for the approval of their permanent status, Participant 12 had hoped to pursue further education and to study English. However, her husband's income was not sufficient

⁴⁰⁵ *Note:* please see an example of this type of service from the website of Ottawa Chinese Community Service Center: online: < <https://www.ocsc.org/services/childcare/>>. A list of services is posted on the main page; the list is under the section of "SERVICES" with childcare being one part of the listed services.

to support their regular family expenses, not to mention to pay for international tuition for both of them. As such, Participant 12's husband continued his study and explored job opportunities after completing his studies, while Participant 12 worked as a sushi maker for about six months. One day, Participant 12 told her husband that,

“Such a life cannot be going on. I can't go to school. We can barely support your study, but making sushi was so tiring for me”.

As such, they planned to have children while Participant 12 waited for her husband to graduate and to find a job. The subsequent career development for her husband was full of challenges: her husband was not able to find a permanent job after working for three employers in the same research institution, and the renewal of his contract was always troublesome for reasons beyond his control. Her husband's first employer was not able to secure new funding to keep his own position in the lab; the second employer moved to a better job in the United States and disbanded the lab in Canada; the third employer was pressed strictly for laboratory results and did not take her husband's extra work during the weekend into account. He was very upset by these difficulties in his career and finally quit his highly professionalized job to enroll himself in a vocational training program at the local college.

During this time, Participant 2 also returned to school with the support provided by the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). OSAP is a financial aid program, which offers a mix of grants and loans for permanent residents and citizens in Ontario to pay for college or university. Participant 2 greatly benefited from this program and enrolled herself in the program for early childhood education in the local college. Participant 12 also received a subsidy for daycare for parents who study full-time. With these supports, she returned to school. Although her previous

career as a doctor could not develop further, she picked up a new area of expertise as an early childhood educator.

“I was very eager to go to school because the daycare freed me from spending all my time taking care of two sons. If I kept delaying my study plan, I would have a slim chance to return to work.”

Whilst studying was important for Participant 12, carrying out family responsibilities appeared to be more important in her life. She spent a significant amount of her time taking care of her two sons and thus worked on a part-time basis since she arrived in Canada. She planned to switch to a full-time job after her sons grew older. However, her husband hoped for her to work part-time and saved the rest of the time for family. She agreed with her husband on this point after calculating the cost and benefits.

“We still have huge financial pressures. We need to pay for all kinds of extra-curricular classes and activities for our sons...In Canada, you need a person to get the children home after two or three o'clock. If I work part-time, all my income would go towards paying for the childcare.”

Story No. 4

Participant 3 worked as a university professor in China. Her experience of visiting Canada as a government-sponsored scholar allowed her to gain an insight into the Canadian educational system that enables students to learn in a more relaxing environment. At that time, she was worried about the heavy pressure of studying intensively and tediously that her daughter had to endure in the Chinese educational system, as well as the fierce competition among other parents for sending children to top schools. To send her daughter to study in Canada, Participant 3 filed an application

for Canadian permanent residency for her family under the Federal Skilled Worker stream in 2013, and their application was quickly approved.

She landed in Canada first to prepare for the settlement of her family, such as renting an apartment, contacting daycare, and applying for the subsidy. Four months later, her husband brought their daughter to join her in Canada when everything was well set up for them. When Participant 3 was alone in Canada, she faced challenges but resolved all problems on her own, and sometimes with support from the community center and other Chinese immigrants whom she knew from her ESL class. I was impressed by the fact that her daughter went to daycare as soon as she arrived, as Participant 3 said, *“I came first and did everything for them.”*

After they all arrived in Canada, Participant 3’s family relied on their savings for the first few months and Participant 3 also found some temporary cash-out work in the community center to supplement their family expenses. Meanwhile, Participant 3 also applied to study in the ESL classes to improve her English, and she also encouraged her husband to do so. Upon the completion of these tasks, they managed to bring their daughter to study in Canada.

However, an unexpected interruption was their divorce in 2016. Participant 3 became a single mother. The divorce made her newly-started life even more difficult because the responsibilities of caring for their daughter practically fell more on her despite the joint parental responsibilities set out in the separation agreement. Participant 3 became the one who almost exclusively parented their daughter. Both Participant 3 and her ex-husband were studying in an ESL program at that time, as she had suggested to him. For childcare responsibilities, Participant 3 had to change her ESL study to an online-based module so as to gain herself more flexibility between work, study, and childcare.

With this significant change in her life, she became more reliant on the part-time job that she had with the community center. After learning that a position would become available for candidates who have a certificate in early childhood education, Participant 3 enrolled herself in the local college to earn this certificate in order to get the community-based position. As she had volunteered and worked on a part-time basis for a long time, she finally managed to get the position with this certificate. Until then, her career choices in Canada were all driven by the vacancies that she could see from her then working environment.

Participant 3 completely gave up her career as a university professor before she immigrated to Canada. Before she immigrated, she had the idea of maybe pursuing a higher level of doctoral study overseas, and receiving permanent residency in Canada made this goal more achievable for her. However, the difficulties she faced later on compelled her to accept the less desirable choice of accepting a different job that she was over-qualified for. As she reported, *“considering both earning incomes and performing family responsibilities was stressful. I was in that stressful situation. I had to accept the second-best choice.”* She described her current work as the “second-best choice” because she always had the dream of completing Canadian doctoral studies and becoming a university professor again in Canada if given the opportunity.

Now, her career development has reached an acceptable level for her and her improved living conditions have also allowed her to take a breath and to consider what she really wanted to do. This more stable situation allowed her to think about receiving additional training about how to adapt her previous knowledge to a Canadian working environment.

“Sometimes I felt that I studied early childhood education because I wanted to ensure that I would have a job after completing the study. I must support the life of my daughter and myself. I am by no means yet reconciled to this situation.”

As her daughter grew older, Participant 3 began to consider how her special skills and previous experience could possibly enable her to do some work that was closer to her expertise as a university professor, such as counseling and teaching. She began to think about herself, but only after she had a stable job that could provide a stable life for her daughter and herself.

Participant 3 and Participant 12 took different approaches from Participant 2 and Participant 13 to enhance their career opportunities in Canada. They sought support from public resources to pay for their tuition to study and to assist them with childcare. These resources helped them to return to highly skilled positions in Canada. Participant 3 and Participant 12 were very familiar with the settlement services that they could benefit from because their work in community centers gave them advantages over other new immigrants in learning this information.

For Participant 12, she immigrated for the purpose of reunifying with her husband in Canada. After she gave birth to two sons in Canada, there was always a struggle between childcare responsibilities and career development. In these years, she benefited from settlement services to improve her English skills and managed to return to school with support from OSAP. Her new career as an early childhood educator was achievable because the settlement services that new immigrants were entitled to effectively provided the support she needed to qualify for this job. Participant 12 described herself as the kind of person who was not extremely active in exploring opportunities, and she tended to go with the flow. She chose her new direction to work based on what resources were available and what goals were practical.

In the case of Participant 3, the original purpose for her to initiate the migration process was to educate her daughter in a more relaxing system. Participant 3 convinced her husband to study English, which sped up the transitioning period for herself and her ex-husband. When an interruption of her life occurred, she still actively explored chances to guarantee a high standard

of living for her daughter. Among the immigrant women I have interviewed, Participant 3 was already skillful in using social services to seek help. However, she still frequently thought that she lacked resources or information to receive sufficient support. She sometimes felt “*uncomfortable*” and “*terrified*” especially as a single mother. When her daughter was little, she needed to spend a lot of time and effort on caring for and educating her daughter. Participant 3 had worried that, if she went to study in the evening, who else could take care of her daughter? Finding adequate childcare while working non-traditional hours posed a huge challenge for her. These difficulties also prevented her from pursuing higher studies and better careers in Canada. She gave up her original plan of pursuing a doctoral degree and becoming a university professor in Canada. Her reason for remaining in an “easier” job was that this position saved her time and energy for other tasks she needed to handle in everyday life.

These two immigrant women chose to adjust their career goals rather than trying to qualify for their previous professions in Canada for a few reasons. First, Participants 3 and 12 were also bound by gendered caregiving roles similar to Participants 2 and 13 that I have mentioned earlier. Participant 3 was very concerned with the education and care that her daughter would receive while planning her own career development path. Participant 12 also returned to school and prepared to enter the labour market only after her youngest son grew older. Secondly, Participants 3 and 12’s work in community centers might have made them more aware of the nature of Canada’s settlement services. Returning to school brought positive results for their settlement in Canada, but the settlement services could only assist them to find more achievable jobs in Canada, such as an early childhood educator and community worker, and did not help them to restore their career as a doctor and a university professor respectively. Whilst striving to find ways to establish themselves in Canada, Participant 3 and Participant 12 did not insist on returning to their previous

professions and switched to more achievable jobs that saved them more time and effort to focus on other priorities.

3. Identifying Problematics in Employment-Related Services: Important but Unknown, Existing but Insufficient

In this section, my analysis begins with identifying the “problematics” that manifest how highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s experiences in their local positions disconnect from the ruling relations that are “present in them, but are not observable” to them.⁴⁰⁶ Problematic, a technical term in IE research, is a methodological tool of inquiry that “tracks from people’s experiences of the local actualities of their living into the relations present in and organizing but at best only partially visible within them.”⁴⁰⁷ As Rankin stated, “a well-formulated research problematic is key to a coherent analysis in IE”.⁴⁰⁸ These four highly skilled Chinese immigrant women’s representative stories manifest that having access to settlement services is crucial for improving these immigrant women’s situation, and the efficacy of the settlement services in assisting these immigrant women also played an important role. Based on these considerations, I discover two points of disconnection that can be translated into valuable topics of IE research: the first problematic is why many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women remained unfamiliar with the employment-related settlement services that they could potentially benefit from after immigration; another problematic is why some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women reshaped their career aspirations and accepted the jobs they were overqualified for as a matter-of-course, but rarely returned to the same level in their previous professions as clients of these employment-related settlement services.

⁴⁰⁶ Dorothy Smith, *supra* note 194 at 4.

⁴⁰⁷ Dorothy Smith, *supra* note 189 at 38-39.

⁴⁰⁸ Janet Rankin, *supra*. note 295 at 3.

To explain the first identified problematic: a common phenomenon reported by highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in this research was that they did not often proactively turn to government-funded services for help to overcome difficulties. In my interviews, the majority of the women participants had not been in contact with settlement services providers who could help them find more employment opportunities. These immigrant women said that such information was not widely circulated among their families, friends, and acquaintances. It was unlikely for them to find the information when they needed it most. As Participant 13 has expressed her concerns,

“I don’t know if this was my fault or not. Was it me who didn’t try to get this information? Was it because someone should have come to tell me but somehow didn’t? Was it because we did not have as much information as we do today?”

When these immigrant women mentioned their lack of access to information, they actually meant that they did not hear the information through word of mouth from their close circle. Oral communication is an important way of circulating information among Chinese immigrants even though the service providers made information available and searchable on the internet. The information circulates more effectively within the community because these Chinese immigrant women understand this information better in their first language rather than reading it online in Canada’s official languages.⁴⁰⁹ The reason links to the language barriers that I analyse in Chapter V. Although settlement services providers might have made the information available and

⁴⁰⁹ *Note:* settlement service providers typically advertise and provide language services in English or French, or both, as they are Canada’s official language. For example, YMCA of the National Capital Region provides information in both French and English, see online:< <https://www.ymcaywca.ca/>>. In rare cases, service provider organizations with the tradition of serving Chinese immigrants would provide service information in Chinese languages. For example, Ottawa Chinese Community Service Center (OCCSC) provides information in English and Chinese, please see, online:< <https://www.occsc.org/>>.

searchable on the internet, many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women have yet to develop the habit of actively searching for and reading useful information.

Sometimes, highly skilled Chinese immigrant women in this case regretted not having considered turning to public resources for help, especially when they saw other Chinese friends or acquaintances in a similar situation benefitting from the settlement services. In the case of Participant 13, she knew the existence of settlement services several years after she arrived in Canada. By then, she had already worked in a low-skilled position for a long time and felt she had little chance to re-restart her career.

For some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who have taken a step forward to receive the settlement services, their feedback was also very different on the ways that they were involved and that they were assisted. The experience of these immigrant women guides me to identify the second problematic: some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women (e.g. Participant 12) who have tried the employment-related services reported that these services have provided strong support for them to return to professional careers. However, some other highly skilled Chinese immigrant women also concluded that these settlement services are not very useful for professional job searches, which was evident by the fact that most highly skilled Chinese immigrant women remained underemployed and were not able to find the same type of professional jobs that they had before immigrating to Canada. Policy-oriented research also confirmed this empirical finding: “community-based agencies have limited connection with professional associations, and therefore

face greater challenges in providing appropriate services and resources to the highly educated professional newcomers.”⁴¹⁰

The interview with Participant 6 highlighted one of the reasons why she, and possibly other highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, turned away from employment-related settlement services. Participant 6 reported that she had once been enthusiastic about sending her resume and cover letter to career advisors for review. However, she did not receive feedback for a few weeks, which made her realize that the career advisor at the community level actually did not know much about her area of expertise and was not able to suggest anything meaningful. As she stated,

“At first, I kept pressing my advisor to review my resume and give me advice. The advisor was not very responsive to my request. Later on, I realized that, my area of expertise was too specific. He did not have the knowledge to comment on my expertise, nor was he able to match me with potential employers”

Participant 6 had spent a great amount of time following the employment-related advice geared towards assisting immigrants to find employment in Canada. These services typically include one-on-one career counseling, employability skills assessment, interview and resume coaching, business etiquette training, etc. However, she was frustrated because she only found abundant resources for immigrants who considered working in low-skilled positions from the service providers. The career advisor whom she contacted appeared not to have much information for highly qualified immigrant workers with very specific areas of expertise. As she was not able to find effective support to continue pursuing a career in her initially trained area, she reshaped her

⁴¹⁰ Usha George et al, “Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region Settlement Directorate Response to: Recommendations for the Delivery of Services to Mandarin Speaking Newcomers from Mainland China” (May 14, 2004), online:< http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/atwork/ISAP_Mandarin_Final_Report_Response.pdf>.

career goal and followed a more common path to take a government job in a new field that did not relate to her expertise. The job search outcomes of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who used the settlement services gave out clues about what kind of jobs that service providers could help them to find.

Narratives of these women participants pointed me towards investigating how their job search experiences were hooked to ruling relations within institutional arrangements. Their experiences revealed two points of disconnection between these immigrant women's experiences of local actualities and ruling relations: firstly, the importance of government-funded employment services is unknown to many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. Secondly, highly skilled Chinese immigrant women who learned about the settlement services feel that the services do not cater to their actual job search needs. Identifying the problematic(s) allows me to follow a specific direction to choose what threads to follow when analyzing my data.

4. Exploring into Ruling Relations from Immigrant Service Providers' Perspective

To complete highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's accounts from another perspective, I interviewed seven community workers at the immigrant-service-providing organizations. These community workers are intermediary practitioners in the social organizations because they perform the front-line roles in the organizations to support immigrants under the guidance of government policies.⁴¹¹ Their accounts enabled me to explore the ruling relations beyond what immigrant women can see from their local standpoint.

⁴¹¹ See, Kamini Grahame, "Asian Women, Job Training, and the Social Organization of Immigrant Labour Markets" (1998) 21 *Qualitative Sociology* 75-90, cited from Marjorie DeVault & Liza McCoy, "Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations" in Dorothy Smith, ed, *Institutional Ethnography as Practice* (Lanham, Rowman& Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2006) at 27.

I contacted four organizations focusing on immigrant services in Ottawa that offer employment-related services in three different ways. I sent out recruiting e-mails with my approved recruitment text attached. I also made in-person visits and left the recruitment text at the front desk for the secretaries to forward the copies to relevant administrators within the organizations. I was also put in contact with relevant experts from my professional network. Among these organizations, the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Center (OCCSC) was the most responsive. I interviewed two community workers from OCCSC who coordinated projects that assisted with Chinese immigrants' settlement. These community workers (Expert 3 and Expert 5) had direct work experiences with a large number of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women, including those who tried to find professional jobs in Canada. I also interviewed one community worker (Expert 7) from Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO), who has more than ten years of work experience in managing settlement programs that assist immigrants in their transition into the Canadian labour market, including highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. I analyze experiences reported from these community workers' located positions to explore how the ruling relations coordinate the settlement services.

4.1. Why Settlement Services are Important but Unknown to Immigrants?

In the account of Expert 3, he mentioned that OCCSC provided a variety of IRCC-funded settlement services that assist new immigrants with transitioning in many essential aspects of their lives. These services are made flexible and accessible to immigrants, and are provided free of charge. Even if the immigrant needs information or help outside their formal services framework, community workers at the OCCSC can also provide a general consultation to point them to useful resources. According to him, *“you can make inquiries any time, you can call, you can drop in, at any time to inquire about anything”*. Although Expert 3 stated that many services are easily

accessible, he was also aware of the fact that many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women still do not know what kinds of services community-based organizations provide to support new immigrants. In my interview with Expert 7, she also confirmed that this situation exists because many immigrants did not know how to navigate the settlement services. According to Expert 7, immigrants from various backgrounds were frequently unfamiliar with the immigrant services system in Canada, and were unaware of the services that were made available to them. Immigrant service providers faced challenges because immigrants thought *“they don’t need help; People sometimes don’t like to know what they don’t know.”*

Based on the experts’ observation, some immigrants are embarrassed to seek assistance from others. Expert 7 reported that many immigrants considered turning to settlement service providers for help as a sign of their incompetency to resolve problems. She mentioned that *“sometimes people are very private because they don’t like people from their community know that their family has a problem.”* Expert 3 noticed that some Chinese immigrants asked their friends to call OCCSC on their behalf. They would only contact OCCSC in person after receiving definitive answers that they could get help: *“some of them (Chinese immigrants) before they actually come, they’ll ask a friend to come here to inquire... to inquire the possibility of getting social assistance”*. Chinese immigrants in need of assistance typically kept a hesitant attitude towards contacting the service providers at first because asking for help brings shame or disgrace on them. As Expert 3 said, *“they will not come to us immediately... if I come to you, would it mean that I am not capable? I am not smart enough to do things on my own? Am I showing my weakness? You know, that kind of thing.”* Besides, these Chinese immigrants were sometimes worried about being recognized if they come to ask for help: *“they feel the shame... If I come in person, people around you know it...they might bump into other people that they might know in the lobby when they are waiting for their turn to*

be seen...some people recognize you and they would say, 'why are you here?' It would be very embarrassing". To deal with this problem, it is worth exploring whether scheduling one-on-one telephone or online appointments might be an effective way to deliver services with better protection of immigrants' privacy by reducing immigrants' chances of being identified.

Furthermore, some Chinese immigrants were hesitant to contact service providers because they were unfamiliar with how social organizations function to fulfill their mandate of assisting immigrants in Canadian society. As these kinds of organizations did not widely exist in China, Chinese immigrants either did not know the existence of these organizations or had misunderstandings of how these organizations function when they first came to Canada. As Expert 3 mentioned, *"a lot of people have a hard time understanding what is the nature of our organization because NGO in China is not very common, and providing services, they're supposed to be done by the government is even rare. A lot of people have no concept of NGO providing very essential services."* Given this context, it would take some time for Chinese immigrants to understand how settlement services are provided in Canada, and opportunities to learn about this information are important. In the stories of Participants 3 and 12 that I mentioned above, they developed a good understanding of how available settlement services can be used to support their career development in Canada because they worked in the community centers, and therefore had more opportunities to learn about the resources. Other Chinese immigrants who didn't have this advantage could have also benefited if they had opportunities to learn about the settlement services through other ways. For example, information about what kinds of employment-related services could be provided for immigrants can be shared in Chinese languages at the places where Chinese immigrants are concentrated. Expanding the publicity of service information among Chinese immigrants is an important step to promote the services despite it would take some time for

Chinese immigrants to learn about the work of immigrant-service-providing organizations in Canada.

In addition, immigrant women sometimes have greater difficulties in accessing settlement services because they are preoccupied with other activities such as childcare, housework, and temporary jobs. To accommodate immigrant women's schedules, the organization that Expert 7 had worked for paid for childcare services in order for them to participate in the programs. The organization also delivered the services in the evening because many immigrant women had to work during the daytime. Expert 7 mentioned that, it would be very difficult for immigrant women to allocate time and effort to invest in their own development unless they have "*a supportive husband, supportive children, or someone who can support you*". Immigrant service providers need to take immigrant women's particular circumstances when they develop and administrate immigrant settlement service programs. For example, settlement service providers could consider developing online services that allow more flexibility for immigrant women to participate. Instead of offering childcare support in daytime/evening shifts, it is possible to offer e-services so that immigrant women can participate in them from home while staying in more comfortable spaces to care for children intermittently.

4.2. Why Settlement Services Existing but are Insufficient?

In my interviews with these community workers, Expert 2 explained how he understands that existing services became insufficient for highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. He thought the settlement services work processes were penetrated and organized in relation to a complex funding apparatus, which tuned out highly skilled immigrants' needs. In Canada, a significant amount of settlement funds is provided through IRCC to a large number of community-based services

providers across Canada.⁴¹² Immigrant service providers that intend to access these funds must develop and submit proposals that articulate what kinds of settlement services the proposed programs will provide in great detail. Chances of successfully receiving funding depend on how IRCC assesses these projects based on several textually mediated principles and standards. Immigrant service providers need to demonstrate that they fully understand the goals and priorities of the funding, and they are committed to ensuring the outcomes are aligned with the goals and priorities. Once the service provider organizations receive funding from IRCC, these organizations follow the designed work processes to identify and assist clients. In the end, IRCC uses a set of criteria to evaluate the service provider organizations' competencies in providing settlement services. These services provider organizations must provide an account of how many clients they served during the funding period, as well as the service outcomes of their funded services. When these services provider organizations apply for funding from the government, they enter into a series of ruling relations that determines their work processes and prescribes how they should operate to assist immigrants to become productive workers in Canada. Based on Expert 2's understanding, the current funding regime for support settlement services offers strong support for finding low-skilled jobs, but tune out the needs of highly skilled immigrants who intend to find professional jobs. Here are two key points that Expert 2 made:

4.2.1. Lack of Advanced Settlement Services

In Expert 2's previous work experience, he had led teams to design employment-related services programs and to apply for funding from IRCC. Based on his observation during the funding application process, he perceived that resources that were devoted to providing support

⁴¹² Please see a description of IRCC's settlement services at <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/program-terms-conditions/settlement.html>.

for highly skilled immigrants' career development were insufficient.

There were multiple community-based organizations offering basic, overlapping employment-related services, such as revising resumes and cover letters, holding mock interviews, and providing labour market information. Expert 2 described these traditional employment-related services as “very basic” because they helped immigrants with the first few steps of entering the labour market, but could not necessarily help them to progress to more advanced professional jobs. Expert 7 also mentioned this point. She thought it was necessary for all immigrants to learn about the basic knowledge for entering into the Canadian labour market because “*there are steps that you need to follow*”. However, completing the courses provided by settlement programs only means that immigrants “are ready to be exposed to employment”, and there are still further steps to go before finding a placement. Considering this situation, the basic information offered in existing settlement services sometimes overlaps with what highly skilled immigrants might have already known or might be able to explore on their own. It does not help them effectively to explore the unknown employment-related information that is actually essential for connecting with highly skilled Canadian employers. With the existing services, their job applications might look better, but they were still unaware of what they need to find professional jobs.

Expert 2 thought this was because the government had “*a more receptive attitude for funding projects that continue to provide the type of services that had already been familiar to the policymakers*”, and the existing services provided more resources that benefited immigrants who targeted low-skilled jobs. Many service provider organizations preferred to continue working under the previous logic of assisting immigrants because it was a safe choice and guaranteed funding. Proposing services that were built upon previous services made it easier for both the government and the service providers because having comparable services that exist could make

the application results more predictable. The Canadian government established performance standards for previous programs that comprised a set of criteria against which the competency of these organizations was judged.⁴¹³ The experience of these traditional services became a reference point for consultation when service provider organizations intended to develop new program proposals. It was more convenient for services provider organizations to maintain or continue the traditional services, but more difficult to propose innovative services and to prove the outputs and outcomes of this kind of program in their funding applications.

Expert 2 has tried several times to propose new services that would benefit highly skilled workers to a larger extent. He experienced great difficulties in broadening the scope of the services to assist a wider variety of immigrants, when he noticed that employment-related services were inadequate for highly skilled immigrants. His work gained some success, but was also limited due to the funding constraints, which reflected how employment services for highly skilled immigrants become under-developed.

4.2.2. Lack of Experienced Social Workers

I also asked Expert 2 for his comments on Participant 6's reported experiences about her career advisor's capability that was not strong enough to revise a professional resume. Expert 2 frankly admitted that it was to some extent reasonable. Career advisors in these community-based institutions often lack the expertise to provide more detailed feedback on immigrants' resumes, if the immigrants intended to look for some in-depth reviews. This was also mainly because immigrant-service-providing organizations had great difficulties in securing stable funding to maintain the smooth running of service programs, as well as keeping the positions available for

⁴¹³ Shuguang Wang & Marie Truelove, *supra*. note 350 at 596.

social workers. These community-based organizations often found it extremely hard to keep knowledgeable and experienced social workers, which subsequently affected the quality of services that immigrants can access. As Expert 2 further explained,

“We have a high turnover rate of employees. These social workers came from various professional backgrounds. Sometimes we receive funding for the project, sometimes we don’t. Like this, it has been difficult for us to keep experienced employees.”

In my interview with Expert 7, she also confirmed that community workers often have to accept the unstable nature of their positions because the funding regime makes it clear that positions last only during the funding period. She stated,

“all the people working in this sector know that the program and the job is there as long as we have funding, so that’s the condition we know when we work with an NGO, the funding is what makes the position available.”

Funding resources for immigrant settlement services are also related to whether the larger political environment is positive to immigration. When the political environment is positive, settlement programs are more likely to be kept going without interruption. If the political environment becomes negative towards immigration, some settlement service programs might be closed or some positions for community workers might be discontinued. The lack of stable funding to maintain the programs and the positions make many community workers target more stable jobs while they are still working in the community organizations. Both Expert 2 and Expert 7 said that community-based service providers *“compete to have good candidates”* within themselves and with various levels of Canadian governments.

This explanation corresponded to Participant 6's doubts about whether community workers were able to provide constructive feedback about her resume. Due to the limited financial resources to retain experienced community workers, the services provided by these community-based institutions had a natural limit to how effective and meaningful the services were. Having difficulties in retaining experienced community workers in relevant positions was an undesirable consequence of the funding issues that have been discussed above. Therefore, according to Expert 2, these career advisors usually only taught immigrants what kinds of tools to use to search for the information they need, but were not able to suggest practical and effective measures for finding highly skilled employment.

5. Responding to the Institutional Barriers

5.1. Making Settlement Services More Accessible to Highly Skilled Chinese Immigrant

Women

5.1.1. Reducing Information Gap

Interview data with Participant 2, 5, 7, 10, 15, 16, 34, 41, 43 in this research demonstrated that knowing how to find highly skilled jobs was important for highly skilled Chinese immigrant women and their family members, especially when they first arrived in Canada. However, some immigrant women, such as Participants 2 and 13, also reported that they rarely thought about seeking information or asking for help from social organizations. These two immigrant women both reported that they lacked contact with settlement service providers. The lack of guidance and information on job search strategies and procedures increased their feelings of uncertainty about their future. Under many circumstances, it was common for immigrant women to start a job search based on their knowledge of the Canadian labour market at the time and without consulting

experienced career advisors about application strategies and opportunities. They hoped that they could eventually find the right career track, but sometimes they were dragged through their career path and missed the best opportunity for highly skilled career restoration.

While there could be multiple reasons for highly skilled Chinese immigrant women to remain distant from settlement services,⁴¹⁴ community workers' observations echoed some Chinese immigrant women's narratives in that immigrants felt shame in reporting their struggles in difficult circumstances to service providers. As Participant 2 pointed out, they were perceived as competent, accomplished, and brilliant individuals by their friends and family members when they were selected as skilled immigrants to Canada; senior family members in China even expected to receive regular remittances as they imagined them being able to soon make a fortune in Canada. Certain expectations of Participant 2's family members and friends were unrealistic because they lacked understanding of the great pressure in finding commensurate jobs and overcoming other barriers to settle in Canada. Therefore, Participant 2 and her husband finally had to swallow their pain and press themselves into the low-skilled labour market. Turning to settlement service providers for help was humiliating for them as it would associate them with the image of failed workers and immigrants, which was a contradiction with the high expectations from their family members, friends, and themselves. Therefore, they showed strong resistance towards asking for help from settlement service providers because receiving settlement assistance might destroy their self-esteem and lead to self-repudiation and self-contempt.

The worries that Participant 2 and her husband had about labeling, stereotyping, and status loss speak to Link and Phelan's definition of stigma being the co-occurrence of a number of

⁴¹⁴ For example, the language barriers that I mentioned in Chapter V was one reason. Chinese immigrant women sometimes rely on word of mouth from friends in Chinese communities because they are more certain about what it means when messages are conveyed in Chinese languages, instead of English or French.

aforementioned components that lead to systematic discrimination under the influence of imbalanced power relations.⁴¹⁵ The concept of stigma was originally introduced by Goffman referring to the membership of a particular social group,⁴¹⁶ which has “inspired a profusion of research on the nature, sources, and consequence of stigma”⁴¹⁷ and created some variations in the definition of stigma.⁴¹⁸ For example, Stafford and Scott propose that stigma “is a characteristic of persons that is contrary to a norm of a social unit” where a “norm” is defined as a “shared belief that a person ought to behave in a certain way at a certain time”.⁴¹⁹ Croker, Major, and Steele also reveal that stigmatization occurs when a person possesses a characteristic that “conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context”.⁴²⁰ The Chinese women participants in this research typically had a concern about becoming stigmatised if they sought government assistance because they might be classified as individuals with particular social identities that are devaluated by common social norms.

To answer how stigma influences the take-up of government assistance, Finn and Goodship’s research reveals that stigma is an important factor in individuals remaining distant from government assistance.⁴²¹ Worrying about stigma could incur a cost for individuals by causing them to reveal personal information to service providers, to apply for supportive services, and to

⁴¹⁵ Bruce Link & Jo C. Phelan, “Conceptualizing Stigma” (2001)27 *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 363 at 363.

⁴¹⁶ See, Erving Goffman “Marked for Life” (1968)12: 322 *New Society* 795–798.

⁴¹⁷ See, Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: J Aronson, 1975), cited from Bruce Link & Jo C. Phelan, “Conceptualizing Stigma” (2001)27 *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 363 at 363.

⁴¹⁸ Bruce Link & Jo C. Phelan, “Conceptualizing Stigma” (2001)27 *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 363 at 363.

⁴¹⁹ Stafford Scott, “Stigma Deviance and Social Control: Some Conceptual Issue” in Stephen Ainsley et al, eds, *The Dilemma of Difference: A Multidisciplinary View of Stigma*, (New York: Plenum,1986) at 80-81.

⁴²⁰ Brenda Major, “New Perspectives on Stigma and Psychological Well-Being” in Shana Levin & Colette Van Laar, eds, *Stigma and Group Inequality: Social Psychological Perspective* (New York, Psychology Press, 2005) at 193.

⁴²¹ See, Dan Finn & Jo Goodship, “Take-up of Benefits and Poverty: An Evidence and Policy Review”, online :< https://ocul-uo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?query=any,contains,Welfare%20fraud%20and%20welfare%20stigma&tab=Everything&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&vid=01OCUL_UO:UO_DEFAULT&offset=0>.

comply with possible reporting or work regulations. Experts 3 and 7 mentioned that some Chinese immigrants were hesitant to visit community-based service providers because they could potentially be recognized by friends or acquaintances. Stigma internalizes negative feelings of shame, anxiety, and self-deprecation from receiving government assistance, and this cost could be strong enough to prevent individuals' participation in the settlement service providing system.⁴²² Kurzban and Leary argue that stigma is a process that leads certain individuals to be systematically excluded from particular sorts of social interactions due to particular characteristics.⁴²³ To make the settlement services more accessible, Canada should work towards improving immigrants' awareness of settlement services available and indicate that seeking such support is acceptable and encouraged in Canadian society.⁴²⁴

Another reason to explain why highly skilled Chinese immigrant women resist seeking government assistance is that similar settlement services do not exist for immigrants in China. Therefore, Chinese immigrants can hardly imagine the existence of such services in Canada. Previous research has also mentioned that Chinese immigrants experience some culturally specific barriers associated with the social and cultural context in the country of origin, such as "the great differences in social system, policy, and cultural values".⁴²⁵ These differences "hinder their access to information and services, as well as to the Canadian labour market".⁴²⁶

China's National Immigration Administration (CNIA) was founded in 2018, which is responsible for coordinating, formulating, and implementing immigration law and policy to

⁴²² Gideon Yaniv, "Welfare Fraud and Welfare Stigma" (1997) 18 *Journal of Economic Psychology* 435 at 436.

⁴²³ See, Robert Kurzban & Mark Leary, "Evolutionary Origins of Stigmatization: The Function of Social Exclusion" (2001) 127:2 *Psychological Bulletin* 187-208.

⁴²⁴ Nick Whalen, Chair, House of Commons, Canada at 27.

⁴²⁵ Usha George, et al, *supra*. note 410.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.* at 3.

manage immigrants' entry, stay, and exit in accordance with *The Exit and Entry Administration Law of the People's Republic of China*.⁴²⁷ The services provided for immigrants by CNIA and other public safety departments in China are similar to those offered by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) in that their work both includes checking immigrants' legal documents to ensure their stay is legal. Immigrants in China may also interact with "neighborhood committees", which are essentially local autonomous institutions that function under the guidance of the local governments to provide people in their residential areas with services in almost every aspect.⁴²⁸ The services provided by neighborhood committees in China include settlement services for immigrants, which are similar to those offered by community centers for immigrants in Canada. Yet, the services provided for immigrants by neighborhood committees are limited⁴²⁹ because these organizations "for self-government at grassroots level"⁴³⁰ target all residents in the areas including immigrants, and much work is done by retired residents who volunteer to serve their neighbors.

This background to some extent explains why many Chinese immigrants never think of navigating various kinds of settlement support that they are entitled to as new immigrants in Canada. As Participant 13 mentioned, she stayed at home to care for her daughter in the first few years of her arrival. When she wanted a job, she directly went to find Chinese restaurant owners to discuss working for them. She believed that the best opportunity for her to find a job in Canada was to take an easy job that had much lower requirements than her qualifications. She overlooked

⁴²⁷ *The Exit and Entry Administration Law of the People's Republic of China*, Zhongguolingshifuwuwang (中国领事服务网) online:<<http://cs.mfa.gov.cn/zlbg/flfg/crjxg/t1054650.shtml>>.

⁴²⁸ See, Judith Audin, "Governing Through the Neighbourhood Community (Shequ) in China: An Ethnography of the Participative Bureaucratisation of Residents' Committees in Beijing" (2015)65:1 *Revue Francaise de Science Politique* 85-110.

⁴²⁹ See, for example, *Exit and Entry Administration Law of the People's Republic of China*, online:<<http://cs.mfa.gov.cn/zlbg/flfg/crjxg/t1054650.shtml>>

⁴³⁰ *Organic Law of the Urban Residents' Committees of the People's Republic of China*, Article 2, December 1989.

the opportunities to consult settlement service providers who might have more information about employment opportunities that better match her skills. The lack of access to information on employment-related settlement services impeded her from making the best choice to develop their careers in the Canadian labour market.

Settlement services for immigrants are better developed and more widespread in Canada than in China. Chinese immigrants following experience in their country of origin are likely to overlook the existing settlement services, and remain distant from various employment-related services that are available and beneficial for new immigrants in Canada. To avoid being constrained in underemployment situations, it is very important to reduce the information gap between highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's knowledge of Canada's employment settlement services and the available resources that are actually provided for them. It is also very important, as mentioned above, to reduce the stigma that is associated with seeking settlement support and make Chinese immigrants understand the positive impacts of receiving these services for their career restoration in Canada. I will further discuss the implications for legislative and policymaking changes to reduce the information gap in the last section of this chapter.

5.1.2. Taking Gendered Family Role into Consideration

Although more immigrant women to Canada are highly-educated professionals themselves, they still constitute an overwhelming majority of those who go through the immigration application process as “dependents” of male economic class immigrants in Canada.⁴³¹ The prevailing understanding of gendered family roles in opposite-sex, heterosexual families continues to influence the division of household activities within many immigrant families, and constructs

⁴³¹ Rupa Banerjee & Mai Phan, “Do Tied Movers Get Tied Down? The Occupational Displacement of Dependent Applicant Immigrants in Canada” (2015)16:2 *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 333 at 335.

these immigrant women's decisions on labour market participation in their post-migration lives. Immigrant women's roles in opposite-sex heterosexual families as wives and mothers require them to devote more energy to work as housekeepers and caregivers in their families, which interrupts their own career development for the sake of their families' long-term development goals.⁴³² Even though they have professional skills, immigrant women tend to consciously sacrifice their potential to develop them further, and are forced to accept the "dependent" roles that primarily support the development of other, primarily male, family members.⁴³³ The gendered family role of immigrant women in opposite-sex heterosexual families underscores their immigration status as dependents of male immigrants, which leads to the devaluation of immigrant women's qualifications.⁴³⁴

In my interviews, some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women felt that the housework intensifies after immigration because, unlike in their home countries, they have fewer relatives to rely upon to share family responsibilities in receiving countries.⁴³⁵ Participant 1 mentioned that her mother-in-law remained in Canada on a tourist visa to help her with childcare and other housework, which enabled her to focus on her job search in the first few years of their arrival. Her marriage also suffered a crisis when her mother-in-law once failed to renew the visa to stay because nobody was here to share her caregiving responsibilities and mediate her conflicts with her ex-husband. Her experiences also echo research indicating that transnational migration processes re-orient highly skilled immigrant women' post-migration experiences to intensified domestic work

⁴³² Parvati Raghuram & Eleonore Kofman, "Out of Asia: Skilling, Re-skilling and Deskillling of Female Migrants" (2004) 27:2 *Women's Studies International Forum* 95 at 97.

⁴³³ Mai Phan et al, "Family Dynamics and the Integration of Professional Immigrants in Canada" (2015)41:13 *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 2061 at 2063.

⁴³⁴ Rupa Banerjee & Mai Phan, "Do Tied Movers Get Tied Down? The Occupational Displacement of Dependent Applicant Immigrants in Canada" (2015)16:2 *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 333 at 348; Habiba Zaman, "Immigrant Women and Accreditation in Canada" (2008)7:2 *Thirdspace*

⁴³⁵ Denise Spitzer, "Caregiving in Transnational Context: My Wings Have Been Cut: Where Can I Fly?" (2003)17:2 *Gender and Society* 267 at 269; Martha Friendly, "Childcare- The Ramp that Provides Equal Access to the Workforce for Mothers" (November 15, 2014) online:< <https://www.childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/14/12/child-care-ramp-provides-equal-access-workforce-mothers>>

ranging from an increased household and childcare responsibilities to a complete immersion in the domestic sphere,⁴³⁶ which leaves them with limited opportunities to explore opportunities in the public sphere. Research on Chinese immigrant women in Canada also reveals that much of the work of caring is loaded to families, and women typically had to absorb this work in addition to their paid work and other responsibilities, with inadequate support provided for immigrant families. In addition, immigrant women sometimes also experience pressure from community members if they do not comply with perceived appropriate gender roles as defined by traditional values.⁴³⁷ This partially explains why Participants 12 and 13 both thought it was “natural” for them to stay at home and care for children. Gendered family roles challenge the family dynamics in the migration and settlement of skilled immigrant women.⁴³⁸ Often, immigrant women have to adjust themselves to a series of changes, such as disruptions of social networks, sudden changes in employment status, and incompatible attitudes and values.⁴³⁹

Financial constraints in immigrant families also strongly impact immigrant women. In cases where immigrant families need two incomes to support themselves,⁴⁴⁰ immigrant women often experience role reversals in becoming the breadwinners for the families, but they still fulfill their traditional gendered roles as caregivers.⁴⁴¹ They still have to carry out the dual burden of work at

⁴³⁶ Carina Meares, “A Fine Balance: Women, Work and Skilled Migration” (2010)33 *Women’s Studies International Forum* 473 at 479.

⁴³⁷ See, Usha George, “Caring and Women of Colour: Living the Intersecting Oppressions of Race, Class and Gender” in Carol Baines et al, eds, *Women’s Caring: Feminist Perspectives on Social Welfare* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁴³⁸ See, Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love, 2nd*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008).

⁴³⁹ Ferzana Chaze, “The Social Organization of South Asian Immigration Women’s Mothering in Canada” (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, Faculty of Graduate Studies, 2015) [unpublished]

⁴⁴⁰ See, Mehrunnisa Ali, Elaine Frankel & Patricia Corson, *Listening to Families: Reframing Services* (Toronto: Chestnut Publishing Group, 2019).

⁴⁴¹ Leslie Nichols & Vappu Tyyska, “Immigrant women in Canada and the United States”, in Harald Bauder & John Shields, eds, *Immigrant Experiences in North America: Understanding Settlement and Integration* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2015) at 248-272

home and at the workplace.⁴⁴² Especially when immigrant families experience extreme financial distress, immigrant women usually need to take on unpaid housework to reduce expenses, and find low-paid, temporary jobs to increase the combined family income.⁴⁴³ This situation compels immigrant women to compromise on their career development by accepting jobs in any fields that bring immediate income to survive; however, these jobs are not professional jobs in their trained areas that lead to better career prospects.⁴⁴⁴ Previous research shows that immigrant women only seeking temporary positions in the labour market to support their families are more likely to enter low-skilled occupations in Canada.⁴⁴⁵ This situation puts immigrant women's development at risk because, as previous research pointed out, this temporary deskilling might turn into permanent deskilling, if no appropriate services are provided to support these immigrant women.⁴⁴⁶

Existing research shows that the simultaneous career development of two adults in immigrant families is often financially unsustainable. Therefore, immigrant families develop a "family investment strategy" whereby immigrant women seek temporary, unstable, low-paying jobs soon after their arrival in order to help finance the family while their husbands invest in career-developing activities during the transition. Immigrant families employ this family investment strategy because they intend to improve their living standards over the longer term.⁴⁴⁷ As a result of this strategy, immigrant women often become occupied with temporary jobs and cannot afford to spend much time on language training or professional development.⁴⁴⁸ Participant 2 confirmed

⁴⁴² Wandar Parsons, et al, "Physicians as Parents: Parenting Experiences of Physicians in Newfoundland and Labrador" (2009)55 *Canadian Family Physician* 808 at 809.

⁴⁴³ Denise Spitzer, *supra*. note 435 at 269.

⁴⁴⁴ Jannifer Jagire, *supra*. note 85 at 1.

⁴⁴⁵ Seik Kim & Nalina Vanarasi, "Labor Supply of Married Women in Credit Constrained Households: Theory and Evidence" (2013) University of Washington, Working Paper UWEC-2010-01 at 2.

⁴⁴⁶ See, Parvati Raghuram & Eleonore Kofman, "Out of Asia: Skilling, Re-skilling and Deskilling of Female Migrants" (2004) 27:2 *Women's Studies International Forum* 95-100.

⁴⁴⁷ Claudia Geist & Patricia McManus, "Different Reasons, Different Results: Implications of Migration by Gender and Family Status" (2012)49:1 *Demography* 197 at 210.

⁴⁴⁸ Helene Cardu, *supra*. note 89 at 429.

this experience: she had once tried to take language classes in the hope of improving her employment opportunities, but she soon gave up and decided to remain in her shop assistant position to support her husband's career development.

Transnational migration often requires the configuration or renegotiation of gendered family roles.⁴⁴⁹ During the migration process, immigrant women might still be influenced by traditional male privileges within immigrant families where male family members have higher social status.⁴⁵⁰ Meanwhile, this male privilege might continue to disadvantage immigrant women in their labour force participation because immigrant women made decisions based on what is best for their families. Therefore, immigrant women are believed to face more barriers to adjusting their post-migration activities in order to meet new challenges than men due to their traditional family gender roles.⁴⁵¹ Challenges throughout the transnational migration process put immigrant women's career restoration in dire straits: they are confined to supporting roles and cannot afford the time and effort to seek out settlement services that benefit themselves.

5.2. Making Settlement Services More Responsive to Highly Skilled Chinese Immigrant

Women' Needs

Evidence from both empirical data (i.e. experts' interviews) and academic research results⁴⁵² indicates that funding opportunities shape settlement services in Canada. This funding regime creates a professional discourse that determines how the work of immigrant settlement services should be designed to coordinate the daily experiences of highly skilled Chinese immigrant

⁴⁴⁹ Denise Spitzer, *supra*. note 435 at 268.

⁴⁵⁰ Jannifer Jagire, "Immigrant Women and Workplace in Canada: Organizing Agents for Social Change." (2019) at 3.

⁴⁵¹ See, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Feminism and Migration" (2000) 571 *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 107-120.

⁴⁵² Daniyal Zuberi et al, "Lagging Behind in Suburbia: Suburban Versus Urban Newcomers' Employment Settlement Service Outcomes in Metro Vancouver, Canada" (2018) 55 *The Social Science Journal* 433 at 446.

women. To explore further, I examine the report of Evaluation of the Settlement Program released by the Research and Evaluation Branch of IRCC in November 2017.⁴⁵³ This report provides a valuable and detailed explanation of the aims, achievements, and problems of settlement services funded by the government. The ways that the Canadian government used to evaluate the outcomes of settlement services reflect how professional knowledge judges the quality of immigration programs and coordinates the further operation of these programs. Service provider organizations must ensure that their delivered services meet the institutional expectations outlined in this evaluation report.

This report reveals that only 31% of economic immigrant principal applicants use settlement services, which is significantly lower compared to the number of 72% for resettled refugees. This statistical difference is interpreted as “vulnerable populations had a greater need for settlement services”.⁴⁵⁴ It presumes that a relatively competent group of skilled immigrants are capable of orienting themselves to social integration without relying heavily on government-funded settlement services. This report continues to suggest that the lower rate of highly skilled immigrants who make use of funded settlement services is a result of “not feel(ing) they needed the services” because “their needs were met or fulfilled through other means/sources of information”.⁴⁵⁵ It suggests that highly skilled immigrants are more capable of meeting their needs through ways other than using government-funded settlement services.

While this finding provides one possible explanation, other findings in this report can be interpreted in another way. This report also acknowledges that “immigrants with high human

⁴⁵³ Government of Canada, “Evaluation of the Settlement Program” (November, 2017), online:<<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/settlement-program.html>>.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

capital have had difficulty finding appropriate levels of employment in host societies” because the settlement services do not aim to “further quantify the precise level of need” beyond generic employment-related services, such as resume building and mock interviews.⁴⁵⁶ The government report appears to support the first conclusion which could potentially lead to stagnation of these government services, whereas my empirical evidence supports the latter conclusion which calls for improvement of these services to meet the needs of all immigrants, especially highly-skilled immigrants.

My interview data reveals that many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women did not benefit from generic employment-related services, and they were not able to find more advanced services that lead them to a professional position in their intended areas. The government report also suggests one piece of evidence that echoes my empirical finding: “clients from different immigration categories and socio-demographic characteristics were taking differing amounts of time to achieve similar results.”⁴⁵⁷ I interpret this to mean that there is an upper limit of assistance that immigrants can get out of the services: immigrants who intend to find highly skilled jobs with these government-funded settlement services are unlikely to have better job search outcomes than those who accept low-skilled jobs, even though they are willing to invest more time and effort, as the results are always similar.

In my interviews, frontline community workers stated that the lack of stable funding restricted the development of more responsive employment-related settlement services to the needs of particular groups of immigrants. This problem has also been identified in other research: a recent study contends that the lack of funding poses significant challenges for immigrant service

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

providers to serve immigrants in Ontario, Canada, and highly skilled immigrants are one of the groups being disadvantaged by this regime.⁴⁵⁸ More generic employment-based programs (mentioned by Expert 2 as the “very basic” services) were “prioritized over targeted employment programs that would better meet the diverse needs of newcomers seeking entry into the Canadian labour market.”⁴⁵⁹ Expert 7 in my research also talked about the closure of a bridging program that she had previously managed, which helped immigrants from a specific professional background to restore their careers in Canada. Although many immigrants managed to restore their professional status to the same level or even eventually advanced to a higher level, this targeted program was not successful in securing funding to help more immigrants in this situation. Other research identifies the reason being: “funding for complex skills-bridging programs for skilled immigrants was cut and the accountability of remaining immigrant employment programs was measured by the number employed at the end of the programs, irrespective of the kind of job.”⁴⁶⁰

6. Summary

In this chapter, I follow IE research methodology to explore Canada’s employment-related settlement services for skilled immigrants from the standpoint of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women. My analysis reveals the processes of constituting barriers that impede these highly skilled Chinese immigrant women from accessing effective employment-related services. The existing employment-settlement services could help immigrant women improve their highly skilled employment opportunities, but they are often unknown to many highly skilled Chinese immigrant

⁴⁵⁸ Mukhtar et al, “ ‘But Many of These Problems are About Funds...’: The Challenges Immigrant Settlement Agencies (ISAs) Encounter in a Suburban Setting in Ontario, Canada.”(2016) 17 *International Migration and Integration* 389 at 397.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.* at 398.

⁴⁶⁰ Gillian Creese, “Government Reconstructing Settlement Agencies in Vancouver Bringing Advocacy Back” in Christine Milligan & David Conradson, eds, *Landscapes of Voluntarism: New Spaces of Health, Welfare and Governance* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2006) at 191-208.

women. Even for those Chinese immigrant women who take advantage of the settlement service, the services are often insufficient for them to find employment to the skill levels prior to their immigration. Probing deeper into the ruling relations, I critically examine the service-providing discourse that excludes many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women from the service framework. Several policymaking recommendations for improving the employment-related settlement services for these immigrant women will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

Chapter VII Conclusion

In this chapter, I bring together previous discussions, highlight my recommendations, explain the limitations of this research, and suggest possible directions for future research. The ultimate goal is to propose a more inclusive agenda for improving current settlement services funded by the Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), with the voices and experiences of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women being represented.

Canada has been increasingly dependent on a steady inflow of skilled immigrants to maintain its economic growth. In facilitating the admission of foreign-trained skilled workers as “a key tool in meeting [Canada’s] economic needs”, the Canadian government believes that immigrants “will contribute to a strong, dynamic, world-class economy”.⁴⁶¹ However, the lived experiences of my research participants demonstrate that the skills of foreign-trained workers are often underutilized in the Canadian labour market. Their experience corresponds to a problem documented in other academic research -- foreign-trained immigrant workers who are often employed at higher levels before immigration often confront obstacles in finding jobs that match their previous qualifications after being admitted.⁴⁶² Given this context, the marginalization of foreign-trained skilled workers

⁴⁶¹ Manjula Variyam, “Canada’s Skilled Worker Immigration Regulation and Its Impact on the Canadian Economy” (2007)13:2 *Law and Business Review of the Americas* 469 at 469.

⁴⁶² See Tania Das Gupta, et al, *supra*. note 93 at 55-56; Janice Fine, “Segmentation and the Role of Labor Standards Enforcement in Immigration Reform” (2017)5:2 *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 431-451; Cynthia Chen, Peter Smith, and Cameron Mustard, “The Prevalence of Over-qualification and its Association with Health Status among Occupationally Active New Immigrants to Canada.” (2010)15:6 *Ethnicity & Health* 601 at 601; Alicia Adserà & Ana M. Ferrer, “The Myth of Immigrant Women as Secondary Workers: Evidence from Canada” (2014)104:5 *American Economic Review* 360 at 360; Helene Cardu, “Career Nomadism and the Building of a Professional Identity in Female Immigrants” (2007)8 *Int. Migration & Integration* 429 at 433; Frank Kristyn & Feng Hou, “Over-education and Well-being: How does Education-Occupation Mismatch Affect the Life Satisfaction of University-Educated Immigrant and Non-immigrant Workers?” (2018)23:8 *Ethnicity & Health* 884 at 894; Patricia Pessar, “Women, Gender, and International Migration Across and Beyond the Americas: Inequalities and Limited Empowerment” UN/POP/EGM-MIG/2005/08 (28 November 2005) at 8.

in the Canadian labour market despite their high levels of education, skills, and previous work experience has become a topic of considerable concern.⁴⁶³

According to previous research, immigrant women from countries with high female labour force participation rates⁴⁶⁴ before immigration are more likely to be “career-oriented” and have high expectations of their career development in receiving countries.⁴⁶⁵ The women participants in this research all worked in highly skilled positions before immigrating to Canada, and most of them expressed their expectation to work in highly skilled positions in Canada, ideally in their trained professions.⁴⁶⁶ When these women participants confronted barriers to restore their careers in Canada, they questioned why Canada shows its great desire to attract and welcome economic immigrants, but leaves these highly skilled immigrants in prolonged underemployment or unemployment once they are admitted to Canada. Their prolonged underemployment and/or unemployment in Canada reveals a problem – admitting highly skilled immigrants, but devaluing their skills in the local labour market is a loss for both Canada and skilled immigrants.

Canada has been active in adopting various strategies to facilitate gender equality and narrow the gender gaps in the workplace.⁴⁶⁷ Increasing women’s participation in the labour force is

⁴⁶³ Kim Walker, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, “What Works: Labour Market Integration Initiatives for Skilled Immigrants in Canada” (November 2006) at 1. Online:< file:///Users/chenwang/Desktop/2013+What_works+Date=[2021-03-14].pdf>.

⁴⁶⁴ *Note:* Women’s labour force participation rate in China is as high as 70%. According to Frank Kristyn and Feng Hou from Statistics Canada, a high rate of labour force participation is defined as more than 50% in their research paper, “Source-Country Female Labour Force Participation and the Wages of Immigrant Women in Canada”.

⁴⁶⁵ Frank Kristyn & Feng Hou, *supra*. note 61 at 8.

⁴⁶⁶ *Note:* Most of the women participants said that they intended and tried to find highly skilled jobs in Canada, Participants 8,13,20 never intended to restore their highly skilled careers because they primarily saw them as caregivers for children. Participants 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33 also indicated that they accepted the situation of being unemployed or working in casual low-skilled positions because they were over 70 years old.

⁴⁶⁷ Government of Canada, “Women and the Workplace – How Employers can Advance Equality and Diversity – Report from the Symposium on Women and the Workplace”, online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/women-symposium.html#h2.1>>.

beneficial for both women's economic empowerment and the Canadian economy.⁴⁶⁸ Nonetheless, with research acknowledging that the gender gap is still significant in the Canadian labour market,⁴⁶⁹ the problem of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's prolonged underemployment and/or unemployment after their admission contradicts Canada's policy intention of maximizing the use of immigrants skills to boost Canada's economy.⁴⁷⁰

1. Findings and Recommendations

Given this context, this research explores the constituting process of several specific types of barriers that lead to highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's labour market marginalization. In Chapter V, I discuss how highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's local language proficiency contributes to their limited access to highly skilled employment opportunities, and how government-funded language assessment and training services fail to meet the employment-driven learning needs of these immigrant women. Chapter VI shifts the research attention to employment-related services that have also been criticized for not meeting highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's settlement needs. Paralleled with Chapter V, Chapter VI reveals that these general and basic employment services targeting a wide range of immigrants could not effectively assist Chinese immigrant women in finding desirable highly skilled jobs. I argue that limited funding resources have constrained the capacity of employment services in a way that does not allow service providers to foster the professional development of highly skilled Chinese immigrant

⁴⁶⁸ See, Maria Yu Beletskaya & Elena Zotova, "Towards Gender Equality in the Labour Markets of Canada, USA and Russia: An Overview of Progress in Achievement of International Commitments" (2020) 4:1 Population and Economics 38-50.

⁴⁶⁹ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, online: < <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/2008001/section/e-female-femme-eng.htm>>; Rachelle Pelletier, Martha Patterson, Statistics Canada, "The Gender Wage Gap in Canada: 1998 to 2018", online: < <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019004-eng.htm>>.

⁴⁷⁰ Umesh Chandra Pandey & Chhabi Kumar, *SDG5- Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2019) at 23

women, instead of funneling them into low-skilled fields when they became the recipients of the settlement services.

Upon revealing the discursive processes that construct these barriers, this research also offers recommendations on how to improve highly skilled immigrant women's job search experiences in the Canadian labour market. My analysis mainly focuses on IRCC-funded language and employment-related settlement services that aim to support mutual adaptation between immigrants and their host society, enabling immigrants to fully participate and contribute to various aspects of Canadian life.⁴⁷¹ This research proposes the following recommendations for improving IRCC-funded language and employment-related settlement services.

1.1. General Recommendations for Language and Employment-Related Services

In general, the Canadian government and service providing organizations should collaborate to support and design, respectively, settlement services that meet the diverse needs of immigrants from various backgrounds. Targeted services that are tailored to particular groups of immigrants' settlement needs could be included in the service framework, instead of fitting all immigrants into generic settlement services by assuming all clients' needs are the same. As such, the voices of highly skilled Chinese immigrant women should be heard by including them as active participants in planning settlement services rather than recipients when designing government-funded settlement services. This research contributes to this goal from the angle of uncovering the lived experience of this particular group of immigrants, and therefore brings the existing barriers to highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's career restoration to Canadian policymakers' attention. As mentioned in previous research, "policymakers cannot pay attention to all the things for which

⁴⁷¹ Government of Canada, "Evaluation of the Settlement Program", (November 2017) online:<
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/settlement-program.html#1>>.

they are responsible, or process all of the information they could use to make decisions.”⁴⁷² Collecting information from immigrant women’s experiences on the ground could facilitate the inclusion of immigrant women’s voices in policymaking and service delivery. The following recommendations are made to improve the IRCC-funded language training and employment-related settlement services

1.1.1. Developing Employment-Oriented Services for Highly Skilled Immigrants

As analyzed in previous chapters, existing employment-related settlement programs provide basic services to help immigrants start their job search, but cannot support them further if some immigrants aim to find highly skilled jobs in their trained professions. Institutionally, service providers are usually unable to create or provide professional development opportunities that could bridge highly skilled immigrants into jobs that match their skills and experiences. Maximizing the utility of skilled immigrants’ human capital is a win-win situation for Canada and immigrants, and settlement services that enable immigrants to quickly improve their skills and experiences to be more marketable in Canada are needed. Therefore, more targeted services could be developed with the aim of expanding the service delivery mandate to address highly skilled immigrants’ primary concern about continuing their highly skilled careers in Canada.

This recommendation speaks to both the language training and employment-related settlement services for immigrants. For language training, language acquisition experts could consider creating a credit-based educational system under which immigrants could gain credits for each completed course in order to earn their LINC certificate. Under this system, LINC administrators could still require immigrants to take a certain number of compulsory courses that

⁴⁷² Paul Cairney & Richard Kwiatkowski, “How to Communicate Effectively with Policymakers: Combine Insights from Psychology and Policy Studies” (2017) 3:1 Palgrave Communication 1 at 2.

combine English learning with Canadian cultural immersion and social practices. Language acquisition experts and LINC administrators would also have more flexibility to develop and incorporate more targeting language courses into the LINC curriculum. Immigrants with different settlement needs can take different elective courses that may help them to enhance language abilities in particular aspects. These elective courses could be chosen based on each immigrant's particular settlement needs. For example, some service providers have successfully developed occupational-specific language training for foreign-trained engineers as part of their employment-related services.⁴⁷³ This kind of course could be included in the LINC framework, so that highly skilled immigrants may have the opportunity to choose work-related language classes to prepare for entering their fields of expertise.

For employment-related services, settlement policies could consider providing more robust support for service provider organizations to assist highly skilled immigrants with their highly skilled job search. Experiences from my expert participants show that some service provider organizations' work of connecting immigrants with local employers is successful in helping skilled immigrants find jobs that match their expertise.⁴⁷⁴ Service provider organizations are situated at a different position from immigrants within the job hiring institution. Community workers in these organizations have an advantage over individual immigrants in networking with local employers and learning local employers' expectations for job candidates,⁴⁷⁵ which enables them to provide suggestions for skilled immigrants to locate job opportunities and prepare for job applications.

⁴⁷³ *Note:* this program was developed by Expert 2 and his colleagues at the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Center and funded by the federal government. The occupational-specific language training for working purposes was developed as part of the employment-related services of OCCSC outside the LINC service framework. Due to the funding limitation, it was only available for engineers, ICT professionals, and accountants at that time and could not continue later on.

⁴⁷⁴ Please refer to my interview data with Expert 2.

⁴⁷⁵ "Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in 6 Selected Rural Communities in Manitoba", online:<
<https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2015/09/Manitoba-Provincial-Report.pdf>.

Additionally, resources should also be mobilized for developing training for community workers in order for them to gain a deeper understanding of highly skilled job application strategies. This training would equip community workers with knowledge about highly skilled immigrants' job search expectations and needs, which enable community workers to better incorporate services for highly skilled job search into the current employment-related service framework. This more targeted service could be conducted under the current service-providing framework: the service providers could continue their pre-employment counseling, career planning, and resume-building services, only adding more attention to searching, finding, and securing highly skilled jobs for highly skilled immigrants.

Aside from the efforts made by Canadian policymakers and service providers, from another perspective, more neutral and direct information about the barriers that highly skilled immigrants may encounter in the Canadian labour market could also be better communicated, as well as the potential need to pay for advanced training, courses, and/or services out of pocket. Immigrants should be informed of the limitations of Canada's settlement services, so that they can choose the appropriate coping strategies to overcome the barriers, or be better prepared for the personal investments they may need to make after migration.

1.1.2. Enriching the Methods for Evaluating Services Outcomes

The Canadian government evaluates settlement services to measure whether their services meet funding conditions and expectations, which greatly influences how service providers develop and implement services. IRCC's settlement programs aim to facilitate new immigrants to participate and contribute in various aspects of economic, social, political, and cultural life in Canada during

a short period of mutual adaptation.⁴⁷⁶ IRCC mainly uses quantitative standards to evaluate the quality of these settlement service programs, such as how many provinces and territories they reach, how many clients they serve, and how much they spend on each client.⁴⁷⁷ This method of evaluation guides service providers to provide generic services that can benefit as many immigrants as possible because the number of immigrants who benefit from the services is an important indicator of service outcomes. However, this method overlooks the necessity of developing in-depth services that can meet particular groups of immigrants' advanced needs. Furthermore, many service provider organizations propose similar services that continue previous logic of assisting immigrants as they are more certain about the results of proposing such programs. This pattern might also lead to the further absence of advanced services for highly skilled immigrants.

Therefore, I propose IRCC introduce new evaluating methods that give more consideration for the depth rather than the breadth of service implementation. As outcome-oriented quantitative evaluating standards might not be robust enough to explain complex contextual issues,⁴⁷⁸ IRCC should also adopt diverse methods of evaluation that might include a combination of quantitative and qualitative standards. Qualitative records are able to examine, compare, contrast, and interpret patterns, which provides contextual data to explain the underlying reasons for certain immigrants' particular needs. Introducing qualitative standards into the evaluation would enable the Canadian government to profile immigrants' particular needs, especially when their experiences are

⁴⁷⁶ Government of Canada, "Evaluation of the Settlement Program" online:< <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/settlement-program.html#5>>

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ See, Jeremy Holland & John Campbell, eds, *Methods in Development Research: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Rugby, Warwickshire, UK: Practical Action Publishing, 2005); Sabine Garbarino & Jeremy Holland, "Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in Impact Evaluation and Measuring Results" (March, 2009), online:< <https://gsdrc.org/publications/quantitative-and-qualitative-methods-in-impact-evaluation-and-measuring-results-3/>>

inconsistent with the general patterns. As such, highly skilled immigrant women could have their particular needs documented and considered in the design of services.

1.1.3. Implementing Gender-Sensitivity during Service Delivery Processes

Another general recommendation from a feminist lens is that, while developing women-centered settlement services, the government should continue to consider the challenges for immigrant women to attend settlement services, such as the limited time that immigrant women can spend on receiving settlement services in addition to other work. Much of immigrant women's time is devoted to supporting and caring for family members after migration. The childcare work could be intensified after migration due to the lack of familial and social support for immigrant families, and this intensified childcare work is often loaded onto immigrant women.⁴⁷⁹ Although offering free childcare during service-providing hours could enhance immigrant women's participation, there may also be other ways to resolve the time conflict between fulfilling family responsibilities and participating in settlement services. An experimental step that settlement service providers could take is to develop more online services, which may enable immigrant women to receive services at home or in other locations, assuming that some immigrant women have access to the equipment and internet facilities required to access these services. Some services that do not require frequent interaction between service providers and clients (e.g. information and orientation) are particularly suitable for this shift from in-person to an online format. These services could be digitally recorded, preserved, and uploaded for immigrant clients to the internet, so that immigrants can access, play, and re-play the recording at their convenience. If this kind of service could be provided, immigrant women could possibly reduce the need for additional

⁴⁷⁹ See, Guida Man & Elena Chou, *supra*. note 46.

childcare support from service providers. It would also save immigrant women's commuting time, so that they might not need to block a big time slot for receiving settlement services at specific locations.

1.1.4. Enhancing Cultural Sensitivity for Chinese Immigrants

Service providers should be attentive to Chinese immigrants' concerns and hesitations about receiving help from community-based organizations. This research revealed that it takes some time for Chinese immigrant women to discover Canada's settlement services, with the self-identified reason being similar services for immigrants rarely exist in China, which increases the difficulties for Chinese immigrants to imagine the existence of such services in Canada. As such, measures that facilitate knowledge sharing among service providers to raise their awareness of immigrants' country-specific backgrounds might be needed. For example, service providing organizations could provide additional training or organize workshops for community workers to share knowledge and experiences about how to reduce the barriers to attract more immigrants to receive services. This training would enable service providers to better understand why Chinese immigrants do not actively search for government support and how to better encourage Chinese immigrants to make use of Canada's settlement services.

Service providers should be attentive to Chinese immigrants' feelings of shame about being perceived as incompetent or failed immigrants who rely on settlement support in Canada. My research revealed that highly skilled Chinese immigrant women usually expect themselves to be able to continue their highly skilled careers in Canada, and many of them considered asking for

help to be a shame or disgrace to them.⁴⁸⁰ Services providers should be culturally sensitive about understanding highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's high expectations for themselves in the transnational migration processes. Failing to find commensurate jobs might already be stressful to highly skilled Chinese immigrants, and seeking government assistance could be additionally stressful because it is perceived as a sign of remarkable failure for them. Canadian service providers should be provided opportunities, such as attending lectures and workshops, to learn about the cultural values and beliefs of Chinese immigrants as they pertain to service delivery

1.2. Specific Recommendations for LINC

Aside from these general recommendations for settlement services, I also make two specific suggestions to improve the LINC program, mainly focusing on methods of assessing highly skilled Chinese immigrant women's language skills and placing them in the appropriate classes.

1.2.1. Offering Multiple, Computer-Based Re-Tests

Some highly skilled Chinese immigrant women reported the reason they chose to leave LINC was their sense that they were misplaced in a LINC class that was lower than their actual skill level. My research participants reported that they were not given sufficient materials to prepare for the English exams, and thus sometimes failed to show their best language skills in their assessment results. They were unable to be re-tested immediately due to a policy of limiting tests to two per year. As such, many of my research participants expressed frustration as they felt they could have learned more in the higher-level classes, but were forced to follow more time-consuming institutionalized steps by starting at a lower level. When I asked language acquisition experts about

⁴⁸⁰ Note: Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 16 reported that they were determined to return to highly skilled positions after immigrating to Canada despite the barriers to their career restoration; Participants 2, 8, and 23 mentioned that they felt embarrassed about not being able to restore their highly skilled careers in Canada.

the rationale for imposing the limit on test attempts per year, Expert 5 explained that assessors were already busy with testing each newcomer and could not support unlimited requests to retake the test.⁴⁸¹ This explanation was reasonable because a substantial part of the test is conducted in person with one assessor testing one immigrant. To resolve this problem, LINC administrators could explore more flexible methods to operate the placement tests, such as offering standard computer-based, English tests.

Research has identified several advantages to computer-based examination over in-person methods, including rapid exam scoring and feedback, reduced scoring errors, more effective utilization of large question banks, reduced cost and time, improved analysis of individual performance.⁴⁸² Developing a standard computer-based test might be a more effective way to resolve the reported problems with the LINC language assessment. There are at least two ways that computer-based tests could save time and allow for more frequent testing: 1) if the test involves multiple-choice questions, the grades can be calculated automatically and quickly, 2) if one language assessor can monitor a group of test-takers, more immigrants can take the language test at the same time. In this way, the workload of language assessors could be reduced while the test-takers could also have multiple chances to demonstrate their best language capabilities. With computer-based tests, I also suggest that immigrant women could be allowed to attempt the test more than one time and pick their best results as a reference for placement. If immigrants could have multiple chances to attempt the exams, they are likely to be more satisfied with the test results and the classes that they are put in, and therefore become more motivated to learn in the government-funded programs. Although repeated test-taking practices might also lead to better

⁴⁸¹ See my interview data with Expert 5.

⁴⁸² Shannon Washburn, James Herman & Randolph Stewart, "Evaluation of Performance and Perceptions of Electronic vs. Paper Multiple-Choice Exams" (2017)41Adv Physiol Educ 548 at 548.

results in language tests, immigrants' knowledge and skills in local languages still play a substantial role in determining whether they can ultimately achieve high test results. Allowing immigrants to take the language tests multiple times would reduce the factors that militate against the success of test-takers in the language assessment.

1.2.2. Overall Consideration of Test Results and Other Qualifications

LINC administrators could also consider determining immigrants' placement not only on the basis of a single criterion of the language test result, but also a combination of factors, such as educational background, work experience, settlement goals, and motivations. Language assessors can determine to what degree they consider standardized test results in decisions regarding placement, as well as how they weigh other components of immigrants' records and experiences. For example, highly skilled immigrants with postsecondary degrees completed in either of Canada's official languages could have this experience considered for their placement. Moving towards including more assessment factors provides additional information for language assessors to determine immigrants' placement results, but it also poses new challenges for Canadian policymakers to gain more comprehensive understandings of immigrants' diverse backgrounds in their countries of origin, so that they can create standardized accreditation criteria that language assessors can use as a reference.

1.3. Specific Recommendations for Employment-Related Services

Following these recommendations for LINC, I also propose several recommendations to improve the accessibility of employment-related settlement services:

1.3.1. Expanding the Publicity of Settlement Service Information

As mentioned above, expanding the publicity of service information among Chinese immigrants is important because it may be difficult for Chinese immigrants to imagine the existence of settlement services in Canada. Chinese immigrants do not speak English and French as their first language; as such, delivering services in Chinese languages would help to enhance the efficacy of information distribution among the Chinese community, as suggested in a previous policy paper.⁴⁸³ However, the Canadian government has expressed great concerns about the significant cost it would incur to expand the services provided in Chinese languages.⁴⁸⁴ In this research, I endorse the view that increasing funding to provide information about Canada's settlement services in Chinese languages is important, especially when the services have not gained a wider range of popularity among Chinese immigrants. Disseminating information in Chinese languages could make the settlement services accessible to more Chinese immigrants. Once the services have been better advertised, the information will spread more widely and easily within this community.

It is also important to continue to or to enhance advertising these services in Chinese languages at the places where Chinese immigrants concentrate. For example, Chinese community centers are amongst the places where Chinese immigrants concentrate to network and exchange information; Chinese language schools bundle a significant number of Chinese immigrants because Chinese immigrant parents send their children to study Chinese languages at school as a common practice. Distributing information about settlement services in these places would increase Chinese immigrants' awareness of the existence of these services and attract more Chinese immigrants to attend the services.

⁴⁸³ Usha George, et al, *supra*. note 410 at 6.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

1.3.2. Protecting Clients' Privacy and Confidentiality

Empirical data in this research reveals a considerable reason that keeps Chinese immigrants away from seeking help from settlement service providers -- they are often worried about being identified by friends and acquaintances in the Chinese community. This is because, as mentioned in Chapter VI, Chinese immigrants perceived asking for social assistance as a shame or disgrace on them, which is understood as they are not able to support themselves within the Chinese communities in Canada. To alleviate this barrier, service providers should work towards strengthening the trust relationship between community workers and immigrants. My research supports that informing clients explicitly that their information will not be disclosed to a third party without the consent of the client is a good practice. This research revealed an inconsistency in the privacy practices in place in a variety of settlement services settings. The assurance of privacy should be confirmed in written form during the service-providing processes, so that clients could keep a copy and be reassured about the confidentiality of their information.

Meanwhile, settlement services providers could continue to develop alternative means for immigrants to access services from a distance, such as internet-based or telephone-based methods of service delivery, which ensures that clients can receive services from a private location of their own choice. For example, many career-counseling services could be conducted through one-on-one online or telephone appointments with the career counselor, and career information sessions or workshops could also be administrated online among a small group of participants. These methods would allow Chinese immigrants to access services from places that are private, convenient, and comfortable, which greatly reduces their chances of being seen by their friends and acquaintances during the service-providing processes.

1.3.3. Maintaining Stable Funding for Employment-Related Services

My research participants found that resources designed to help them find highly skilled positions are scarce. The lack of stable funding makes it very difficult to make employment-related settlement programs continuously available, especially services that benefit specific groups of immigrants. Interview data from this research shows that settlement service providers have made a great effort to develop projects that provide occupational-specific services for foreign-trained professionals in certain areas (e.g. computer science, accounting, and law), but their abilities to effectively help highly skilled immigrants are limited by institutional arrangements -- community workers do not always have the resources they need to help highly skilled immigrants. Additionally, community workers have all given positive comments on the outcomes of these occupational-specific services and hope to develop similar services in other occupations if more funding were made available. However, they still often failed to convince funding providers of the value of maintaining these services despite the fact that these services helped some immigrants to a great extent. As such, the Canadian government should not only pay attention to the wide coverage of employment-related settlement services, but also reserve funding to maintain service programs for immigrants with professional skills. With increased and stable funding, more occupational-specific programs could eventually be developed and maintained to help highly skilled immigrants.

The lack of stable funding to maintain employment-related services for highly skilled immigrants also makes it difficult for service providing organizations to retain experienced community workers. Empirical data from my women participants suggested that career counselors sometimes did not know much about their professional areas of expertise, and thus were not able to suggest anything meaningful for their highly skilled job search. Data from expert participants

further explained that the lack of stable funding for the settlement service programs affects the stability of community workers' positions. Therefore, having unstable funding impairs the service providers' abilities to retain experienced community workers who can efficiently help immigrants with specific needs, which diminishes the quality of service delivery. To improve the service quality, it is very important to secure stable funding in order to develop specific employment-related settlement services, as well as to maintain positions for experienced community workers to deliver these services.

2. Limitations of this Research

One of the limitations in my research design is that only a proportion of the collected data has been analyzed in this research. This research attracted a large number of women participants soon after I circulated the recruitment text. The reported experiences of these women participants contained many threads from where I could trace up to the ruling relations. Reporting all these experiences would have largely exceeded the length requirements of this dissertation; therefore, I only chose the employment-related experiences of finding highly skilled jobs and restoring their previous career status in Canada as the focus of this thesis.

To reflect more deeply upon the cause, the limitation stems from my omission of controlling the age of my research participants. This research has attracted a wide range of women participants, who were as young as in their early twenties to as late as in their seventies. These immigrant women all meet my recruitment requirements, including having at least one year of professional work experience, but their broad age group determined that not all of them immigrated to Canada for the purpose of using their professional skills within Canada's labour force. Senior Chinese immigrant women mainly came to Canada for family reunification purposes, such as playing the important role of educating and caring for their grandchildren. These senior Chinese immigrant

women no longer intended to join the labour market, and therefore they did not report any barriers to their professional career development. I omitted this group of senior immigrants from this thesis due to their lack of relevance to the chosen topics about career restoration. I will analyze the data about these senior Chinese immigrants and present the results in my future work.

Another limitation lies in the relatively small number of experts who participated in this research. I have interviewed seven expert informants: one of them was from a private immigration law firm, and the other six were from community-based organizations. Although their narratives are produced from a differently-situated position from my women participants, it would be helpful if more experts had participated in this research. With the difficulties in recruiting more expert informants, I turned to textual analysis to complement my empirical data analysis. I was able to find sufficient government texts online that were accessible to me, which effectively made up the deficiencies in my data collection with interviews. Nonetheless, I would have preferred to increase the number of expert participants in this research if it was possible.

3. Direction of Future Research

During my research on this topic, there were some issues that I found to be very hard to tackle. Most of these issues were first uncovered from women participants' narratives; however, tracing from their reported experiences to find out how the ruling relations have actually influenced their experiences turned out to be difficult because textual records in written form were not always available and accessible. To give a specific example, the limitation of 10 hours per week of work for international students on-campus is a common rule that widely impacts numerous international students' employment-related activities. Nonetheless, this rule could only be found in some universities' websites or government work reports. This is because this rule was not produced at the legislative or policymaking level, at which formal processes were established to keep an

accurate written version of it. It is even more difficult to find out relevant information if the rule only existed during a certain period in the past. Another example is that international students only had limited access to browse co-op opportunities. This information has been mentioned by multiple participants, but it was difficult to find out the reasons why Canadian universities draw such distinctions between Canadian and international students. These limitations posed great challenges for researchers to investigate how some lower-level institutional rules function to influence immigrants' experiences in Canada. Nonetheless, it is still important for researchers to understand the impacts generated by these specific rules. These rules are produced at lower levels, but they actually have the closest link with immigrants' daily experiences at the local level and are important for immigration research.

Another direction for future research is to pay more attention to the labour market experiences of highly skilled immigrants with temporary immigration status in Canada. Although this research did not attract many highly skilled Chinese immigrant women on temporary status, I still found this as an area of great research value. Currently, skilled immigrants who work and live in Canada with temporary status are usually ineligible for settlement services. Under Canada's immigration policy, these highly skilled temporary immigrants, who have already partially integrated into the Canadian labour market, have the option to become Canadian permanent residents and citizens in the future. However, if they were able to receive permanent immigration status and become eligible for settlement services at a later stage, they would have missed the period during which they would have been most in need of the services. In recent years, Canada has seen a growing number of immigrants admitted on temporary resident status, which even exceeded the number of immigrants being directly admitted as permanent residents.⁴⁸⁵ Immigration laws and policies also tend to orient

⁴⁸⁵ Belinda Leach, "Canada's Migrants Without History: Neoliberal Immigration Regimes and Trinidadian Transnationalism" (2013)51:2 *International Migration* 32 at 32.

immigrants to come and remain on temporary status first, and eventually transition into permanent residents. As a result, many immigrants who originally intended to immigrate permanently now have to remain on temporary status for years. Given that Canada's changing immigration policies facilitate temporary admission before directly offering permanent immigration status, it would be valuable for researchers to explore whether extending current settlement services to some immigrants on temporary immigration status is beneficial.

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Appendix A - Certificate of Ethics Approval

25/03/2021

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	S-02-19-2884
Titre du projet / Project Title	The Migration of Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women in Canada
Type de projet / Project Type	Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral thesis
Statut du projet / Project Status	Renouvelé / Renewed
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	25/03/2019
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	24/03/2022

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Chen WANG	Faculté de droit - Section de common law / Faculty of Law - Common Law Section	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Angela CAMERON	Faculté de droit - Section de common law / Faculty of Law - Common Law Section	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

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www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie | www.recherche.uottawa.ca/ethics

Appendix B – Recruitment Poster

Seeking Chinese Skilled Immigrant Women

Researchers at the University of Ottawa are seeking Chinese skilled immigrant women to speak with them about your migration experience! The project is aimed at learning how Chinese immigrant women understand Canada's highly skilled immigration schemes.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to tell us about your migration stories. The one-on-one, in-person interview will take about 60-90 minutes at a time and place that is convenient to you.

We are looking for volunteers meeting the following criteria:

- Age 18 or older, self-identify as a woman;
- Temporary residents, permanent residents or citizens in Canada;
- Having at least one-year full-time work experience in any country of residence
- Currently living in Canada
- Having Chinese nationality originally; and
- Being able to read and converse in English or Mandarin

If you're interested in learning more about the project, and are willing to share your experiences, please contact: Chen Wang, University of Ottawa [redacted]

Interviews will be conducted on a first come/first served basis, and only those who have been selected for an interview will be contacted.

This study has been reviewed by, and has received ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa.

Appendix C – Recruitment Scripts

◆ **Email Script for Contacting Women Participants (as follow-up to those who are in touch)**

Dear (Name of Key Stakeholder) you are invited to participate in a research project entitled The Migration of Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women in Canada

You are being asked to participate because you have expressed your interest in participating in this research project.

Purpose of the Study:

Academic research and everyday experience have both shown that many highly skilled immigrant women face hardships during their migration process. However, common perceptions of highly skilled immigrant women as a privileged group compared to immigrants in other categories could make them further invisible. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how Chinese highly skilled immigrant women understand their migration experiences in Canada, and the roles that Canadian immigration laws, policies, and social relationships in formulating their understanding about Canadian skilled immigration schemes.

What you will be asked to do in the Research:

This research involves a telephone or face-to-face interview that is anticipated to last 60 minutes in which you will be asked for your opinions and thoughts on Canada's highly skilled migration schemes. The interview can be done at your convenience. I am hoping that you would be willing to share your experiences of being a highly skilled immigrant woman who have migrated from China to Canada

You are free to refuse to answer any of the questions for any reason. This will not affect your relationship with the researchers, the University of Ottawa or any other group associated with

this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed whenever possible.

.

I will be happy to provide you with any additional information, so please don't hesitate to be in touch with questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Best wishes,

Chen Wang

◆ **Email Script for Contacting Key informants**



Dear (Name of Key Stakeholder) you are invited to participate in a research project entitled The Migration of Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women in Canada

You are being asked to participate because you have been identified as a key expert in this area.

Purpose of the Study:

Academic research and everyday experience have both shown that many highly skilled immigrant women face hardships during their migration process. However, common perceptions of highly skilled immigrant women as a privileged group compared to immigrants in other categories could make them further invisible. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how Chinese highly skilled immigrant women understand their migration experiences in Canada, and the roles that Canadian immigration laws, policies, and social relationships in formulating their understanding about Canadian skilled immigration schemes.

We aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How would you understand Chinese highly skilled immigrant women' migration experience in

Canada?

2. Are there barriers for Chinese highly skilled immigrant women to migrate and integrate?
3. If there are, what changes should be made to alleviate these barriers?

What you will be asked to do in the Research:

This research involves a telephone or face-to-face interview that is anticipated to last 60 minutes in which you will be asked for your opinions and thoughts on how Canada's skilled migration schemes affect highly skilled immigrant women. You are free to refuse to answer any of the questions for any reason. This will not affect your relationship with the researchers, the University of Ottawa or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed whenever possible.

Thank you.

Chen Wang

◆ **Email Script for the Institutional Head of the Agencies from which I wish to Recruit Key Informants**

Dear (Name of Key Stakeholder)

I am a doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa, and I am contacting you because I would like to invite your employees to participate in my interviewbased research project entitled The Migration Experience of Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women in Canada.

I would like to ask if your institution has existing policies or practices that prohibit you from: 1) allowing employees or volunteers at the organization becoming potential participants or 2) referring clients that have used their services that are appropriate for this research study.

If not, I would like to contact employees in your institution and invite experts with knowledge and experience in Canada's migration schemes to participate in this research

Purpose of the Study:

Academic research and everyday experience have both shown that many highly skilled immigrant women face hardships during their migration process. However, common perceptions of highly skilled immigrant women as a privileged group compared to immigrants in other categories could make them further invisible. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how Chinese highly skilled immigrant women understand their migration experiences in Canada, and the roles that Canadian immigration laws, policies, and social relationships in formulating their understanding about Canadian skilled immigration schemes.

The study is being conducted by Chen Wang from the University of Ottawa.

We aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How would you understand Chinese highly skilled immigrant women' migration experience in Canada?
2. Are there barriers for Chinese highly skilled immigrant women to migrate and integrate?
3. If there are, what changes should be made to alleviate these barriers?

I will be happy to provide you with any additional information, so please don't hesitate to be in touch with questions or concerns.

Thank you,
Best wishes,
Chen Wang

◆ **Email Script for the Institutional Head of the Agencies from which I wish to Recruit Women Participants**

Dear (Name of Key Stakeholder)

I am a doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa, and I am contacting you to ask whether you would like to refer qualified candidates to participate in my interview-based research project entitled The Migration Experience of Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women in Canada.

I am recruiting highly skilled immigrant women who have migrated from China to Canada.

Detailed requirements are as follow:

- Age 18 or older, self-identify as a woman;
- Temporary residents, permanent residents or citizens in Canada;
- Having at least one-year full-time work experience in any country of residence
- Currently living in Canada
- Having Chinese nationality originally; and
- Being able to read and converse in English or Mandarin

What the participants will be asked to do in the Research:

This research involves a telephone or face-to-face interview that is anticipated to last 60-90 minutes in which the participants will be asked for your opinions and thoughts on how Canada's skilled migration schemes affect highly skilled immigrant women. Participants are free to refuse to answer any of the questions for any reason. This will not affect their relationship with the researchers, the University of Ottawa or any other group associated with this project. In the event that they withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed whenever possible.

Purpose of the Study:

Academic research and everyday experience have both shown that many highly skilled immigrant women face hardships during their migration process. However, common perceptions of highly skilled immigrant women as a privileged group compared to immigrants in other categories could make them further invisible. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how Chinese highly skilled immigrant women understand their migration experiences in Canada, and the roles that Canadian immigration laws, policies, and social relationships in formulating their understanding about Canadian skilled immigration schemes.

We aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How would you understand Chinese highly skilled immigrant women' migration experience in Canada?
2. Are there barriers for Chinese highly skilled immigrant women to migrate and integrate?
3. If there are, what changes should be made to alleviate these barriers?

Thank you,

Best regards,

Chen Wang

Appendix D – Consent Forms for Women Participants and Experts

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

Interview Participant Consent Form – Women Participants

Title: Migration of Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women in Canada

Purpose of the Study:

Academic research and everyday experience have both shown that many highly skilled immigrant women face hardships during their migration process. However, common perceptions of highly skilled immigrant women as a privileged group compared to immigrants in other categories could make them further invisible. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how Chinese highly skilled immigrant women understand their migration experiences in Canada, and the roles that Canadian immigration laws, policies, and social relationships in formulating their understanding about Canadian skilled immigration schemes.

The study is being conducted by Chen Wang from the University of Ottawa. This research is part of Chen Wang's Doctoral Thesis supervised by Professor Angela Cameron at the Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa.

We aim to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there barriers for Chinese highly skilled immigrant women to integrate?
2. Do Canada's highly skilled migration schemes affect men and women differently?
3. What measures could be used to improve highly skilled immigrant women's status in Canada?

Benefits to you as a participant, your community and society: This research will provide you an opportunity to share your knowledge and expertise in research aimed at evaluating the law and policies related to highly skilled immigration, particularly the impacts on Chinese highly skilled immigrant women.

What you will be asked to do in the Research: This research, funded by the China Scholarship Council involves a telephone or face-to-face interview that is anticipated to last 60-90 minutes in which you will be asked for your opinions and thoughts on Chinese highly skilled immigrant women's experience. The funding organization will not have any access to research data or your personal information.

I would like to audio-record the interview to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. If you prefer not to be audio-recorded, I will take notes instead. Please indicate if you agree to be audio-recorded: YES or NO

You are free to refuse to answer any of the questions for any reason. This will not

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affect your relationship with the researchers, the University of Ottawa or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed whenever possible.

Confidentiality: I may quote your remarks in presentations or articles resulting from this work, but I will surely guarantee your anonymous participation by providing the utmost confidentiality of subject data. I will use study codes on data documents instead of recording identifying information. I will encrypt identifiable data. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview. We expect you to return the transcript to the researcher via email within two weeks of receipt. Responses during the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Your data will be safely stored in password protected Word document in a password protected harddrive. Any notes will be stored in a locked facility in the office of Chen Wang at the University of Ottawa and only research staff will have access to this information. Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet or on a password protected harddrive for 5 years following the study and will be securely deleted after that.

Questions about the Research? Any questions about the research in general or about your role in the study can be directed to the research supervisor, Angela Cameron, by telephone (613-652-5800 x3328) or email (acameron3@uottawa.ca). This research has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5, Tel.: (613) 562-5387, Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

The project is funded by the China Scholarship Council. The funding organization will not have any access to research data or your personal information.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is yours to keep.

I, (print name) _____,
have been fully informed of the objectives of the study. I understand these objectives and consent to being interviewed for the project. I understand that, if I wish to withdraw from the study, I may do so at any time without repercussions.

_____ Date:

Participant

_____ Date:

Principal Investigator, Chen Wang

PhD candidate, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa


Interview Participant Consent Form – Key Informant

Title: Migration of Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women in Canada

Purpose of the Study:

Academic research and everyday experience have both shown that many highly skilled immigrant women face hardships during their migration process. However, common perceptions of highly skilled immigrant women as a privileged group compared to immigrants in other categories could make them further invisible. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how Chinese highly skilled immigrant women understand their migration experiences in Canada, and the roles that Canadian immigration laws, policies, and social relationships in formulating their understanding about Canadian skilled immigration schemes.

The study is being conducted by Chen Wang from the University of Ottawa

 This research is part of Chen Wang's Doctoral Thesis supervised by Professor Angela Cameron at the Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa.

We aim to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there barriers for Chinese highly skilled immigrant women to integrate?
2. Do Canada's highly skilled migration schemes affect men and women differently?
3. What measures could be used to improve highly skilled immigrant women's status in Canada?

Benefits to you as a participant, your community and society: This research will provide you an opportunity to share your knowledge and expertise in research aimed at evaluating the law and policies related to highly skilled immigration, particularly the impacts on Chinese highly skilled immigrant women.

What you will be asked to do in the Research: This research involves a telephone or face-to-face interview that is anticipated to last 60-90 minutes in which you will be asked for your thoughts on Canada's skilled immigration schemes. You are free to refuse to answer any of the questions for any reason. This will not affect your relationship with the researchers, the University of Ottawa or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed whenever possible.

I would like to audio-record the interview to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. If you prefer not to be audio-recorded, I will take notes instead. Please indicate if you agree to be audio-recorded: YES or NO

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Confidentiality: We will guarantee your anonymous participation. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview. We expect you to return the transcript to the researcher via email within two weeks of receipt. You may withdraw from the project at any time up to the point of publication of the results. Responses during the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Your data will be safely stored in password protected Word document in a password protected harddrive. Any notes will be stored in a locked facility in the office of Chen Wang at the University of Ottawa and only research staff will have access to this information. Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet or on a password protected harddrive for 5 years following the study and will be securely deleted after that.

Questions about the Research? Any questions about the research in general or about your role in the study can be directed to the research supervisor, Angela Cameron, by telephone (613-652-5800 x3328) or email (acameron3@uottawa.ca). This research has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5, Tel.: (613) 562-5387, Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

The project is funded by the China Scholarship Council. The funding organization will not have any access to research data or your personal information.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is yours to keep.

I, (print name) _____,
have been fully informed of the objectives of the study. I understand these objectives and consent to being interviewed for the project. I understand that my anonymity cannot be guaranteed. I also understand that, if I wish to withdraw from the study, I may do so at any time without repercussions.

Participant Date:

Principal Investigator, Chen Wang Date:
PhD candidate, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa

Appendix E – Interview Guides for Women and Experts

Interview Guide with Chinese Highly Skilled Immigrant Women

Interviewer: Chen Wang

Interviewer’s Affiliation: Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa

Introductory Statement:

The purpose of this research is to study the respondent’s experience as a highly skilled immigrant woman in Canada. The respondent will be asked about the migration experience under Canada’s immigration laws and policies, career options in the Canadian labour market, and family relationships before and after immigrating to Canada. The interview will be conducted at the venue preferred by the respondent. The interview will last 60-90 minutes. The interview will be recorded by a digital recorder.

Interview Questions:

Question 1: Tell me about your migration history (When and through which immigration program did you come to Canada? What are your motivation for migration to Canada? How would you describe your experience in Canada since arrival?)

Question 2: Tell me about your employment history in China and Canada (What do you do for a living in China? Are you working in Canada? If so, how long did it take for you to get this job and how did you get this job? What are the most helpful things you did to get this job? Do women and men have same experience in finding employment in Canada?)

Question 3: Tell me about your family (Did your family come with you to Canada? If so, who are they? Who initiated the immigration process in your family? What are the most/least helpful things your family did for you? Do you feel migration affect men and women differently?)

Question 4: Tell me about your migration status (How long did you take to go through this immigration process before receiving your current immigration status? Did the immigration process you went through, at any point, shock you and interrupt your immigration plan? In what way do you feel the immigration process affects your life in Canada? If you could suggest a change to the immigration rules that influence you, what would be the most important part you want to change?)

Question 5: Tell me your stories about combating difficulties in migration process as an immigrant woman. Interview Guide with Key Informants

Question 6: Tell me about your children’s experience at school (How do you communicate with teachers at your children’s school? How did you help your children to resolve problems at school, if there is any?)

Question 7: What's the attitude of your parents/grandparents about immigrating to Canada? How is their lived experience in Canada? What you have done/ will do to help them knowing more about the Canadian society?)

Interview Guide with Key Informants

Interviewer: Chen Wang

Interviewer's Affiliation: Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa

Introductory Statement:

This research begins with challenging a common perception that highly skilled immigrant women is a comparatively privileged immigrant group in contrast to immigrants in other categories.

However, this perception could make them further invisible because academic research and empirical evidence have both shown that many highly skilled immigrant women face hardships during their migration process. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how Canada's skilled immigration schemes affect Chinese highly skilled immigrant women's experiences in Canada. We want to ask you about your experiences with Canada's highly skilled migration schemes, and your opinions about how these schemes work on Chinese highly skilled immigrant women.

Interview Questions:

Question 1: Whether or not you have direct experience with Chinese highly skilled immigrant women, what are your personal thoughts?

Question 2: Whether or not you have seen the hardships faced by these Chinese highly skilled immigrant women? If so, what were these hardships?

Question 3: What are the goals that Canada want to achieve by having current highly skilled migration schemes?

Question 4: Do Canada's highly skilled migration schemes generate effects felt equally by men and women? If not, what were the differences?

Appendix F – Work History of Women Participants

No.	Immigration status upon arrival	Work Before Migration	Main Work After Migration	Temporary Part-Time Work After Migration
1	skilled worker (principal applicant)	IT engineer	professional government employee with Canada Revenue Agency	newspaper carrier, hotel cleaner and bedmaker
2	skilled worker (dependent spouse)	pharmaceutical quality control technician	grocery store stocker and bagger	restaurant worker
3	skilled worker (principal applicant)	university professor	early childhood educator	community worker
4	fiancée	IT engineer	IT engineer	restaurant worker
5	international student	university professor	professional government employee with Canada Revenue Agency	restaurant worker, part-time teacher, Mandarin teacher
6	skilled worker (principal applicant)	university professor	professional government employee with Canada Revenue Agency	restaurant worker
7	skilled worker (dependent spouse)	medical doctor	none (full-time student)	none
8	skilled worker (dependent spouse)	medical doctor/researcher	quality control technician	grocery store stocker and bagger, cashier
9	skilled worker (principal applicant)	architect	professional government employee	food processor
10	spouse (family class)	journalist	none (full-time student)	restaurant worker
11	spouse (family class)	Professional government employee	telemarketing operator	Mandarin teacher
12	spouse of international student	medical doctor	early childhood educator	sushi maker, Mandarin teacher
13	skilled worker (dependent spouse)	quality control engineer	restaurant worker	restaurant worker
14	skilled worker (dependent spouse)	IT team manager	IT engineer	none
15	spouse (family class)	insurance manager	none	none
16	skilled worker (dependent spouse)	engineer	engineer	factory worker
17	skilled worker (principal applicant)	data analyst	data analyst	none
18	international student	IT engineer	IT engineer	volunteer

19	skilled worker (dependent spouse)	teacher	part-time Mandarin teacher	none
20	spouse (family class)	administrative staff	restaurant worker	restaurant worker
21	skilled worker (principal applicant)	university professor	baker	none
22	skilled worker (dependent spouse)	medical doctor	Chinese medical doctor	assembler
23	spouse of international student	administrative staff	assembler	assembler, restaurant worker
24	skilled worker (principal applicant)	university professor	none	none
25	parents/grandparents (family class)	quality control engineer	none	none
26	parents/grandparents (family class)	retired professional	retired professional	none
27	parents/grandparents (family class)	retired professional	retired professional	none
28	parents/grandparents (family class)	retired professional	retired professional	none
29	skilled worker (principal applicant)	lawyer assistant	post-doc researcher	none
30	international student	business owner	waitress	administrative staff, restaurant worker
31	parents/grandparents (family class)	accounted	retired professional	restaurant worker
32	parents/grandparents (family class)	medical technician	retired professional	none
33	visitor (tourist visa)	retired professional	retired professional	caregiver, cleaner
34	international student	technician	waitress	waitress
35	skilled worker (dependent spouse)	administrative staff	dental technician	restaurant worker, grocery store stocker and bagger
36	international student	none (full-time student)	lawyer, technician	none
37	international student	none (full-time student)	business owner	restaurant worker, sales representative
38	international student	none (full-time student)	accountant	sales representative
39	international student	none (full-time student)	none (full-time student)	sales representative
40	dependent child (family class)	none (full-time student)	designer	none
41	international student	high school teacher	sessional university lecturer	sales representative
42	skilled worker (principal applicant)	IT engineer	insurance advisor	none
43	international student	training instructor	insurance advisor	restaurant worker
44	international student	none (full-time student)	dental technician	restaurant worker, sales representative
45	international student	IT engineer	none (full-time student)	none (full-time student)
46	international student	none (full-time student)	IT engineer	none (full-time student)