

**Keep the Tradition Alive: Contextualizing the Development of Tai Chi in the Chinese
Diaspora in Ottawa, Canada**

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Disclaimer: I remain responsible for any error or omission still present in this thesis.

Abstract

Tai Chi is a traditional Chinese practice rooted in ancient philosophy, traditional medicine, and martial arts. Since the 1970s, the Chinese diaspora has played an important role in transmitting and adapting Tai Chi in Canada. However, little is known about its development and sociocultural significance within Ottawa's Chinese diasporic community. This study used Burdsey's (2008, 2016, 2017) and Van Gorp and Smets' (2015) theoretical concepts of diaspora and leisure, a historical descriptive analysis of the Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association (OTCA) and the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS), and semi-structured interviews with seven Chinese diasporic practitioners to examine the development of Tai Chi and its meaning for the Chinese diasporic practitioners in Ottawa. The historical analysis revealed that OTCA and TTCS uniquely reconstructed and developed Tai Chi practices, created diasporic yet inclusive leisure and cultural spaces, and fostered social integration and cohesion among their members. The findings suggested that all participants were motivated to practice Tai Chi for mind-body health, well-being, social connections, and martial arts techniques, with varying levels of emphasis. Moreover, the modalities of individual practice were closely adapted to the local socio-geographic space and personal circumstances. Last, the study illustrated how Tai Chi practitioners navigated multiple layers of attachment and embeddedness to their homeland and their present lives in Ottawa through embodied practices. This study highlighted that Tai Chi, as a living tradition, resonated with both collective shared experiences and personal significance in the midst of diaspora and multiculturalism. Through practicing Tai Chi, the Chinese diasporans did not merely carry their bodily heritage; they reinterpreted and expanded the meanings of this art, weaving it into a fabric of the process of building a healthy and meaningful life, making a "home," and creating the mind-body practice communities in Canada.

Chapter One: Introduction

Leisure is a significant social factor that can positively impact one's physical health and psychosocial well-being (Mansfield et al., 2020). For transnational migrants, leisure can provide an anchor in organizing daily life, shaping identity, fostering a sense of belonging, and facilitating various forms of social integration (Diana et al., 2015). Since the 21st century, a growing number of North American scholars, such as Karlis (2015), Kim (2012), Stodolska and Walker (2007), Tirone (2010) have explored the intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, and leisure. Their research delves into leisure participation patterns, motivations, constraints, and functions within various minority groups and their sociocultural subgroups (e.g., female and intergenerational immigrants).

More recently, scholars such as Burdsey (2016, 2017), Mata-Codesal et al. (2015), and Stodolska (2015, 2018) have highlighted the significance of leisure in the personal lives and social interactions of migrants, particularly the roles leisure played in self-expression, subjective happiness, life satisfaction, social contacts and integration, and social justice. In the context of increasing transnational human movement, understanding the role of leisure across different cultural groups and individuals remains crucial for providing inclusive leisure opportunities and addressing the diverse needs of various populations (Mata-Codesal et al., 2015; Stodolska, 2015, 2018).

In Canada and its sustained immigration since the 1970s, multiculturalism is a sociological reality and a cornerstone of public policies (Brosseau & Dewing, 2018). Scholars have investigated leisure practices among several immigrant groups such as South and East Asian communities (e.g., Indians, Koreans, and Japanese) (Walker et al., 2015; Kim & Iwasaki, 2016; Omori, 2017), European groups (e.g., Spanish, Greek, Finnish) (Beyrouiti-Stratas, 2015;

Golob, 2008; Heinonen et al., 2005), and among racialized adolescent girls (Hagggar & Giles, 2022). Their studies suggest that the leisure experiences of immigrants are often associated with the values and beliefs of their own cultural paradigm, and they are often practiced together within their respective community.

According to the 2021 Census (Statistics Canada, 2022), nearly one in four Canadians (23.0%) were born outside of Canada, the highest percentage since Confederation. Moreover, this upward trend is expected to continue with immigrants, including permanent residents, projected to make up 31.8% of Canada's total population by 2041 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2023). As the capital city of Canada, Ottawa has an even higher percentage of immigrants in its demographic than the national average. According to the 2021 Census (Statistics Canada, 2023), 25.89% of Ottawa's population were landed immigrants or permanent residents. Chinese immigrants and their descendants accounted for 4.58% of the total Ottawa population in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2023). In Ottawa and across the country, Chinese immigrants are among the fastest-growing racialized population groups (Statistics Canada, 2023). As such, the Chinese community is an integral component of the "cultural mosaic" in Ottawa. While researchers have studied the leisure practices among Chinese immigrants in certain regions, particularly in the populous Chinese centres, such as Metro Toronto and Vancouver (e.g., Chen, 2013; Yang, 2016), little research has been done on culturally meaningful leisure practices within the Chinese community in Ottawa. In particular, little is known about how they created diasporic spaces for developing traditional leisure and benefited from these practices in terms of health, well-being, and social integration.

Tai Chi is a traditional Chinese physical exercise embedded in ancient philosophy, traditional medicine, and martial arts. Since the mid-twentieth century, it has gained increasing

global popularity with migrants of Chinese descent playing a major role in its worldwide dissemination (Frank, 2003; Ryan, 2008; Zhang, 2010). In Canada, Tai Chi was introduced by Chinese immigrants and has become a popular practice within their communities as well as gradually permeating other cultural groups (e.g., Garcia & Da, 2011; Jette & Vertinsky, 2011; Lu, 2018; Ng, 2011; Wong, 2017).

The development and practice of Tai Chi in Ottawa provide a valuable site for a better understanding of the leisure participation and meanings of the Chinese diaspora community within the multicultural context of Ottawa and the sociocultural significance of Tai Chi in its global development. As such, for my Master of Arts thesis, I drew on diasporic imagination theory to explore the development and practice of Tai Chi within the Chinese diaspora community in Ottawa. Through this research, I seek to better understand how Chinese immigrants in Ottawa have maintained cultural continuity and pursued their health and social needs through Tai Chi in a new environment. I also hope to understand how Tai Chi is recontextualized and revitalized in a diaspora setting by Chinese diasporic communities.

Research Questions

In this thesis research, I explored the role of Tai Chi as a cultural and leisure activity within the Chinese diasporic community in Ottawa. Accordingly, the main body of this study is divided into two parts. In the first part, I investigated the establishment and evolution of two key Tai Chi associations—the Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association (OTCA) and the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS) that were founded by early immigrants of Chinese descent. In the second part, I examined the personal experiences of the practitioners from the Chinese community in Ottawa. Together, this research study sheds light on the development of Tai Chi and its impacts on

health, well-being, social interaction, and a sense of belonging within the Chinese community in Ottawa.

The objectives for this research study are as follows: 1) to trace the historical development of two Tai Chi associations in Ottawa established by the Chinese diasporas; 2) to gain an understanding of Chinese-speaking immigrants' beliefs and practices on Tai Chi and health, well-being, and social integration in the diaspora. The study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How has Tai Chi been developed in Ottawa by the OTCA and TTCS founded by the Chinese diaspora; (2) Why and how do individuals within the Chinese community in Ottawa practice Tai Chi?

To answer these questions, chapter 2 of this thesis explored the histories of two local Tai Chi associations created by early immigrants of Chinese descent. In Chapter 3, I examined the personal experiences and perceptions of Tai Chi among Chinese-speaking practitioners in Ottawa.

Key Terms

Diaspora

A term of Greek origin, “diaspora” literally refers to the dispersal of a group of people of the same origin throughout the world, emphasizing one’s primordial bonds to a homeland despite national boundaries (Weil, 2006). In academic research, diaspora-related topics are well-studied, and the term itself is infused with sociological meanings in response to the increasing complexities of the transnational human migration phenomenon. However, there are three core elements (with varying weights) underlying commonly used definitions and discussions of diaspora in academic research. These include spatial dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary maintenance and erosion (Brubaker, 2005, 2017; Mavroudi, 2007). First, spatial

dispersion refers to geographic separation across state borders from homelands. Second, homeland orientation is the orientation to a real or imagined homeland as an authoritative source of values, identity, and loyalty (Brubaker, 2005, 2017). Third, boundary maintenance and erosion are based around (re) constructions of “sameness” and the homeland, as well as individual identities that are malleable and multiple (Mavroudi, 2007). In this research context, the term “Chinese diaspora” refers to immigrants of Chinese origin living in Canada who engaged in diasporic practices, particularly leisure and physical activities associated with their cultural traditions.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity generally refers to the shared sociocultural and/or national-origin characteristics of a subpopulation within a larger society, including a series of social practices (e.g., language, religion) and/or physical differences (e.g., putative descent), which are often passed down through generations (Fenton, 2010). In anthropological studies, ethnicity and diaspora are interconnected and critical concepts for understanding cultural identities, migration, demographic composition, and transnational human movement. Tölölyan (2007) further suggested that the relationship with a homeland is central to the diaspora, while ethnicity emphasizes the group distinctions between “we” and “them,” marked by symbolic cultural boundaries (e.g., traditional norms, religions, beliefs) that preserve collective identities. Ethnicity, therefore, can be perceived as a set of social attributes expressed by diasporic groups, reflecting and reinforcing their diasporic identities and consciousness within the host society.

Since Sollors (1989) introduced the conceptualization of “invention of ethnicity,” many sociologists agreed that ethnicity is a constant process of negotiations and construction, grounded in real life contexts and social experiences (Fenton, 2010; Kivel et al., 2009; Shinew et al.,

2006). While a constructionist approach to ethnicity remains debated—whether ethnicity is seen as malleable and fluid or immutable and rigid—both perspectives have limitations (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006), the perspective of the construction of ethnicity is particularly relevant to Canada’s multiculturalism as it highlights the transformative role of immigrants in the host society and the incorporation of ethnic cultures into the evolving definition of the host society. This study adopts the perspective that ethnicity is socially constructed. The ethnicity (ethnicities) of Chinese immigrants in this study is (are) not fixed but rather subjective and highly context-dependent.

Tai Chi

This thesis follows the popular English language practice of using “Tai Chi” rather than the Chinese term “Taijiquan” or “Tai Chi Quan,” as Tai Chi is a widely used term academically and worldwide outside of China. The word “Quan” (拳) in Chinese implies “fist” or “boxing.” The reference to Quan indicates that Tai Chi is understood as a part of martial arts in Chinese culture.

Throughout the history of Tai Chi, there have been three essential elements constitutive of Tai Chi: philosophic concepts (particularly Taoist ideology), traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), and martial arts (Zhang, 2010, pp. 8-12). Since the 20th century, Tai Chi, as a part of national martial arts, has also been intentionally imbued with national identity and cultural symbolism by Chinese officials (Ryan, 2008). Meanwhile, it has been expanded to more contemporary applications in competitive sports and scientific therapies (Guo et al., 2014).

Tai Chi practice emphasizes the awareness and cultivation of “Qi” (气). As such, traditionally, it has been perceived as an internal martial art (内家拳) distinct from the more forceful forms of external martial arts (外家拳) (Guo et al., 2014; Zhang, 2010). Its gentle,

flowing, and tranquil movements make it especially appealing for seniors as a holistic art to improve physical and mental health. The martial aspects of Tai Chi have been notably downplayed by general practitioners in the Western world, as evidenced by its alternative name invented by some non-Chinese researchers called “moving meditation” (Robins et al., 2012).

There are various opinions in academic literature and folklore regarding the origin of Tai Chi. Each opinion, to some extent, has contributed to portraying the richness and diversity of Tai Chi. Therefore, the meaning attached to Tai Chi has never been fixed but rather continuously reconstructed, and it has deeply intertwined with traditional cultural motifs and images, despite that it, as a physical exercise, has been practiced for only several centuries (Guo et al., 2014). The two widely accepted accounts of Tai Chi’s origin attribute its creation to a Taoist priest, Zhang Sanfeng, and the Chen family of Chenjia Village (Guo et al., 2014; Lu, 2018; Ryan, 2008; Wen & Su, 2013; Zhang, 2010). These two types of accounts respectively highlight Tai Chi’s connections to Taoist traditions and Chinese martial arts.

Tai Chi is rooted in the Yin-Yang theory of ancient philosophy, one of the most representative embodiments of Chinese thinking and behavior. As Chu (2004) suggested, “Tai Chi is the way of life that has been practiced by the Chinese for thousands of years.” Literally, Yin means “darkness,” and Yang means “light.” The Yin-Yang theory is comprised of several main claims, including opposition, interdependence, mutual inclusion, interaction, complementary, and transformation (Robin, 2013). Accordingly, the ultimate goal of Tai Chi practice is to achieve harmony and balance between these two opposing forces of Yin and Yang (Lu, 2018).

Before the 20th century, Tai Chi was predominantly practiced within family-based and oral traditions, which accounts for its numerous but contested historical narratives and tales.

Since the middle of Nineteenth century, Tai Chi has gradually transitioned from a family-circuit practice to an institutionalized and publicly taught discipline. This transformation was initially linked to the modernization of Chinese martial arts, driven by Chinese national efforts to strengthen cultural identity in the context of the growing influence of Western sports culture in Chinese society during the early twentieth century (Lin & Tsai, 2022; Lu et al., 2014). To date, Tai Chi has developed into various styles, most of them named after the family surnames of the creators. Every name not only represents a unique set of movements but also carries its lineage (Guo et al., 2014).

Literature Review

In the following section, I provide an overview of three key areas of literature that are particularly relevant to this investigation. First, I discuss the relationship between leisure behaviors, immigration, and ethnicity, with a focus in Canada. I then discuss leisure practices within the Chinese community in Canada that are closely tied to their cultural traditions and ethnicity. Finally, I end this section by reviewing influential research on the practice of Tai Chi in Canada.

Leisure, Immigrants, and Ethnicity

Immigrants often experience dramatic changes in their lives when they migrate to a new environment. They need to learn a new language, participate in local activities, and make new friends (e.g., Adamuti-Trache et al., 2018; Zhu & Zhang, 2019). As immigrants navigate between the sociocultural environment of the host society and their country of birth, they may experience a constant negotiation of their cultural identity and ethnicity, which could shape their leisure behaviours in the places of resettlement (Stodolska, 2013).

Studying leisure and ethnicity can provide critical insights into understanding and assessing the quality of immigrants' resettlement lives, encompassing their health and psychosocial well-being, leisure preferences and challenges, and social interaction and integration, potential oppression discrimination, and among others (Quirke, 2015; Stewart, 2014; Tirone, 2010). These insights can be instrumental for leisure departments and providers in developing targeted and inclusive programs for immigrants and minorities Canadians, furthering social justice.

Ethnic-specific and Culturally Meaningful Leisure Practices

Karlis' (2020) review of two Canadian bilingual peer-reviewed journals from 2000 to 2020 revealed that traditional culture plays a significant role in the leisure patterns of immigrants in Canada, and immigrants often practiced ethnic-specific leisure activities. Ethnic-specific leisure activities are closely linked to ethnic cultures and norms, and they are performed in various forms, such as physical activities, festivals, religion, and cooking (Karlis, 2020; Tirone, 2010; Tirone & Pedlar, 2005).

It is well documented that ethnic-specific leisure activities can be beneficial for the physical, psychological, and social well-being of immigrants and minority Canadians, particularly helping them develop social relationships and a sense of belonging, cultural preservation/transmission, self-development, and improving health and well-being (e.g., Forde et al., 2015; Karlis, 2016; Omori, 2017; Stack & Iwasaki, 2009). Kim and Iwasaki (2016) examined the role of leisure in reducing acculturation stress of Korean immigrants in a western Canadian city. Their study found that by engaging in ethnic and culturally meaningful leisure activities, Korean immigrants can increase their life satisfaction and self-esteem, thereby alleviating the stress associated with acculturation. Iwasaki and Bartlett (2006), in their study on the leisure

experiences of urban Aboriginal Canadians with diabetes, defined culturally meaningful activities as those linked to a specific ethnicity or race and can provide physical, psychological, cultural, and social benefits. Their findings emphasized that such activities played a critical role in coping with stress.

However, another study by Kim et al. (2015) that examined the relationship between types of leisure activities and acculturation among Korean immigrants in the U.S. found that while culturally meaningful activities can promote positive health and well-being for immigrants, those who engaged in ethnic activities tended to have lower levels of acculturation.

Ethnic-based Organizations

People who share the same ethnic identity are often the main focus of interaction in immigrants' leisure life, especially the practice of ethnic-specific activities. Tirone and Pedlar's (2000) study indicated that South Asian immigrants in Canada often participated in cultural-related leisure activities within their families and ethnic organizations, which provided them with a sense of familiarity and strengthened their connections to the ethnic community and cultural heritage. Ethnic-based organizations and communities have significant impact for leisure opportunities available to immigrant groups by providing space and activities for immigrants to connect with people of the same ethnic backgrounds, engage in familiar leisure activities, and reduce risk of potential discrimination (Ho, 2018; Karlis et al., 2020).

Guo and Guo (2011) examined the role of two regional Chinese organizations in addressing the changing needs of Chinese communities in Edmonton and Calgary. The study found that the changes in the population size and demographic diversity within the ethnic communities and the national policies had significantly influenced the development of the development of the ethnic organizations (Guo & Guo, 2011). Guo and Guo (2011) emphasized

that contemporary ethnic organizations are based not only on a shared cultural heritage but also on common experiences as newcomers to Canada, a shared goal to succeed in a new society, and their interdependent support relationships. Consequently, ethno-specific organizations play a crucial role in accommodating the distinctive identities and needs of ethno-cultural groups and their ethnic communities and should be recognised as an integral part of an inclusive Canadian society (Guo & Guo, 2011).

However, Gwyn (1995) argued that such organizations may threaten national unity, dilute Canadian identity, and foster ghettoization and separatism. Moreover, Golob and Giles (2014), Karlis (2015), and Tirone (2010) suggested that ethnic leisure organizations may leave space for resisting cultural assimilation but can exacerbate social isolation and marginalization by minimizing integrated first experiences. Furthermore, Karlis et al.'s (2020) study on the Hellenic organization in Ottawa indicated that ethnic organizations, by offering inclusive and integrative leisure activities, can not only strengthen cultural cohesion within the ethnic community but also promote inter-cultural exchange and social integration.

Diversified Leisure Practices of Immigrants

With the process of globalization and the social, political, and economic development and turmoil, transnational migration patterns have become more complex, which are partly reflected in the evolving racial dynamics and the shifting demographic compositions within migrant communities. In response, scholars have increasingly adopted perspectives from globalization, transnationalism, and interdisciplinarity to explore leisure behaviors within these diverse community (e.g., Floyd et al., 2014; Ho, 2018; Stodolska, 2018).

Stodolska and Walker (2007) emphasized that modern technologies of transportation and communication made migrants easy to sustain transnational links and develop multiple

attachments. The traditional view of migrant communities as static, localized, and demographically stable has been gradually supplanted by a recognition of their high mobility and heterogeneity (Stodolska & Walker, 2007). This shift in understanding has significant implications for how leisure is conceptualized among international migrants. Mata-Codesal et al. (2015) argued that the meaning of leisure for immigrants has expanded beyond functionalist notions of assimilation, integration, and coping. Instead, leisure encompasses more individualized pursuits, such as self-actualization, self-expression, and the maintenance of transnational identities (Mata-Codesal et al., 2015). Thus, leisure activities are not merely tools for acculturation but are also spaces for personal growth and cultural negotiation.

Building on this, Stodolska (2018) posited that the personal and/or subgroup migration histories and lived experiences can offer a more nuanced understanding of leisure practices within heterogeneous migrant populations. Factors such as age, gender, intergenerational status, socioeconomic background, and the size and distribution of ethnic populations could play important roles in shaping leisure experiences (Karlis, 2016; Mata-Codesal et al., 2015; Stodolska et al., 2014; Stodolska & Walker, 2007; Tirone & Goodberry, 2011).

Understanding the diversified leisure practices of immigrants is relevant to my research on the development of Tai Chi within the Chinese community in Ottawa. As a traditional exercise, Tai Chi has been constantly developed and reconstructed within global Chinese communities to meet various needs such as improving health and wellbeing, preserving and negotiating cultural identities, developing relationships with the homeland and the new environment.

Immigration-Related Leisure Challenges and Negotiations

Leisure constraints not only explain why some individuals might refrain from participating in certain leisure activities but also shed light on why they engage in other activities. This is because constraints often lead to passive or active negotiation and strategies in leisure behaviours. The types of leisure constraints are numerous and vary significantly from person to person. Some common leisure constraints discussed in studies on ethnicity and leisure include time constraints and unfamiliarity with the local language and culture (Mahmood et al., 2019), family responsibility, gender norms, values, and expectations (Nijjar & Johnson, 2022; Suto, 2013), lack of knowledge and access to information on available activities, equipment, and internet for registration (Stodolska, 2015), transportation and lack of discretionary income (Stewart et al., 2011), discrimination (Stodolska, 2015), time of settlement (the initial phase of post-immigration is often with low-level leisure physical activities) (Tirone, 2010), and the broader sociopolitical contexts (Golob & Giles, 2011; Tirone, 2010).

Beyond these leisure constraints, significant cultural differences between the Eastern and Western society also shape leisure behaviors among East Asian immigrants in North America. Ito & Walker (2020) argued that self-construal (how individuals perceive their relationships with others) is important for understanding cultural differences in leisure constraints and negotiation. For Ito & Walker (2020), an independent self-construal characterized by self-focused representations (i.e., individualism) is more prevalent in North America. In contrast, they found East Asian cultures tend to exhibit an interdependent self-construal in self-other representations (i.e., collectivism).

Dattilo (2021) highlighted the importance of recognizing these challenges at the societal level and developing more inclusive leisure programs to accommodate diverse needs, interests, and cultural backgrounds. Dattilo (2021) suggested that inclusive leisure can promote social

justice and inclusion by developing an environment that values and respects individual's ethnic identity and cultural heritage and the right to pursue the kind of lives they value. Choice is a key aspect of inclusive leisure (Frisby & Dattilo, 2020), as numerous personal factors, such as class and ethnicity, are interconnected with specific historical contexts, resulting in restricted choices for certain individuals and groups (Spracklen, 2015). Frias & Dattilo (2020) argued that when individuals have the opportunity to make meaningful leisure choices that enhance well-being and alleviate suffering, it promotes inclusion at the individual level and social justice at the collective level.

Leisure Practices Within Chinese Diaspora Communities

Canada has long been a destination for immigrants of Chinese origin and immigrants of Chinese origin constitute one of the fastest-growing ethno-cultural groups in the country (Yee, 2005). With the introduction of the “point system” for immigration in the 1960s, coupled with economic and political changes in regions of origin, subcultural groups of the Chinese diaspora community in Canada became increasingly heterogeneous in their places of origin, educational backgrounds, and social-economic status (Li, 2005). As such, the leisure needs of this population are accordingly diverse and complex, thereby fostering a wide range of leisure activities and resources within the community.

Culture of Origin as a Key Determinant of Leisure Participation

A recurring theme in studies on physical leisure activities within the Chinese diaspora is the hybridity of cultural and mainstream practices, reflected in both cultural integration and the preservation of traditions to varying degrees. In his master's research, Ng (2011) found Chinese immigrants at the First Chinese Senior Association of Vaughan were open to exploring new leisure activities such as skiing and attending church, they still engaging in traditional activities to preserve and celebrate their cultural identity and heritage. Even in their participation in

church-related events, Chinese immigrants often infused these experiences with unique cultural values. Li's (2000) study on Chinese churches in Ottawa similarly found that, although Chinese Christians consciously embraced mainstream values such as democracy and gender equality, their leisure activities within the church context remained deeply rooted in their Chinese cultural heritage and traditions. This included a strong emphasis on family and Confucian values, as well as the celebration of traditional Chinese festivals.

Lu et al. (2008) studied the health perceptions of 10 first-generation Chinese Canadians. The study found that the participants had integrated some Canadian health and fitness practices into their daily lives, such as incorporating Western cooking techniques and utilizing health care services while still preferring traditional Chinese medicine and health (Lu et al., 2008). Walker & Wang's (2008) study on the meanings of leisure among 35 Chinese Canadians found that the principles of moderation and harmony of traditional Chinese culture and values influenced their leisure behaviors in Canada. These cultural ideas led Chinese immigrants to prefer passive and quiet leisure activities, such as watching television or chatting with friends, rather than pursuing more active activities (Luh, 2004; Walker & Wang, 2008).

Similarly, Xiong (2006) surveyed the leisure participation of Chinese immigrants in Toronto and Thunder Bay—most of whom had been living in Canada for less than ten years—and found that they were inclined to engage in familiar, routine activities while also exploring activities connected to nature. Xiong (2006) attributed these outdoor leisure preferences to the influence of cultural traditions, noting that Chinese immigrants often favour traditional or familiar activities and uphold the Taoist principle of harmony between humans and nature.

In a study comparing the physical activity participation rates among 810 Chinese, French, and English-speaking immigrants in Ottawa and Gatineau, Tang et al. (2015) identified

significant differences in the types of activities favored by Chinese immigrants compared to the other two cultural groups. Specifically, Chinese immigrants had the highest participation rates in walking, jogging/running, hiking, table tennis, yoga, and Tai Chi/Qigong. Conversely, they had the lowest participation rates in activities like cycling, skating, soccer, basketball, hockey, and tennis (Tang et al., 2015). Tang et al. (2015) attributed these differences largely to variations in cultural backgrounds and the process of physical activity acculturation.

The studies mentioned above illustrate that although Chinese immigrants may be engaged in some new leisure activities (sometimes for reasons beyond the activities themselves, such as acculturation), the culture of origin plays a significant role in shaping the leisure behaviors of this diaspora population. The ethnic-specific nature of their leisure patterns becomes particularly evident when considering the Chinese immigrant population as a whole.

Heterogeneity and Leisure Within the Community

In recent years, research on Chinese immigrants and leisure gradually shifted from a focus on ethnicity to a broader exploration of various factors associated with leisure behaviours due to the growing subcultural diversity and demographic heterogeneity within the Chinese diaspora community. These include gender and age demographics, socioeconomic levels and education backgrounds, place and duration of resettlement, immigration status and transnational ties (e.g., Di, 2018; Frisby, 2011; Garcia & Da, 2011; Wang, 2014; Yang, 2016; Zhang, 2017). The expanded scope of this research field produced new lines of research on leisure and health practices among different subgroups. These studies demographic characteristics as well as social experiences, real-life contexts, and the evolving reconstruction of ethnicities play a significant role in leisure perceptions and participation among this group.

As such, culturally related leisure activities hold several meanings for different Chinese subgroups. For instance, first-generation Chinese immigrants tend to have a strong adherence to traditional health values and activities and practice it as a means to ease culture shock and social isolation (Garcia & Da, 2011). For second-generation Chinese immigrants, traditional activities and values may symbolize cultural heritage and family memories from their parents (Hiller & Chow, 2005). Li et al. (2015) examined the role of leisure in the acculturation of Chinese immigrants in Australia and found some participants' attitudes toward traditional activities shifted over time. During the early stages of settlement, some immigrants deliberately avoided activities of their homelands and engaged in new activities to adapt to local society. However, as the importance of leisure activities for cultural acculturation diminished, they increasingly participated in traditional activities.

Leisure Constraints Among Chinese Immigrants

Similar to the leisure experiences of other immigrants in Canada, the Chinese diaspora in Canada face leisure constraints due to the change in social environments, English or French language skills, lack of time and social companions, gender roles, financial factors, and reduced accessibility to facilities (Chen, 2013; Walker & Wang, 2008; Xiong, 2006; Yang, 2016). For instance, Chen's (2013) study on leisure participation among ten female immigrants living in the Greater Toronto Area revealed a significant decrease in leisure participation following their immigration and/or childbirth, shifting from individual leisure activities to family-based leisure (Chen, 2013). Chen identified several main reasons for this decline and change in leisure participation, including their lower socioeconomic status compared to their life before immigration, the traditional expectations gender roles and caregiving, and the cultural devaluation of leisure (Chen, 2013).

Notably, the profound sociocultural differences between Canada and China pose unique leisure challenges for Chinese immigrants. For instance, Li (2000), Deng et al. (2005), and Shan and Guo (2013) argued that the significant cultural disparities between China and Canada's society, such as politics, language, culture, social development and ideology, produce culture and leisure shock, as well as potential discrimination for Chinese immigrants. These culturally different challenges partly explain why Chinese immigrants tended to embrace ethnic-specific leisure activities created by the well-established Chinese diasporas in Canada.

Moreover, the traditional cultural devaluation of leisure and the emphasis on work and education has not only made Chinese immigrants more likely to engage in passive leisure activities but has also resulted in their lower participation in physical activities compared to other cultural groups (Deng et al., 2005; Li & Stodolska, 2007). Yet, while culture may constrain leisure behaviour within the Chinese diaspora community, it is also important to note that leisure constraints vary from person to person.

Tai Chi in Canada

Tai Chi was introduced to Canada by immigrants of Chinese origin (Tirone, 2010). Over several decades in the twentieth century, the practice spread beyond the Chinese community and is now common in various settings including community centres, rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, private clubs, and associations across the country. Since the late 1980s, there has been a significant increase in English-language biomedical research on Tai Chi, which has led to greater recognition of its movement mechanisms and therapeutic benefits in Western society (Ryan, 2008). As a collective practice rooted in Chinese tradition, there has been a growing number of sociological studies on Tai Chi in Canada in recent years.

Biomedical Studies

Over the past four decades, Canadian researchers in the biomedical sciences and clinical trials identified the positive health benefits of Tai Chi across various physiotherapeutic interventions. These include reducing age-related and fall-related health risks, improving overall mental and physical well-being, and mitigating the effects of certain chronic conditions and diseases, such as stroke, osteoarthritis, and Parkinson's disease, among others (e.g., Huston & McFarlane, 2016; Tousignant et al., 2011; Tousignant et al., 2014).

Tousignant et al. (2011) conducted a 15-week Tai Chi group exercise intervention with elderly participants aged 65 and over at a geriatric hospital in Quebec to explore why supervised Tai Chi is more effective than the conventional physiotherapy program in preventing falls for seniors. The findings revealed that an improvement in the self-efficacy of the participants was the only factor that could explain supervised Tai Chi's superior effectiveness in fall prevention (Tousignant et al., 2011). Tousignant et al. (2011) defined self-efficacy as the capacity to cope with daily challenges and adapt following exposure to various life stressors.

Sociological Studies

Gavin & Myers (2003) tracked class attendance and dropout patterns from eight community senior centres and four Tai Chi clubs. The research indicated that most participants were Caucasian females, with an average age of 60. In addition, most of those attending Tai Chi were doing so to improve fitness and health (Gavin & Myers, 2003). Koert van der Linden's (2019) study on 11 seniors practicing Tai Chi at a community center in Thunder Bay found key beneficial impacts for participants of Tai Chi included improved health outcomes and an appreciation of mindfulness through the gentle movements of Tai Chi, expanding their social network. Some participants also showed interest in the Chinese culture of Tai Chi. Manson et al.'s research (2017) on barriers to practicing Tai Chi among 87 multi-ethnic participants from a

community-based Tai Chi program in the Greater Toronto Area revealed that there were time constraints primarily from family responsibilities, traffic commuting, and weather conditions in winter. Shah et al. (2015) examined predictors of adherence to community-based Tai Chi programs among multi-ethnic seniors aged over 50 in Ontario and found that adherence to Tai Chi was positively associated with aging, higher educational attainment, and strong mental and physical health.

As a mind-body practice rooted in traditional Chinese culture, Tai Chi provides Chinese immigrants with a means to preserve traditional culture, improve their physical and mental health, and build social connections. Ng's (2011) study on the leisure activities at the First Chinese Seniors Association of Vaughan found that a key reason for seniors to practice Tai Chi was to maintain their ties to traditional culture. Jette and Vertinsky's (2011) study on health practices among Chinese female immigrants in British Columbia suggest that some participants perceived Tai Chi as an embodiment of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) principles such as bodily harmony and balance. Zhu and Zhang's (2019) participatory observation among five Chinese senior immigrant associations in Toronto suggested that social interaction to reduce their social isolation was a key motivation for Chinese immigrants to practice Tai Chi. Research by Tang et al. (2015) on the participation rates of physical activities among Chinese-speaking immigrants in Ottawa and Gatineau found that Tai Chi and Qigong were two of the most popular activities among this population.

One of the most important socio-cultural studies on Tai Chi in Canada is Lu's (2018) comprehensive comparative doctoral study on the experiences of Tai Chi practitioners in China and non-Chinese practitioners in Canada. Lu (2018) demonstrated how Tai Chi practitioners in China experienced a deep sense of Chinese tradition and cultural pride through their Tai Chi

practice compared to those in Canada. This study suggests that cultural differences may significantly influence the motivations, meanings, and experiences of Tai Chi practice, providing valuable insights into its sociocultural significance in a Canadian context. Amez (2015) explored the creation of the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS) and the connection of Tai Chi to traditional Chinese culture and spirituality. Amez (2015) suggested the success of the TTCS in Canada is due to their emphasis on cross-cultural dialogues between Eastern and Western traditions and their ability to provide space for culture, spirituality, meditation, and integration.

Summary

This review of literature situates the critical roles that homeland culture and ethnic identity play in shaping leisure behaviors among Chinese-speaking immigrants in Canada. These studies highlight the significance of cultural-related leisure activities in preserving traditions, enhancing health and well-being, fostering social interaction, and navigating leisure barriers. Additionally, in the process of globalization and social changes in the host lands and the homelands, diasporic communities are dynamic and fluid, and ethnicity is continuously reconstructed. Leisure needs and behaviors within the Chinese diaspora community in Canada are increasingly diverse due to global human mobility and the heterogeneity of their sub-cultural groups.

To date, research on Tai Chi in Canada provides valuable insights into the age group (primarily middle-aged and elderly) and motivations (primarily health) of some community practitioners. The research also suggests potential differences in practice methods and understandings between Chinese and non-Chinese practitioners.

These studies also raise several important questions when we seek to examine the roots of Tai Chi knowledge and teachings in Canada's capital city. As Tai Chi is a popular traditional

activity within the local Chinese diasporic community (Tang et al., 2015), how was this practice developed in Ottawa? In this thesis, I strive to contribute to the literature by examining the historical development of two Tai Chi associations in Ottawa created by immigrants of Chinese origin and to explore the meanings and motivation to practice Tai Chi among seven (7) Chinese-speaking practitioners in Ottawa.

Epistemology: Social Constructionism

I used a social constructionist epistemology, which underscores the role of human interaction in the formulation of knowledge (Crotty, 1998), to conduct my research. Keele (2010) and Weenink and Bridgman (2017) noted that the ontological and epistemological foundations of social constructionism are subjectivist and relativist. Namely, multiple and evolving truths exist as opposed to one single and static truth. Consequently, the outcomes from research with a social constructionist epistemology can only exemplify the research sample (Keele, 2010). Keele (2010) and Weenink and Bridgman (2017) further elaborated on the principle of interdependence between the researcher and the “researched” in the process of knowledge production. In other words, the knowledge derived from social constructionist research is built on two foundations: the participants’ constructive understanding of certain events and the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ understandings. Therefore, the researcher must continuously reflect on their subjective position and ethical considerations throughout the research process (Davies & Dodd, 2002).

Social constructionism provides an appropriate epistemological model for my thesis as it offers critical insights into my role as the researcher in the process of knowledge creation and meaning making. The reinterpretation of Tai Chi within the two Tai Chi associations together with the experiences of their participants, along with my own experiences, represent a co-

constructed interpretation of the development and significance of Tai Chi within Ottawa's Chinese community. Moreover, as Cohen et al. (2013) and Crotty (1998) argued, the findings and/or theories of constructionism research should stem from the researcher's interpretation of the subjects' understanding of a certain event at the research site during the research period. Therefore, the geographic, historical, and political contexts from which I, as a graduate student researcher and an international student born and educated in China who engaged with the study Tai Chi associations and practitioners, and the research subjects produced and created meaning about Tai Chi in Ottawa are intrinsically linked to understanding the historical and sociocultural significance of Tai Chi within the Chinese community.

Theoretical Framework: Diasporic Imagination

In the context of transnational human movement, the demographic composition and socio-cultural characteristics of the Chinese community in Ottawa is increasingly diverse, which is closely linked to the practice of Tai Chi in this diasporic community. The term "diaspora" carries polysemous and evolving meanings, in line with the changes in transnational human movement and the dynamic socio-political contexts of both the homelands and the host lands. Joseph (2014) argued that diaspora can be an important conceptual and analytical lens for understanding cultural heritage, as diasporic groups often utilize bodily practices, such as sports and leisure, "to feel at home or emplaced" (p. 669) Diaspora thinking thus can help to capture the affective phenomena in leisure activities that are obscured using national perspectives (Joseph, 2021).

In his work *Race, Place, and the Seaside*, Burdsey (2016) employed the framework of what he called "diasporic imagination" to interpret the resettlement experiences and leisure practices of ethnic minorities living by the British seaside. Burdsey (2016) connected personal

narrative biographies with the “larger picture” (historical racialization of public space at the British seaside and global diasporic events), examining how the everyday leisure practices (and constraints) of minority residents were intertwined with their personal memories, certain geographic space, the power structure and race relationships of the seaside community, and their attachment to the homeland (real or imagined). Burdsey’s (2016) central idea of the diaspora imagination is the “coastal liquidity” where “people’s lives are (to relative degrees) fluid, mobile, and characterized by differing material, affective, and emotional engagements” (p. 15). Thus, Burdsey (2017) argued that within the framework of diasporic imagination, “leisure is a matter of interaction between identity and space, individual and group activities, processes of inclusion and exclusion, inter- and intra-cultural exchanges, and transnational links” (p. 776). Burdsey’s (2008, 2016, 2017) work on diaspora immigration will inform my study on Tai Chi in the Chinese diaspora in Ottawa.

Core Tenants

Homeland-oriented Leisure

Researchers who draw on the theoretical tenets of the diasporic imagination argued that homeland-oriented leisure activities are a crucial aspect for diasporic communities to develop their diasporic consciousness, identities, and emotions (Burdsey, 2008, 2016, 2017; Joseph, 2021; Pasura, 2014, 2022; Spaaij & Broerse, 2018; Watson & Ratna, 2011). In the study on the Zimbabwean community in the UK, Pasura (2022) demonstrated that their homeland-oriented leisure activities, such as traditional music festivals and family gatherings, serve as important ways to activate and materialize their diasporic identity and solidarity based on the pan-ethnic homeland. However, “homeland” did not always refer to a geographic state location; more often, it was an imagined, utopian homeland or nostalgic emotions. Anderson’s (1991) notion of

“imagined communities” made a powerful argument to this point. Anderson defined that “homeland” is often not a fixed physical place but rather a symbolic, imagined community constructed through shared cultural practices and collective memory. For Anderson, the notion of modern nations is “imagined communities,” where individuals, even if they have never met, perceive themselves as part of a common community, unified by cultural symbols and narratives that transcend physical boundaries.

Walle’s (2013) study on Pakistani cricket spectators in Norway indicated that following cricket matches associated with the homeland did not mean their alignment with the current issues of the Pakistani nation-state but rather celebrated the dream of what Pakistan could have been. Burdsey (2016) suggested that diasporic leisure practices are deeply intertwined with the reconstruction of emotions and memories associated with other lands and past times. Diasporic leisure, therefore, serves as a means of rebuilding their “ideal homeland” in the host land (Joseph, 2021) and in different forms of activities and expression (Mukherjee, 2021).

In this light, Van Gorp and Smets (2015) contend that diaspora is a collective process that involves establishment of a shared emotion and cultural belonging to a (n imagined) community. Thus, diasporic and ethnic organizations can play a critical role in identity constructions and social belonging development among groups of people, as they can transform symbolic significance into concrete communities of practices that forge cultural resilience, social ties, and transnational connections (Ho, 2018; Schrover & Vermeulen, 2005). Van Gorp and Smets (2015) categorized diaspora organizations into two types—exclusive organizations and mixed organizations—based on their objectives, membership composition, and levels of community engagement. Van Gorp and Smets’ (2015) classification, alongside Burdsey’s (2008, 2016,

2017) diasporic concept, offer a theoretical perspective for Chapter 2 of this study, which explores the historical development of two Tai Chi associations.

Furthermore, advancements in media and communication technologies enhance homeland-oriented leisure practices and transnational links within diasporic communities. These technologies not only enable the consumption and appropriation of leisure resources from the homeland but also foster connections with global diasporic communities that share a common cultural heritage and memories (Burdsey, 2016; Pasura, 2014, 2022).

Boundary-crossing Leisure

Burdsey (2016) argued that diasporic state is at the intersection of space and time, where diasporas are embedded within a nexus of past memories, present life, and future outlook, as well as in the interaction of here and there. Within this dynamic context, diasporans often live in the in-between status, as they navigate cultural identities and senses of belonging between ancestral cultural influences and the new culture in the host society (Burdsey, 2016). Therefore, diaspora can be further understood as a fluid consciousness, rather than a fixed sense of rootedness (Fletcher, 2012). Diasporic consciousness can significantly influence their leisure practices, which in turn, reinforce and shape their diasporic consciousness. As a result, diasporic leisure becomes a personal and embodied practice, through which individuals engage with their local environment physically, emotionally, and cognitively, which contributes to the process of their “home-making,” identity building, and meaning making in the diaspora (Burdsey, 2017).

As diasporic leisure can be individualized, boundary-crossing leisure practices essentially refer to how diasporic communities establish and develop multi-sited embedment in their migration through leisure across cultural and geographic boundaries (Burdsey, 2016; Horolets, 2015). In this process, traditional normative and cultural boundaries of leisure could be

challenged and dissolved, and the diasporic consciousness could evolve, diminish, or even disappear over extended resettlement and successive generations. Such leisure practices can include adapting and redefining homeland-oriented activities, engaging in new forms of leisure, and building cross-cultural interactions and transnational links (Burdsey, 2016; Pasura, 2022). Pasura (2022) argued that through these boundary-crossing leisure practices, diasporic spaces emerge as areas that resist simplification or reduction to specific racial or ethnic identities and involve interactions between cultural integration, assimilation, and resistance.

Strengths and Limitations

The strength of diasporic imagination as a theoretical lens lies in its capacity to link leisure practices with the phenomenon of diaspora within the broader context of transnational human movement. It emphasizes the interactions and transformation of the triadic relations between homelands, leisured bodies, and host lands, enabling a profound exploration of how leisure identities and practices are shaped and constructed by/to diasporic consciousness and spaces (Burdsey, 2017; Pasura, 2022; Shuval, 2000). This theoretical lens underscores the significance of sociocultural contexts and the continuity of individual life experiences within the diasporic journey, helping to create a nuanced understanding of leisure's role not only in social adaptation and integration but also in self-realization and self-construction (Burdsey, 2016; Kivel et al., 2009). Therefore, the concept of diaspora provides a theory to move beyond the constraints of nation-state that imposes tangible and static boundaries on identity, belonging, and practices (Brubaker, 2005; McSweeney & Nakamura, 2020). Burdsey (2017) further suggested that the concept of diaspora presents a positive view of global mobility, cultural hybridity and transnational networks, offering a dynamic framework for understanding the connections

between leisured bodies, identities, and spaces within both migrants and long-established residents.

One of the primary limitations of the diasporic imagination lens lies in the semantic, conceptual, and disciplinary fragmentation of the term of diaspora (Brubaker, 2005; Shuval, 2000). The term “diaspora” can lead to broad, contested, and ambiguous definitions resulting in inconsistencies in its application across leisure and sport studies (Brubaker, 2005; Burdsey, 2016). McSweeney and Nakamura (2020) conducted a literature analysis of 319 empirical studies that concerned with diaspora and leisure or sports and found that the scholars have defined and theorized diaspora in heterogeneous ways based on personal subjectivity, historical and social contexts, and different groups of people, such as immigrants, asylum, refugees, and migrants. McSweeney and Nakamura (2020) further argued that although the significance of diaspora provides a flexible and versatile analytical tool for leisure studies on people residing in countries outside their origins, diaspora-as-concept often faces accompanying debates regarding its multiple and varying meanings.

Moreover, researchers raised concerns regarding the diversity and internal contradictions within diasporic communities, arguing that idealizing the notions of a “homeland” may obscure the complexities of real-world cultural interactions and marginalize the physical practice itself (Axel, 2002).

Application to Thesis

Acknowledging these potential limitations, my research endeavors to avoid simplifying Tai Chi as merely a continuation or replication of “homeland” culture and memory, striving instead to strike a balance between Tai Chi and diasporic thinking. I draw upon diasporic imagination theory to guide my understanding of the development of Tai Chi and the experiences

and perspectives of its practitioners within the Chinese community in Ottawa. This theory facilitated my nuanced understanding that Tai Chi is not solely a physical practice, but also embodies Qi practices, philosophical concepts of balance and duality, and martial arts, which are continually reconstructed and reexperienced by Chinese practitioners in new places of resettlement. By situating Tai Chi within the diasporic context, I explored the intricate ways in which its health benefits, philosophical underpinnings and martial arts elements are constructed, negotiated, and embodied by Chinese diaspora practitioners in the process of home-making and the creation of diasporic spaces within a multicultural and transnational context.

Methodology

Qualitative Descriptive Methodology (QDM) was used in this study. As the name suggests, QDM emphasizes the straightforward and detailed description of experiences and events (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). Unlike other qualitative designs, QDM does not require a conceptual or highly abstract rendering of the data (Kim et al., 2017; Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). QDM is often associated with constructionist epistemology, focusing on participants' subjective perspectives and experiences within specific sociocultural contexts (Bradshaw et al., 2017). It is well-suited for research that seeks to answer “what,” “why,” “how,” and “what” questions related to human behavior, motivations, perspectives, and barriers (Kim et al., 2017; Sandelowski, 2000). Consequently, QDM is typically exploratory and inductive. While QDM emphasizes the description of participants' perspectives and language, it does not negate the process of interpretation by the researcher. During data analysis, QDM researchers identify patterns, themes, or categories and contextualize these findings within a specific sociocultural background (Sandelowski, 2010; Turale, 2020). The degree of interpretation is grounded in the detailed

presentation of the data and ultimately guided by the research focus (Sandelowski, 2010; Turale, 2020).

The main strength of QDM lies in its focus on a direct description of an event. In this study, QDM enabled the researcher to explore the development and practice of Tai Chi within the Chinese community in Ottawa by capturing the content, locations, motivations, and methods of the two Tai Chi associations examined in this study, OTCA and TTCS, as well as the practitioners.

Tai Chi is a culturally rich practice that is deeply intertwined with cultural traditions of the Chinese community in Ottawa. Taken together, the lens of diasporic imagination with QDM enriched descriptions of the development and practices of Tai Chi.

Methods

Research Ethics

This study received ethics approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board in December 2023 (see Appendix A). The Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association (OTCA) and the Ottawa branch of the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS) granted me permission to conduct my recruitment of research participants. The personal documents I obtained from the OTCA were approved by the provider for inclusion in my thesis research and dissemination.

Historical Descriptive Analysis

Historical descriptive analysis is a strategy to systematically examine past events and practices and understand their development, context, and influence (McCullagh, 2000). This approach involves collecting, evaluating, and interpreting historical data, such as written documents, oral histories, and other artifacts within a certain time frame (Kipping et al., 2013; Lipartito, 2013). The “descriptive” aspect of the historical method emphasizes the recording of data and detailed representation of historical facts and events to answer the typical questions:

who, what, why, when, where, rather than an in-depth exploration of underlying causal relationships that go beyond the available evidence (Grimes et al., 2002). The historical descriptive approach aligns well with the qualitative descriptive methodology employed in this research as it can provide a detailed and data-orientated presentation.

In this research, a historical descriptive method was used to explore how Tai Chi has developed in Ottawa by focusing on the two local Tai Chi associations and their historical origins, trends, influences. The design of a historical descriptive method of this study is based on several subquestions: (1) Who created the Tai Chi associations, (2) what are the primary purposes of the Tai Chi associations in Ottawa? (3) what Tai Chi activities or services do these associations provide, who are their target audiences, and how do they develop diasporic cultural spaces and identity (ies)? (4) how does the history of the Chinese community support and contextualize the roles and development of these associations? Through a historical descriptive method, this study provided an accurate portrayal of their Tai Chi practices and events, and gained insight into their roles in creating diasporic spaces and mind-body practice communities.

Moreover, a historical descriptive approach helped me enhance the quality of data obtained from the participants in semi-structured interviews. With a deeper understanding of the development of Tai Chi associations through analysis of archival and original documents and secondary literature, I was better equipped in the semi-structured interviews to engage in discussions with respondents about their Tai Chi practices.

Although a historical descriptive method is appropriate for the first part of this study on the development of two Tai Chi associations, it is imperative to recognize that historical studies inherently reflect the historian's personal interests and visions of past events, as the historical description is a reconstruction the past (McCullagh, 2000). Thus, historical studies are inevitably

subject to multiple layers of bias, including the authors' bias, the bias of the sources preserver and provider, and the researcher's own biases. While the biases are an integral part of the historical approach, researchers can mitigate personal and selection bias by adhering to three critical steps. First, source criticism involves rigorously assessing the authenticity and reliability of historical documents, including authorship, origin, purpose, and targeted audience (Kipping et al., 2013). Second, source pluralism emphasizes using multiple, diverse sources to create a comprehensive historical narrative (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Third, the researcher needs to have a critical lens in processing the data, which means they should consider the specific social and cultural contexts in which documents were produced and remain aware of the influence of personal perspectives and stances (Kipping et al., 2013; McCullagh, 2000).

The Selection and Collection of Documentary Materials

The primary method used in the historical study on the development of Tai Chi within Ottawa's Chinese community was archival research, which provided essential insights into the origins, growth, and community engagement of two Tai Chi associations. The archival approach helped the researcher to obtain the original documents and records that offered the most relevant and representative data on these Tai Chi associations. Lipartito (2013) and McCullagh (2000) argued that selecting historic documents and records is a meticulous and intentional act of locating the materials and evidence that are most representative and relevant for building a historical narrative and addressing the research questions. Thus, it is important for the researcher to establish a practical inclusion and exclusion criteria to identify pertinent documents and filter out the irrelevant information. As the goal of this study is to explore the development of two Tai Chi associations in Ottawa and their roles in promoting Tai Chi and diasporic spaces, the selection criteria prioritized archival documents and associational websites' records that revealed

information about their chronological development, key figures, and Tai Chi activities, as well as their social engagement within the Chinese diasporic community and their broader host society. However, a large amount of Taoist-specific religious booklets and papers from the TTCS were excluded, as they did not provide relevant information for this research purpose.

To gather foundational data on the OTCA and TTCS, the researcher began by conducting an online search of the associations' official websites to access publicly available information on their history, goals and missions, Tai Chi programs and activities. Following this, the researcher contacted staff members at the OTCA and the Toronto headquarters and Ottawa branch of the TTCS via email to inquire about any internal materials relevant to this study. From the OTCA, the researcher obtained a personal collection from one of its founders, which included textual, photographic, and video records of classes, meetings, and events, as well as personal writings and correspondence, spanning from the 1970s to 2015 (see Appendix B). While the holdings are currently in a locked cabinet in my supervisor's office, they will be returned to the association founder upon completion of this project. Although the TTCS did not provide any internal archival materials, they guided the researcher on accessing related documentary materials available through their websites and social media platforms.

The researcher also obtained recordings, articles, and news clips from local Chinese-language newspapers, websites, and the Ottawa archives. As these materials were produced by various authors, they offered diverse perspectives on the associations' activities and their recognition within both the Chinese community and the broader society. Moreover, the researcher gathered secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and theses that provided context and insight into the development of Tai Chi in mainland China and the trajectory of Chinese immigration to Ottawa since the 20th century. Understanding the origin of Tai Chi in

mainland China and the growth of Ottawa's Chinese community is essential for deepening the understanding of the associations' roles in cultural continuity and adaptations of Tai Chi, forging a sense of belonging, and promote social engagement within the Chinese diaspora and the larger society. The process of gathering sources was not a one-time task. Instead, it was a continuous, open-ended journey that allowed me to gradually collect information relevant to my research topic. Through this process, I was able to continuously become familiar with the documents and my research subjects.

Semi-structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is a method of data collection in which one person (an interviewer) verbally asks questions to the respondent (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The key features of semi-structured interviews are that they are scheduled in advance at a designated time, they are organized around a set of predetermined questions, and they include other questions that emerge from open dialogue (Gill et al., 2008; Whiting, 2008). The semi-structured interview allows the interviewer and interviewee to share their views and perspectives on the topic (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Consequently, semi-structured interviews facilitate the co-creation of knowledge, aligning with the principles of social constructionism.

Semi-structured interviews are often conducted in person but can also be conducted over the phone or through videoconferencing (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). During interviews, researchers can rephrase, clarify, and adjust questions within the conversation to effectively gather information and data. In this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews to collect data on the personal experiences and perspectives among Chinese-speaking Tai Chi practitioners affiliated with the OTCA and the TTCS in Ottawa.

Sampling and Inclusion Criteria

This study utilized purposive and snowball sampling methods to recruit participants. Purposive sampling, one of the most prevalent approaches in qualitative research, enables the targeted collection of information from environments, individuals, or events that are pertinent to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). Snowball sampling is a participant-driven method and effective in identifying individuals within specific, often hard-to-reach, populations (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Due to the specific recruitment criteria and the small sample size required, both purposive and snowball sampling proved invaluable in identifying eligible Chinese Tai Chi practitioners residing in various areas of Ottawa.

The inclusion criteria for participants in this study were individuals who identified as being of Chinese descent, either as immigrants from China or as those born to at least one Chinese parent, and who had practiced Tai Chi in Ottawa for a minimum of six months at the time of recruitment. Moreover, eligible participants were required to speak Mandarin or Cantonese, as familiarity with the Chinese language often enables a deep understanding of Tai Chi's philosophies and practices, thereby enriching the interviews data.

Sample Size

According to Braun and Clarke (2019b), decisions regarding the appropriate number of data items and when to cease data collection are inherently subjective and cannot be definitively established prior to analysis. In reflexive thematic analysis, researchers are advised against relying on the operationalized concepts of sample size and saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2019b). Instead, they should focus on providing a transparent and well-justified explanation for the number of participants selected, considering the specific context and aims of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2019b).

In this study, the final sample size was determined by combining the availability of willing participants and the insights of my supervisor, which included recommendations on sample diversity and scope. Ultimately, I was able to recruit seven participants for this study, consisting of four males and three females who are either current or former members of the OTCA and the TTCS at the time of recruitment. Among them, six participants were over the age of 50, while one was in the 30–35 age range. Two participants possessed a junior school education, while the remaining participants held a bachelor’s degree or higher. All the participants had been active in the Tai Chi community in Ottawa when recruitment took place. Regarding their experiences and roles in the local Tai Chi community, five participants have been teaching Tai Chi for over five years in Ottawa, and another two have been serving as core volunteer members in their associations for at least two years. Some of them also performed Tai Chi at various community and cultural events. Moreover, some of the participants were also involved in other Tai Chi groups/workshops. To protect their identities, I anonymized all participants by assigning them pseudonyms, labeled A through G. Additionally, I ensured that references to specific participants did not disclose their membership in the OTCA or TTCS, given the relatively small size of these Tai Chi associations in Ottawa.

Table 1. Study Participants Profiles

Participant (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age group (Year)	Education Level	Number of years of Tai Chi experience	Residency in Ottawa (Year)
A	F	50-55	Master's	17	27
B	F	60-65	PHD	2	21
C	M	30-35	Bachelor's	13	11
D	M	60-65	PHD	33	25
E	M	70-75	PHD	45	35
F	M	70-75	Junior high school	18	24
G	F	70-75	Junior high school	37	24

Recruitment

Participant recruitment process was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, I initiated contact with the OTCA and the TTCS through their official email addresses. I explained my research to them including its objectives, potential contributions, and my intention to recruit participants from their Tai Chi classes. While the inclusion criteria did not require participants to be members of the OTCA or TTCS, these two associations were founded by Chinese and Hong Kong immigrants and are well-known Tai Chi associations in Ottawa. As such, starting recruitment within these associations offered me a valuable opportunity to establish connections to the community of Tai Chi practice in the city.

To become familiar with the associations and build trust, I paid for a membership and participated in their classes on an irregular basis. After establishing rapport, I sought permission from the classes' leaders and instructors to present my research background information before the classes started. During these presentations, I distributed research materials to the classes, which included informational flyers, recruitment letters, and consent forms, all printed in both Mandarin and English. Some class participants immediately agreed to participate in the study and provided their contact information. The other participants contacted me later via email to express their interest.

One of the significant challenges I encountered during the recruitment process was a widespread presumption among some individuals that the study focused on individuals with extensive Tai Chi experience and deep knowledge of the practice. This presumption led several eligible practitioners, who assessed their skills and knowledge as insufficiently advanced, to decline participation. A particular concern among these practitioners was that they believed that if they participated in the study without their teachers also being involved, it was perceived as a form of disrespect towards their teachers. Despite my best efforts to clarify that the study was open to all levels of Tai Chi practitioners, this presumption contributed to unexpected delays in the recruitment process. Moreover, a few eligible practitioners preferred to be interviewed through online messaging or declined to be audio recorded. Due to the study's design, I excluded these individuals and expressed my gratitude for their willingness to participate. The recruitment process began in mid-December 2023, coinciding with the end of the Fall term Tai Chi courses. When I started the recruitment, some practitioners were away from Ottawa on holidays. Critical logistical support was received from the directors and instructors at the OTCA and TTCS. With their referrals, I was able to disseminate my research recruitment information to the broader Tai Chi community in the diaspora and complete my recruitment.

Data Collection

From the end of December 2023 to early February 2024, I conducted in-person and semi-structured interviews with seven participants in a lab space at the University of Ottawa or in local cafés. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Before the interviews, participants were asked to complete a consent form, which outlined their right to withdraw from the study at any time, as well as their consent for the interviews to be audio recorded and for quotes to be used in the thesis and future conference presentations and publishable papers. I conducted the interviews

in Chinese and English during the interviews, depending on the participants' preferences. As a native Chinese speaker, I also practiced the interview questions in English before the interviews. Four participants primarily spoke in English but switched to Chinese when discussing specific Tai Chi terms and cultural concepts. The remaining three participants spoke entirely in Chinese.

After each interview, participants received a follow-up email with the transcribed transcript of their session, inviting them to review and confirm the accuracy of the content. In the email, I also expressed my gratitude for their participation. Participants were given two weeks to review and clarify the transcripts before returning to the researcher. By the end of February, I received all transcription accuracy confirmation by all participants. I used DeepL translation software to translate the Chinese-language transcripts into English. With the assistance of a Chinese-speaking professor who was member of the advisory committee until her retirement, I manually reviewed the translations to ensure their accuracy. During the analysis phase, all physical copies of the interview data and related documents were securely stored in a locked cabinet in my supervisor's office. Upon completion of the project, all physical and digital data will be stored in a locked cabinet in my supervisor's office. All data will be destroyed after ten years.

The purpose of the interviews was to explore the experiences and perspectives of Tai Chi practitioners within the Chinese diaspora in Ottawa (see Appendix C). To achieve this, interview questions were structured into four distinct segments. For the first segment, I asked about the participants' immigration histories and their perspectives on cultural identity (identities), providing context for their lives before and after moving to Canada. The second segment delved into their reasons for practicing Tai Chi, with specific prompts addressing initial reasons, long-term motivations, and the effects of Tai Chi practice. In the third segment, I asked how they

integrated Tai Chi into their daily lives, such as locations and frequency of practice, adaptations, facilitators, and challenges. In the final segment, I explored participants' links to Tai Chi and cultural traditions and heritage. I also provided participants with an open moment to share other perceptions or experiences of Tai Chi.

Data Analysis

I employed Braun and Clarke's (2019a) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to independently analyze the data from the archival documents obtained from the Tai Chi associations and the semi-structured interviews. This approach involves a constantly reflective and thoughtful process of data analysis, wherein the researcher actively engages in the ongoing "construction," "development," and "generation" of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Researchers employing RTA should recognise that while repetition and frequency are important aspects of the analysis, it is the meaning and meaningfulness of the data related to research purposes that should primarily guide the coding and theme generation process (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Byrne, 2022). RTA begins with data familiarization followed by coding, theme development, revision, naming, and writing up.

Analysis of the Archival Data

Following the steps and principles of RTA, I began by immersing myself in the documents to become familiar with the data. First, I read secondary documents related to the history of Tai Chi in mainland China and the demographic changes of the Chinese community in Ottawa. These secondary sources have already been analyzed and summarized by their respective authors, reflecting their own themes and perspectives. However, first reading these secondary sources was crucial for the researcher to understand the background of the two Tai Chi associations. Subsequently, I read the archival materials and recordings related to the OTCA

and the TTCS. This entire process of being familiar with the data was time-consuming. Bowen (2009) and Karppinen and Moe (2014) emphasized that researchers must devote significant time to reading the textual material, as language is never neutral but is shaped within specific contexts and groups to serve purposes. As I familiarized myself with the data, I documented the questions and thoughts that arose in my mind and constantly reflected on how my background and stance influenced my interpretation of the documents. My memories related to martial arts and education experiences in patriotism frequently arose from my mind during this process. I recognised that my stance and lived experiences play a significant role in shaping the knowledge I produced. Moreover, the researcher also recognised that the authors and providers of the archival and original documents brought their own perspectives and stances to the materials they presented within specific social contexts, such as the language they used and the details they emphasized (McCullagh, 2000). The embedded perspectives within these documents formed the basis for the researcher's insights and analysis.

In the coding process for the archival data, several questions (as mentioned above) guided the creation of initial codes closely linked to my research question on how Tai Chi was developed and practiced within the Chinese diaspora in Ottawa. The researcher created several codes, including the origin of the association, the structure of the association, the purpose of the Tai Chi association, the types of Tai Chi activities and services provided, the primary audiences or participants for these offerings, and community engagement. I completed my coding primarily using an inductive approach, meaning the data were open-coded and data-based meanings were emphasized (Braun & Clarke, 2020). However, I also employed a certain level of deductive analysis to ensure that the themes generated were aligned with the research questions.

In the third, fourth, and fifth phases, I integrated the codes from the archival data of the associations to generate and refine themes with attention to my research concerns. The reflexive thematic analysis of the documents was an iterative process of reading, reflecting, coding, and refining themes. After completing the RTA on the semi-structured interviews, I revisited the document data and with the help of my supervisor, defined two themes for the OTCA and one theme for the TTCS. In the chapter 2 of this thesis, the researcher presented these themes and discussion in a chronological order to answer the research question on the development of Tai Chi in Ottawa.

Analysis of Interview Data

My RTA of the interview data began with documenting my observations, reflections, and thoughts after each interview. After transcribing the interviews into Word documents, I immersed myself in the data by repeatedly listening to the audio recordings while reviewing the corresponding transcripts and my field notes. From the start of familiarizing myself with the data, I reflected on how my positionality (as an international Chinese student researcher) and lived experiences could shape my interpretation of the participants' responses. In particular, I noted differences in life experiences, ages, and Tai Chi experiences between the participants and myself, and I was less aware of Hong Kongers' experiences in the diaspora before starting this study.

The coding process was initiated on printed interview transcripts by systematically reviewing each of the seven interviews, focusing on labeling words or statements relevant to my main interview questions (e.g., cultural backgrounds, practice motivations, modalities, challenges, adaptations, and perceptions of links of Tai Chi to Chinese culture). Given that the selected theoretical framework is dynamic, and my adopted methodology emphasizes

perspectives and experiences of the participants, an inductive approach was used to represent the meanings conveyed by the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2020, 2021). The RTA included both semantic and latent coding, whereby the former indicates a level of analysis based on explicit statements while the latter is based on implicit ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2019a, 2021). A semantic focus aligned my analysis to the research goals in providing a direct description of the participants' experiences as much as possible.

In the third, fourth, and fifth phases of the RTA, I initially independently generated preliminary themes from the aggregated meaning and meaningfulness across the interview dataset. Throughout this process, I aimed to develop themes that could capture multiple facets of specific meanings or experiences. Subsequently, I created a thematic map and table to assist me in recursively understanding and clarifying the relationships between the initial codes and the preliminary themes, as well as the consistency between data excerpts and their corresponding subthemes or themes, respectively. At this point of analysis, I engaged in discussions with my supervisor regarding the initial results of my data coding and theme generation. These discussions were vital to encourage my reflective practice and critically reflect on my thinking and assumptions. We defined and named the overarching themes that addressed the research questions of “why” and “how” participants practiced Tai Chi, which are discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

Thesis Format

My thesis is structured in publishable paper format. The first publishable paper, chapter two, is a historical analysis of the development of Tai Chi in Ottawa. This manuscript includes discussion on the traditions and modernization of Tai Chi in mainland China and the evolution of the Chinese community in Ottawa; the development of the OTCA; and the development of the

TTCS in Ottawa. This chapter/manuscript examines our research question on how Tai Chi was developed in Ottawa, and it examines the role of the OTCA and TTCS associations in sustaining the Chinese diaspora.

In the second publishable paper, chapter three of this thesis, findings from the seven semi-structured interviews with Chinese-speaking Tai Chi practitioners (6 months+) in Ottawa is discussed. This manuscript was published in a forthcoming issue of the *International Journal of Sport & Society* and is focused on exploring our research questions on why and how do individuals practice Tai Chi within the Chinese diasporic community in Ottawa. In the final chapter of this thesis, overall research findings are discussed, as well as conclusions, study limitations and recommendations for future research.

**Chapter 2: Creating Space for Tai Chi in the Diaspora: Exploring the Development of the
Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association and the Taoist Tai Chi Society in Ottawa, Canada**

Abstract

Tai Chi is a Chinese martial art rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine and ancient spiritual and philosophical theory. Throughout the 20th century, the pedagogy and syllabus of Tai Chi in mainland China underwent significant transformations, aligning with the idea of national martial arts as a tool for nation-building, social reform, and cultural influence. Since the mid-twentieth century, Tai Chi has grown due to promotion by the Chinese government, Western interest in Asian alternative therapies and philosophies, transnational human movements, and media dissemination. Among these, diasporas of Chinese origin played a major role in transmitting and adapting Tai Chi to Canada.

This study explored the historical development of Tai Chi in the multicultural city of Ottawa, Canada, focusing on three aspects: the traditions and modernization of Tai Chi in its homeland-mainland China, the evolution of the Chinese community in Ottawa, and more importantly, the role two prominent Tai Chi associations—the Ottawa Tai Chi Association (OTCA) and the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS) played in promoting Tai Chi, diasporic spaces, and mind-body practice communities on a regional or nationwide basis. In line with the globally popular conception of Tai Chi as a physical exercise, aspects related to health and well-being were emphasized. The OTCA and TTCS were functional in developing leisure and cultural spaces, facilitating cultural belonging and embeddedness, social interactions and community integration in Ottawa. Drawing on diasporic concepts from Burdsey, Van Gorp and Smets, we employed a historical descriptive methodology to analyze the OTCA and TTCS, and provides insight into understanding how Chinese immigrants created a collective diasporic while inclusive leisure space for disseminating and diversifying Tai Chi styles, lineages, traditions in a multicultural context of Ottawa.

Introduction

Tai Chi is a traditional Chinese form of physical exercise that combines elements of traditional philosophic concepts, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), and Chinese martial arts techniques. While Tai Chi has been practiced in mainland China for over 300 hundred years, it was in the mid-twentieth century that Tai Chi gained increasing popularity in the Western world (Ryan, 2008). However, the significant roles Chinese immigrants played in the transmission of Tai Chi to the West cannot be overlooked. Therefore, the first objective of this study is to highlight the efforts of Chinese immigrants to create Tai Chi groups and build a space for meeting and expressions of cultural practices. As a result of this commitment to establishing Tai Chi groups, Tai Chi became accessible in their communities, which is particularly important considering the transmission of this traditional practice relies heavily on physical interactions and person-to-person contact.

The existing literature on Tai Chi underscores four aspects: the biomedical values of Tai Chi for improving fitness and illness; the sociocultural dimensions of Tai Chi, encompassing its history, philosophical and cultural heritages; the experiences of Tai Chi practitioners in community-based programs; and the mechanisms of transmission and promotion of Tai Chi in national and international contexts.

However, there is limited historical knowledge regarding the Chinese diaspora as a distinct group in transmitting Tai Chi in the West, and particularly the role of Tai Chi organizations in creating the community of practice in Canada. This research gap overlooks the collective efforts made by Chinese immigrants to disseminate knowledge, meanings, and practices of Tai Chi in new places of relocation.

This study explores the development of Tai Chi in Ottawa since the 1970s, a period marked by a surge in the influx of Chinese immigrants in Canada. Ottawa is a multicultural city in which Chinese immigrants are among the largest minority groups. The study subjects are two prominent and enduring Tai Chi associations founded by the early Hong Kong immigrants: the Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association (OTCA) and the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS). Both Tai Chi associations created important embodied leisure spaces for practicing Tai Chi and other traditional health activities in the local Chinese community and in a broader society while exhibiting many notable differences, such as their Tai Chi approaches, objectives, and structures in the course of their development in various societies. As the Tai Chi associations that created by the Chinese diaspora, OTCA and TTCS played a critical role in transforming the symbolic significance of Chinese culture and holistic health principles into tangible vibrant communities of practices, further promoting cultural belonging and attachment and strengthening solidarity among the Chinese diaspora and other cultural groups of practitioners. As Brubaker (2005) suggested, diaspora can be understood as a practice, stance, and idiom, these Tai Chi associations provided a valuable site for studying Chinese diasporic leisure practices and their collective efforts in fostering cultural resilience, promoting social integration, and developing various senses of embeddedness in the host country.

Following that diasporic leisure is a homeland-orientated practice (Burdsey, 2016, 2017) and a collective process (Van Gorp & Smets, 2015), this paper employed a historical descriptive approach to explore the origins and development of the Tai Chi associations, the Tai Chi activities and programs they offered, and their roles in creating diasporic leisure spaces and inclusive traditional Chinese mind-body practice communities in Ottawa. This study will contribute to an understanding of Tai Chi as an embodied leisure practice that allows the Chinese

community to develop diasporic space and fostered social integration in the place of resettlement. In this vein, “they are not in the place where they happen to live, they also become of that place” (Mata-Codesal et al., 2015, p2).

Archive research provides the corpus for this study. For the OTCA, primary documents were obtained from unpublished internal materials (e.g., correspondence, curriculum and activities schedules, meeting reports, workshops and events records, and photographs). In contrast, the main materials of the TTCS were sourced from public available webpages and associated documents that the researcher accessed from their websites. The public-available information from the local Chinese community newspapers and websites, the Ottawa archives also added to the data scope of the associations. The academic literature, theses, and demographic statistics are secondary sources to provide background histories of Tai Chi in mainland China and the development of Chinese community in Ottawa and in a broader Canada. The aim of providing this historical context is not to write a narrative history of Tai Chi or Chinese immigration but rather to examine how Tai Chi has been constructed as a tradition and been influenced by power centers and how changes in the demographic makeup and subcultural dynamics of Chinese communities have facilitated Tai Chi taking roots in Ottawa.

This paper is structured and presented in a chronological format. The researchers first provide an overview of the tradition of Tai Chi and its evolution of a culturally representative activity in mainland China. We then outline the development of the Chinese community in Ottawa within Canada. After that, we explore the development of two Tai Chi associations, focusing on their role in expanding the knowledge and practice of Tai Chi in Ottawa, and its purpose in creating a robust diaspora.

Theoretical Framework: Diasporic Imagination

Brubaker (2005) has posited a seminal notion of the contemporary diaspora that it should not be understood as merely geographic relocations of fixed entities, but rather as a range of practices, claims, idioms, and stances. Building on this perspective, many leisure and socio-cultural scholars have come to view diaspora as a socially constructed process that unfolds through diverse cultural and leisure activities, community formation, and multifaceted sense of belonging in new places (e.g., Adamson, 2008; Burdsey, 2008, 2016, 2017; Van Gorp & Smets, 2015). In his book *Race, Place and the Seaside: Postcards from the Edge*, Burdsey (2017) introduced the concept of diasporic imagination to study how the minority individuals constructed diasporic consciousness and emotions through social and leisure practices in the British seaside space. According to Burdsey's (2017) diasporic perspective, "leisure is a matter of interaction between identity and space, individual and group activities, processes of inclusion and exclusion, inter- and intra-cultural exchanges, and transnational links" (p. 776). Mata-Codesal et al (2015) further suggested that through bodily engagement with their new surroundings, migrants can actively participate in the home-making process and cultivate a diasporic awareness, multiple senses of attachment and embeddedness in the host country.

Burdsey (2016, 2017) indicated that diasporas are often engaged in homeland-oriented leisure activities, such as traditional sports, music, dance, and rituals to feel at "home" in the place of resettlement. Traditional bodily practice such as Tai Chi can provide continuity of individual memory and culture, help to maintain tangible or intangible connections to their homeland, strengthen embeddedness to a cultural group as well as the locality. However, "homeland" is not always a specific geographical location; more often, it represents an idealized utopia and a putative homeland or a nostalgic sentiment. The theory of "imagined community"

proposed by Anderson (1991) provides a powerful explanation to this point. In Anderson's theory, although all the members of a country are not familiar with each other, they gain a shared understanding of their community through cultural products such as novels and newspapers, which give them a common sense of belonging and experience.

Ho (2018), Schrover and Vermeulen (2005), Van Gorp and Smets (2015) indicated that diasporic and ethnic organizations play a significant role in the development of diaspora cultural spaces and transnational practices, as they transform the imagined community into a tangible community of practices by organizing events such as celebrations, commemorations, festivals, and parades, or providing shared spaces such as community centers. Diasporic organizations can also create spaces for the identity constructions and social ties development. Therefore, diasporic organizations not only have symbolic significance in shaping the diaspora, but also promote concrete and tangible solidarity, cultural belongings among certain groups within socio-cultural and political spaces through shared activities. However, the group practices within diaspora communities are diverse, because the diasporic life situation (relatively speaking) is characterized by great heterogeneity and mobility, which enables them to cross different cultural, social and geographical boundaries (Burdsey, 2016).

Van Gorp and Smets (2015) posited that diasporic organizations can be classified into two types: "exclusively" and "mixed" organizations, which can be distinguished by their goals, activities, the presentation of language and cultural symbol, member composition. According to Van Gorp and Smets (2015), exclusively diasporic organizations primarily focus on strengthening bonds within a diasporic community with limited capacity or intent for forging intercultural interactions and belongings among communities. In contrast, mixed organizations primarily aim to bridge connections with other cultural groups, building cross-cultural

communities by referencing shared purposes or interests. Furthermore, advances in media and communication technologies can facilitate homeland-oriented leisure practices and transnational links with global diaspora communities (Pasura, 2014, 2022).

This study draws on Burdsey's (2008, 2016, 2017) concept of diasporic imagination, along with Van Gorp and Smets' perspective for categorizing diaspora organizations, to trace the growth of the two Tai Chi associations created by the Canadian Chinese diaspora and their roles in expanding Tai Chi knowledge and developing diasporic leisure spaces in Ottawa.

Methodology and Methods

Historical Descriptive Methodology

This study employs a historical descriptive methodology to examine the historical development and sociocultural significance of the two Tai Chi associations within the Chinese diasporic community in Ottawa. Historical methodology is a valuable approach to trace organizational evolution and practices by analyzing written documents, oral history, or artifacts within a certain time frame (Yates, 2013). The “descriptive” aspect of the historical descriptive research emphasizes the recording of data and detailed representation of historical facts and events, rather than an in-depth exploration of underlying causal relationships (Grimes, 2014). As this study seeks to trace the development of the two Tai Chi associations within Ottawa's Chinese community since 1970 and analyze the role they played within the diasporic context based on the available documents, this methodology is suitable for this study. The methodological design of this study is based on several questions: (1) Who created the Tai Chi associations, (2) what are the primary purposes of the Tai Chi associations in Ottawa? (3) what Tai Chi activities or services do these associations provide, who are their target audiences, and

how do they develop diasporic cultural spaces and identity (ies)? (4) how does the history of the Chinese community support and contextualize the roles and development of these associations?

Kipping et al (2013) highlighted three core elements of conducting a basic historical methodology. The first element is source evaluation. Documents are socially produced which means they are influenced by the perspectives and intentions of those who create them. This requires the researcher to conduct a rigorous assessment of the authenticity and reliability of the provenance of historical documents including author, date and place of origin, purpose and target audience (Kipping et al, 2013). The second element of historical methodology referred to historical triangulation or source pluralism, emphasizing the integration of multiple and heterogeneous sources to build a comprehensive historical argument (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). The third element involves analyzing and interpreting historical materials with a critical lens. Historians should empathetically understand the historical documents in relationship to the specific social and cultural contexts and remain aware of how personal positions, backgrounds, and views may influence the research process, from selecting data to produce historical knowledge (Kipping et al, 2013; McCullagh, 2000).

A Collection of Documentary Sources

The main method used for this study that explores the development of Tai Chi in Ottawa among the Chinese community was archival research, which produced detailed and useful data about the associations, their origins and development, programs and activities they provided. The inclusion criteria focused on collecting archival and original documents pertinent to the associations' origins, key figures, activities, and community engagement to both the Chinese diaspora and the broader community, while unrelated documents were filtered out.

To begin, the researchers searched the websites of these associations to understand the information they presented to the public in terms of their history, missions, and programs for Tai Chi. The information provided on these webpages and associated public documents varied in the detail about their background and activities. Then, we contacted the staff members at the OTCA, the Toronto headquarters and the Ottawa branch of the TTCS via email to ask whether they knew of or could provide internal materials that might not be accessible online. A key founding member of the OTCA provided the researchers with his private archive collection containing firsthand personal documents and official records, such as personal papers and letters, meeting minutes, mission statements, annual class schedules and activity reports, photographs and videos. His personal archival collection spanned from the 1970s to 2015, and offered insights into the association's foundational years, a range of activities and initiatives, and connections with the local community. Although the respondents from the TTCS headquarters and local branch either indicated they could not provide internal materials or stated that they did not have any internal materials on the development of Tai Chi in Ottawa, they referred the researcher to download a great number of relevant documents and records available on their official website and social media platforms.

Moreover, the researcher gathered documents related to the two Tai Chi associations produced by the various authors from the local Chinese-language newspapers and websites, from which the researcher retrieved information of their historical engagement and recognition within the Chinese community. The researcher also obtained scarce but valuable information from the Ottawa archives and non-Chinese mainstream press articles, which offered an external perspective on the associations' influence within the broader society.

As Lipartito (2013) noted, secondary sources serve as an excellent foundation for exploring the historical landscape of a socio-cultural work. The secondary sources in this study provided solid backgrounds on the history of Tai Chi in mainland China and the trajectory of Chinese immigration to Ottawa since the 20th century, drawing from published books, articles, and theses. These historical contexts are important to understand the context of Tai Chi practices within the study associations, as their Tai Chi activities are inevitably connected with Tai Chi philosophies and formats that have continuously developed in mainland China. Simultaneously, the expanding population and demographic diversification of the Chinese community in Canada have also shaped how cultural traditions like Tai Chi are interpreted, practiced, and preserved within the Chinese diaspora.

Data Analysis

The analysis of historical data involved selection, rearranging, and reinterpreting of the obtained materials. Kipping et al (2013) emphasized that historical documents can be organized and analyzed chronologically and thematically, depending on the research questions and types of documents, that is, by constructing a timeline of events or by identifying recurring themes and overarching narratives within the data. For this study, a chronological approach was utilized to provide an understanding of the origins and timeline of Tai Chi associations, as well as the development of Tai Chi in mainland China and the growth of the Chinese community in Ottawa. At the first stage of the data analysis, the researcher used keywords (both in English and Chinese language), including “Tai Chi (history) in (mainland) China (太极在中国的历史)” and “(the development of) Chinese community in Ottawa (渥太华华人社区的发展)” to comb the background information of the study from the secondary sources in a chronological way.

Braun and Clarke's (2019a) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was employed to analyze archival documents from the Tai Chi associations. RTA is an iterative six-step analytic process that emphasizes the researcher's reflection and includes familiarization with the data, coding, generating initial themes, developing themes, refining themes, and producing a final write-up (Braun & Clarke, 2019a). During the first and second steps of RTA, the researcher re-read the archival materials, arranged them in chronological order, and generated several codes. These codes included "the origin of the association", "the (changing) structure of the association in different years", "the purpose of the Tai Chi association in different years", "the type of Tai Chi activities and services provided in different years," and "community engagement". I completed my coding primarily using an inductive approach, meaning the data were open-coded and data-based meanings were emphasized (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

In the third, fourth, and fifth phases, I generated and refined themes with attention to staying close to the data while aligning with the research purpose and the descriptive nature of this study. Meanwhile, the researcher recognized that perspectives embedded within the archival and original documents by their authors and providers, and the researchers' own stance together shaped the themes and analysis of these two Tai Chi associations. The researchers maintained ongoing reflections on their cultural backgrounds and personal biases throughout the data analysis process.

The researchers identified two primary themes for the Ottawa Tai Chi Association (OTCA), which emphasizes its role in preserving cultural traditions and reinforcing connections and ties within Ottawa Chinese diasporic community. For the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS), the researcher generated one theme, underscoring its significance in building a cross-cultural community to practice Tai Chi and Taoist activities.

Tai Chi Traditions: Taoist Internal Alchemy and Chinese Martial Arts

The English term “Tai Chi,” when used in the context of the Chinese centered pinyin system, is spelled “Taijiquan,” which carries two connotations absent in the English version. First, the word “Tai” (太) literally means “Supreme,” “Ji” (极) means “Ultimate,” and “Quan” (拳) means “Fist,” linking it firmly to martial arts. Second, the pronunciation of “Quan” makes a different word: Taiji is a term used in traditional Chinese philosophy. Considering the widespread acceptance of “Tai Chi” in Western contexts, this study uses “Tai Chi” to refer to the physical movement of Taiji. Traditionally, Tai Chi has been classified with Xingyiquan (心意拳) and Baguazhang (八卦掌) as internal martial arts to distinguish from external martial arts regarding technical emphasis and philosophical ties.

The tradition of Tai Chi lies not only in its physical movements that have been practiced over several hundred years but also in its cultural underpinnings that embody “the way of life that has been practiced by the Chinese for thousands of years” (Chu, 2004, p. 774). The philosophical foundation of Tai Chi is rooted in the Yin-Yang theory, which can be traced back to the seminal ancient Chinese texts, *I Ching* and *Dao de jing*. Yin-Yang is a central concept in ancient Chinese philosophy, representing the interconnected and interdependent nature of opposites such as light and dark, strong and weak. Yin and yang are not merely abstract ideas; they permeate various facets of Chinese culture, influencing such as traditional healing and fitness practices, dietary habits, and martial arts (Wang, 2013). As a form of physical movement that has been invented and continuously developed within the cultural soil of China, Tai Chi is informed by three main components of Chinese culture: principles of traditional Chinese medicine such as Qi and interconnectedness of mind and body; external formats of Chinese martial arts; and traditional philosophical foundations.

There are various accounts for the chronological origins of Tai Chi as a physical practice. The most common but contested claim found in extensive historical records and folk anecdotes indicates that Tai Chi was created by a Taoist priest, Zhang Sanfeng, in the Wudang Mountain during the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties (Lin, 2016). Zhang Sanfeng is respected as a sage by the various Taoist sects and was skilled at Fengshui and fortune telling in some official accounts. Regardless of numerous tales of how Zhang Sanfeng merge Taoist cultivation and Yangshen (life cultivation) to create Tai Chi, this widely accepted account of the Tai Chi origin from Taoism reflects that the practice has been popularly perceived as part of Taoist internal alchemy to pursue self-cultivation, self-defence, and longevity in the traditional folk culture.

Another common academic perspective on the history of Tai Chi linking it with martial arts is that the origin of the practice is in Chenjia Valley, where the two most significant Tai Chi lineages, the Chen and Yang styles, emerged in the 17th and 19th centuries, respectively. Regarding continuous transmissions by teachers, Tai Chi can be directly traced without any breaks to Chen Changxing, the fourteenth generation of Chen Clan (1771-1853). He is credited with significantly developing Chen-style Tai Chi as a martial art, particularly for breaking his family's admonitions to keep the art within the family by teaching Tai Chi to Yang Luchan (1799-1872) (Guo et al., 2014). Yang Luchan (1799-1872) is the figurehead of Yang-style Tai Chi. After training Tai Chi from Chen Changxing, Yang Luchan began teaching Tai Chi to imperial guards and the royal family of the Qing court and the general public in the capital Beijing, gradually developing what has been known as the Yang style Tai Chi (Wile, 2023). Under his instruction to a vast population, Tai Chi as a branch of martial arts became known to the public for the first time. Subsequently, Tai Chi evolved into diverse styles named by family surnames partly through his students' transmissions.

While its origins cannot be definitively traced, it is certain that Tai Chi has experienced continuous evolution and is still developing. National and personal imagination continually reinvented the external forms and spiritual-cultural connotations of Tai Chi in response to novel situations (Zhang, 2010). However, three traditional axes constituting Tai Chi are distilled through centuries to modern days, encompassing Taoist philosophy, health cultivation, and martial techniques. Moreover, over time, a tradition of Tai Chi transmission was established based on master-disciple relationships, with different styles being named by surnames. In the 20th century, Tai Chi underwent significant institutionalization and modernization in mainland China, with the Chinese governments playing a pivotal role in this process.

From a Folk Practice to the Official Endorsement: the Institutionalization and Modernization of Tai Chi in Mainland China Since the Twentieth Century

Like other Chinese martial arts, the development of Tai Chi in the twentieth century has been significantly affected by the national political and cultural environment. During the Republic of China era, in a climate of political turmoil and foreign invasions, Tai Chi was actively promoted as part of national martial arts by the nationalist government and various private associations to meet the needs of a surge in patriotic sentiments and the public's strong interest in martial arts. Simultaneously, the adoption of Western sport cultures not only introduced new sports to China but also stimulated the development of national martial arts and affected the traditional practices towards scientificization, exemplified by the “Tu Yang Ti Yu Zhi Zheng” movement (debate on native and foreign sports) centered on advocating scientific approaches to practice traditional martial arts during the 1920s and 1930s (Li & Yin, 2015).

The Shanghai Chin Woo Athletic Federation (SCWAF) and the Central Guoshu (National Arts) Academy (CGA) were the important pillars for the institutionalization of Tai Chi

among others. The Chinese Gymnastics School, established in 1909 and renamed the SCWAF in 1919, was one of the earliest state-supported sports organizations with the aim to promote national salvation and develop national spirit through educating both Western sports and Indigenous martial arts (Kuo & Kuo, 2023). In 1929, the SCWAF had 42 branches in other Chinese major cities and in Southeast Asian with over 400000 members (Zhou, 2003, p. 114). The CGA was founded in 1928 by the Nanjing Nationalist Government to systematically promote Chinese martial arts and enhance public health through four major initiatives: conducting research on martial arts, teaching martial arts, compiling and publishing martial arts books, and managing martial arts events (Zhou, 2003).

As martial arts and Tai Chi schools developed, the adaption and diversification of the Tai Chi forms occurred through four basic processes: variation - inventing new forms and styles; combination - integrating other martial elements; simplification - streamlining lengthy movements; and extension - creating new training methods (Ryan, 2008; Zhang, 2010). Another important feature of the institutionalization of Tai Chi in the Republican era was the rapid growth in publications and instruction manuals. These printed forms had not only increased the popularity of Tai Chi but also helped construct a public image for the practice, further promoting the theoretical and historical research on Tai Chi.

At the beginning of the People's Republic of China (PRC), national martial arts were promoted in the competitive sports arena and were given a government-managed label. The new governmental leaders initially emphasized the cultural and health values of Tai Chi and advocated for its promotion as a national exhibition and competitive sport. As a result, the modernization of Tai Chi accelerated in the first decade and a half of the PRC. Under the guidance of sports departments, national and international demonstrations and competitions were

rapidly held along the lines of Western sports systems with fixed standards, regulations, and professional teams. In 1956, the General Administration of Sport of China (GASC) convened a group of Tai Chi experts to create the first standardized and simplified Tai Chi form based on Yang style Tai Chi, named “Simplified 24-step Tai Chi” (Li et al., 2003). In 1959, the GASC announced the first official set of competition rules for martial arts under the new government, which standardized the content, format, timing, and categories of Tai Chi competitions (Zhou, 2003).

At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the public practice of Tai Chi was suppressed by the authorities due to perceived <leftist thinking> of critiquing feudalism and Confucianism found in martial arts (Lu, 2018). As a result, Tai Chi was practiced in private, clandestinely and some techniques and methods of Tai Chi were lost. During this period, several Tai Chi masters migrated to Hong Kong and other countries where they enjoyed more freedom to practice alternate styles (Ryan, 2008; Zhang, 2010).

Following China’s economic reform, Tai Chi experienced a significant revival and was promoted as a competitive sport and traditional martial art with the rise of popular nationalism. With the endorsement of the government, Tai Chi was characterized and practiced in several forms, including through formal competitions, education programs, mass participation events, and as a symbol of cultural heritage (Han et al., 2021). As Tai Chi gained in popularity, the “cradle” of Tai Chi, Chenjia Valley and Wen County, became destinations for global Tai Chi practitioners and subsequently developed into tourist attractions.

In 1982, the GASC set an ambitious goal to “bring Wushu to the world” (Zhou, 2003, p. 120). Subsequently, the Chinese government made conscious efforts to include Tai Chi as a unique contribution of Chinese culture on the list of recognised Olympic sports. In 1984, the

inaugural international Tai Chi Championship took place in Wuhan, Hubei Province, attracting 70 Tai Chi practitioners from 18 countries, including Canada (Lu, 2018). In 1989, the GASC developed the “42-Step Tai Chi Competition Routine,” which was included at the 11th Asian Games in 1990 and later became the standard global competition hand form.

Compared to the lengthy process of gaining international recognition as a competitive sport, the dissemination of Tai Chi as a significant symbol of Chinese heritage was immediate and was frequently performed at numerous cultural and political events. During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Tai Chi was showcased as a symbol of Chinese culture to the world. Not only did the opening ceremony feature a Tai Chi performance by 2008 practitioners, but the emblem of the Games was a pictogram of a Tai Chi practitioner moving in the shape of a Chinese character. In 2020, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization inscribed Tai Chi on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, n.d).

In addition to official channels, Chinese immigrants played a crucial role in introducing and adapting Tai Chi to the Western world from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Just as the histories of Tai Chi’s dissemination into the United States and Britain are embedded in the history of Chinese immigration (Frank, 2003; Ryan, 2008), the development of Tai Chi in Ottawa is associated with the history of the local and broader Chinese communities.

Chinese Immigration to Canada

In 2021, Canada was home to 1,715,770 individuals who identified as being of Chinese ethnic origin, including those from Taiwan and Hong Kong, making up 4.63% of the country’s total population (Statistics Canada, 2023). Chinese immigrants were the second largest minority group after South Asian (Statistics Canada, 2022). In 2021, the city of Ottawa was home to Canada’s sixth-largest Chinese population, with approximately 46,170 individuals, comprising

4.60% of the region's total population (Statistics Canada, 2023). Although Ottawa has never grown to be a major city for Chinese immigrants in Canada, the Chinese community has a long-standing presence that dates back to the 1880s (Eastern Ontario Hoy Sun Association Canada, 2008, p. 1). Ottawa is also one of the eight cities in Canada with a Chinatown. The evolution of the Chinese community in Ottawa largely parallels the historical trajectory of the country's Chinese population as a whole, such as the shift from early physical labor-based individuals to the arrival of skilled migrants in recent decades.

The first wave of ethnic Chinese migrants to Ottawa primarily came from Taishan and Kaiping of Guangdong Province at the end of the nineteenth century. Following the 1923 *Chinese Exclusion Act*, the Chinese population in Ottawa declined from 300 in 1931 to 275 in 1941, while the national Chinese population dropped from 46,519 to 34,617 during the same period (Eastern Ontario Hoy Sun Association Canada, 2008, p. 17). Before 1947, Chinese residents in Canada were typically characterized as rural-born and uneducated males whose social life was confined to specific enclaves (Yee, 2005). Shortly after the repeal of the *Chinese Exclusion Act* in 1947, there was a steady increase in Chinese immigration to Ottawa. During the 1950s and 1960s, the migration flow was mainly comprised of wives and children as family members of Chinese men already in Canada. Particularly, Cantonese-speaking families from British Hong Kong and Portuguese Macau, a small Mandarin-speaking group from Taiwan, and diaspora communities elsewhere began arriving in Ottawa (Eastern Ontario Hoy Sun Association Canada, 2008, p. 18).

From the 1970s onwards, economic and political conditions in different places of origin, as well as the emphasis on economics and evolving immigration policies, profoundly influenced patterns of Chinese immigration to Canada. These shifts led to the reconfiguration and

sociocultural diversity of Ottawa's Chinese communities in terms of the population composition and subcultural identities. Many Chinese immigrants who were skilled at Tai Chi-related practices started to resettle in Canada beginning in the 1970s. From the end of the Second World War to the middle of the 1990s, Hong Kong was the primary source of ethnic Chinese emigration to Canada, and many of these individuals had professional backgrounds and elevated socio-economic status (Li, 2005).

The constant influx of immigrants from Hong Kong resulted in the replacement of Taishanese with Cantonese as the dominant language within the Ottawa Chinese community in the early 1980s (Li, 2002). Simultaneously, a sequence of political and economic events associated with mainland China and Canada contributed to the annual increase in the number of mainland urban-based immigrants, including the normalization of diplomatic relations between Canada and China in 1971, China's <opening-up policy and economic reform> since 1978, the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests, the rapid economic development of mainland China since the end of 1990s, among others (Li, 2005). Since 1998, Mainland China has surpassed Hong Kong as the primary source of ethnic Chinese immigrants to Canada. As a result, Mandarin gradually became the dominant language within the Chinese community in Ottawa (Yee, 2000).

Notably, the rapidly expanding high-tech industry and higher education institutions in Ottawa have attracted significant Chinese professionals and international students since the 1980s (Feng, 2016). Compared to other major cities, the Chinese community in Ottawa experienced a higher growth rate and boasted a larger proportion of well-educated and younger immigrants from the 1991 to 2006 (Feng, 2016). In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Ottawa's reputation as the "Silicon Valley North" and the capital city remained important factors

in attracting a large number of Chinese immigrants who were well-educated and keen to work in the high-tech and governmental sectors (Khan, 2021).

During the first wave of ethnic Chinese immigration before the 1947, the community predominantly revolved around clan and home-district associations and brotherhood-based political groups (Li, 2002). These early organizations were based on nationalist sentiments. Pioneering examples include the Ottawa Tan Clan Association and Chinese political fraternal groups such as the Kuomintang and Zhigongtang (Yee, 2005).

After the Second World War, the Chinese community transitioned towards forming associations that emphasized a shared cultural heritage and an increased sense of belonging in Canada (Li, 2005). Under Canadian policies to encourage multiculturalism, various new Chinese cultural associations were created including community service agencies, political organizations, recreation clubs, and religious groups, partly due to socio-cultural diversity among new Chinese immigrants with regard to linguistic abilities, demographics, social status, and leisure interests. Traditional Chinatown organizations such as clan associations gradually lost influence with new Chinese professionals, who instead organized various voluntary organizations for their interests and needs.

The Chinese Community Association of Ottawa (CCAO) (n.d.) and Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre (OCCS) (OCCS, n.d.) are two prominent volunteer-based community service agencies. These two formal ethnic organizations preserved Chinese cultural heritages and promoted interactions between the Chinese community and the host society through various services, including language instruction, social support, and cultural initiatives. In 1972, with support from the CCAO, a small group of community-minded local Chinese Canadians established the Ottawa Chinese Language School (OCLS), which was the first and

most influential Chinese language school in Ottawa (Ottawa Chinese Language School, 2023). The school offered various cultural activities, including Chinese languages, traditional dance, calligraphy, and Tai Chi. This Tai Chi class in the OCLS was a precursor to the OTCA, a subject of this analysis.

The Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association (OTCA)

The Sisterhood: The Close Relationship Between the OTCA and the OCLS Before 2013

The main founder of the OTCA metaphorically described the relationship between the OTCA and the OCLS as “sisters” before their partnership ended in 2013, underscoring their historical connection (Huang, 2015). Throughout the OTCA’s development, many loyal members were former teachers or parents from the OCLS. The long-standing sisterhood between the OTCA and OCLS has resulted in the OTCA being predominantly comprised of members of Chinese origin, thus maintaining strong ties to the Chinese community. Furthermore, the OCLS provided extensive support for the OTCA such as member recruitment and securing rental spaces, which solidified their close relationship prior to 2013.

The OCLS was created in 1972 by a group of Chinese parents with the goal of passing Chinese culture to the next generation. This Chinese language school was enthusiastically embraced within the Chinese community and received financial support from the community and later the municipal government. In 1976, as the number of students at the OCLS grew dramatically, some parents created new activities to enjoy in their free time while waiting for their children. Correspondingly, the OCLS began providing Tai Chi classes specifically for parents on weekends. Li, a parent of an OCLS teacher, learned Tai Chi in Hong Kong under the tutelage of a descendant of the Yang-style lineage before migrating to Canada. She was invited to teach this Tai Chi class and later continued teaching at the OTCA until 1994. From 1976 to

the early 1980s, the Tai Chi classes organized by the OCLS were characterized by spontaneity and a less structured format.

In the early 1980s, the student body of the OCLS continued to grow as well as the Tai Chi class for parents. On June 1, 1985, Wong and several other parents from the board of OCLS were keen on learning Tai Chi and initiated the OTCA under the teaching support of Li. These eight parents served as the first board members of the OTCA and established the charter and primary aim to “promote Tai Chi Chuan by holding exercise demonstrations, public meetings, classes and conferences” (OTCA, n.d.). Tai Chi classes have always been the main focus of the association, and its emblem incorporates the Tai Chi diagram, the colour of vermillion sand (the color symbolizes auspiciousness, joy, and strength in ancient culture), with traditional calligraphy, emphasizing Tai Chi and Chinese culture.

In the subsequent year, the association established an annual schedule of activities that has been followed to this day, including an open day enrollment in September, regular indoor classes from October to April (to synchronize with the former OCLS’s calendar), a social fellowship at the end of December, an annual general meeting in May, a summer barbecue in June, and summer practice sessions at the park near Dow’s Lake. In 1988, the OTCA was officially registered as a non-profit association.

In the 1980s, the OCLS was a prominent organization that functioned as a community centre, providing Chinese education and cultural services. In 1986, more than 900 Chinese individuals were involved in its programs, representing approximately one-tenth of the total population of Chinese of ethnic origin in Ottawa in the year (Huang, 1986; Statistics Canada, 1986). Although the OTCA was created to become an independent Tai Chi association nominally, it was still closely affiliated with the OCLS as they shared the same governing body

and space resources. The relationship between the OTCA and the powerful OCLS laid a foundation for the OTCA's growth. In the inaugural year, the OTCA registered 30 to 40 members, all associated with the OCLS (Huang, 1985). Due to sharing the gym with the OTCL students, the OCTA levied an affordable membership fee of \$5 per family in 1985 (Huang, 1985).

From 1985 to the early 1990s, the OTCA was primarily comprised of established residents from Taishan and recent-arrived immigrants from Hong Kong. During this period, Li was the sole Tai Chi instructor for the OTCA. The 1990s saw significant diversification within the OTCA's membership, particularly with an increasing number of members coming from mainland China. In 1996, Yuan, a student's parent from the OCLS, became the first instructor from mainland China to join the association. Yuan was a renowned Tai Chi master in mainland China and brought extensive expertise in various Tai Chi styles to the association. She taught both traditional, simplified, and competitive Tai Chi forms that were previously unfamiliar to the members.

The OTCA set itself apart from private Tai Chi clubs, in which authority is typically centralized in a single master. In his address to the association's 30th anniversary, the main founder who was initially a Tai Chi student highlighted the association's commitment to an open teaching approach to promote an inclusive and collaborative learning environment where instructors and members can share and learn diverse Tai Chi theories and skills with each other. However, from the perspective of teaching system, the OTCA's loose structure often required volunteers to proactively recruit potential instructors, especially following the departure of previous ones. During the first decade of the new century, the OTCA benefited from the network of the OCLS and the expansion of the Chinese community, which brought in several experienced

instructors from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macao. As a result, the association could sustain and diversify its range of Tai Chi styles within its curriculum.

In 2013, the OCLS encountered financial difficulties and underwent reconfiguration, which ended its long-term partnership with the OTCA. The OCLS officially closed in 2023. This development had an immediate effect on the OTCA as it had to independently rent the gym space and lose access to the strong network previously supported with the OCLS. Consequently, the association experienced a decline in new student enrollments and public performances in the subsequent years. The OTCA is currently managed by a board of executives consisting of 6-8 volunteers, each serving a two-year term. The executives are responsible for coordinating classes and activities, recruiting students and instructors, and managing the association's online resources. Compared to its peak membership of around 150 members in 2010, the OTCA now has approximately 70-80 active members, most of whom are still parents of former students from the OCLS.

Enhancing Cultural Cohesion and Community Engagement Among Ottawa's Chinese Diaspora Through Tai Chi

Karlis (2020) stated that non-profit, ethnic-based community organizations can play a significant role in preserving cultural traditions, building ethnic cohesion, and enhancing inclusion in the multicultural society by providing cultural recreation and leisure services. As an association predominantly composed of Chinese practitioners, the OTCA not only practiced Tai Chi but also played a role in maintaining health and cultural traditions, strengthening the local Chinese community, and promoting a broader social integration. In a comment posted on the Ottawa Chinese website, the main founder reflected on the purposes of creating the association:

In 1985, a group of Tai Chi amateurs from the Chinese language school formed the ‘Ottawa Tai Chi Association’ under the encouragement of Master Li. As the name suggests, it emphasizes using Tai Chi to Qiang Shen Jian Ti (make the body strong and healthy) and Yi Wu Hui You (make friends through martial arts). We hope that the essence of Chinese culture can take root and flourish in Ottawa. So that, our friends can enjoy a harmonious and healthy life within Canada’s multicultural environment. (Huang, 2015, p. 2)

The emphasis on “martial arts” and the “essence of Chinese culture” indicates that the OTCA continued the official Chinese construction of Tai Chi as a martial art and as a national cultural heritage. Although the main founder acknowledged Tai Chi as a martial art, the low intensity and flexible content of the classes suggest a strong focus on presenting Tai Chi in terms of the health and cultural-leisure activity rather than a form of self-defence martial arts. Therefore, the association fostered a deep appreciation for traditional health culture associated with Tai Chi among its members, and to some extent, reinforced the cultural identity of Chinese members.

The health focus is particularly evident in the workshops the association held, which often centered on themes related to traditional health theories. For instance, in 2013, the OTCA held a public Tai Chi and Qigong workshop at the University of Ottawa Theatre, given by a renowned Tai Chi master who had emigrated from China. The Tai Chi master elaborated on the health efficacy of these practices from a TCM perspective, highlighting key concepts such as the flow of Qi, internal vitality, and Yin-Yang balance.

In addition to promote Tai Chi as a traditional exercise, the OTCS has maintained its cultural ties through three main aspects: upholding Tai Chi lineages, providing Tai Chi resources in Chinese languages, and participating in Chinese community activities. The OTCA recruited

instructors based on whether they had training histories with masters from recognised traditional styles. In the Tai Chi community, the lineage rather than Duanwei system is the primary means of establishing credential for instructors, since the tradition of master-disciple relationship is still integral to the transmission of Tai Chi techniques and culture. Therefore, the OTCA located itself within an ‘authentic’ tradition by way of emphasizing on its visible lineages. All the main instructors gained their ‘qualification’ from Chinese masters in their homelands or Canada, which were advertised through a lineage chart circulated within members.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the growing popularity of Tai Chi in mainland China and Hong Kong led to the domestic production of numerous books and videos on the subject. The OTCA amassed a significant collection of these works and made them available in its online library for members to study. These digital resources not only enriched the content of OTCA’s programs but also strengthened its ties to the evolving practices of Tai Chi in China.

Festivals and rituals are crucial in creating a visual and symbolic emblem of Chinese culture and tradition as ceremonial practices are deeply interwoven into the broader fabric of Chinese social life (Li, 2002). Benefiting from the intimate relationship with the OCLS, the OTCS frequently performed Tai Chi at various cultural events within the Chinese community. These public performances not only enhanced the association’s profile but also emphasized its belonging to the ethnic community. In the 1980s and 1990s, the OTCA gained visibility by performing Tai Chi at events hosted by the OCLS and the broader Chinese community. For example, in 1987, the OTCA performed at the Chinese New Year Celebration organized by the CCAO on behalf of the OCLS. In 1992, the OTCA represented the students’ parents with a Tai Chi performance at the OCLS’s 20th Anniversary and graduation ceremony and continued to perform at similar events in subsequent years. In the early 2000s, the OTCA expanded its

performances to various cultural events, such as the Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival and Asian Heritage Month. Moreover, the OTCA also contributed to the Chinese community-building by making donations in 2008 and 2010 to support the Kent Street Chinese Cultural Building and Chinatown projects.

Over the past two decades, the OTCA has significantly extended its reach beyond the Chinese community to “improve cultural links between the Chinese community and other ethnic groups in Ottawa” (OTCA, n.d.). In 2004, the OTCA launched the official English website, which provided an important window for non-Chinese individuals to learn about the association. Before this, the OTCA relied primarily on the community Chinese newspapers and websites for publicity. Since the new century, the OTCA has increased its presence at various public events outside the Chinese community, showcasing Tai Chi to a broader audience. As a result, the OTCA has attracted a diverse group of non-Chinese students, instructors, thus bridging ethnic and non-Chinese individuals with similar health interests.

In 2018, the OTCA made an effort to establish its role as an arbiter within the local Tai Chi community by launching the Instructor Development Program to provide training and qualifications to members interested in serving as voluntary instructors for the association and the general public. This program comprised two key components: technical judgement by veteran instructors and the completion of a certain time of practicing Tai Chi. Through this program, a few senior students became instructors teaching in the association and some community seniors’ and rehabilitation centres. The OTCA’s dedication to public health and well-being and its efforts in promoting social integration have been acknowledged by the wider community. This recognition is exemplified by the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards received by some volunteers over the years.

From the perspective of the association alone, its long-term success and inclusive vision are primarily attributed to the homogeneity of its members in terms of educational and professional backgrounds, as well as their volunteer efforts in promoting Tai Chi. Most of the association's volunteers are well-educated, long-term residents who have established stable social networks in Ottawa. For instance, some influential Tai Chi instructors within the association previously worked in Ottawa's high-tech industry. As an association with a relatively loose structure based on a common interest, it heavily relies on voluntary work. Between 1985 and 2015, over 120 members volunteered to manage the operations of the OTCA. They made significant collective efforts to coordinate and consolidate the community's Tai Chi instruction resources, such as inviting Tai Chi instructors to lead classes, and to develop the association's multifaceted roles in enhancing community health, strengthening the ethnic community, and promoting social integration.

The Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS)

Bringing Tai Chi and Taoist Traditions to Canada

Many Tai Chi groups in Western countries were founded by renowned Tai Chi masters who acted as role models for students both in techniques and ethical standards. A prime example is Moy Lin Shin, the founder of the TTCS. His teachings of Tai Chi and Taoist arts significantly influenced the TTCS's development. Moy is revered as a spiritual leader within the organization, as evidenced by the numerous accounts of his teachings and compassionate acts featured on the official website.

Moy was born in 1931 in Taishan County, Guangdong Province. Due to frail health in childhood, he went to the Hua Shan School of Taoism to seek traditional health practices. There, Moy learned a wide range of internal martial arts and Taoist religion (Moy et al., 1990). Ahead

of the Communist Revolution of 1949, he moved to Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, Moy continued his learning in internal martial arts from different masters, including Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Lok Hup Ba Fa, Pa Kua, Xingyiquan. During this period, Moy was ordained as a Taoist monk in the Yuen Yuen Institute, which was built to practice the synthesis of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. In 1968, he co-founded the Fung Loy Kok (FLK) Taoist temple with Mui Ming-to on the grounds of the Yuen Yuen Institute (TTCS, n.d.-a).

In 1970, Moy Lin Shin emigrated to Canada and very soon established the TTCA to teach Tai Chi and other internal martial arts in Toronto and Montreal. His teaching was initially focused on martial techniques but shifted to health aspects after he discovered that most students needed to regain their health more than they needed to learn how to fight (Kin San Tai Chi Academie, n.d.). Subsequently, Moy created a 108-movement set of Tai Chi based on Yang-style Tai Chi to make it suitable for health improvement (Moy, et al., 1990). He named this form as Taoist Tai Chi to emphasize its roots to Taoist traditions while removing the word “Chuan” (fist) to de-emphasize its combativeness.

Taoist Tai Chi and other internal arts garnered significant interest and acceptance among individuals who were interested in the Asian holistic health practice but were not familiar with these concepts. Although Moy could only speak Cantonese fluently, he attracted diverse students, including ethnic Chinese immigrants and other cultural groups interested in Eastern health and philosophy wisdom. As Moy’s original students dispersed from Toronto, the TTCS’s branches began to spring up across Canada. In 1982, Moy renamed his Tai Chi club “the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Canada” (TTCS, n.d.-b, p.1).

While teaching Taoist Tai Chi and other traditional physical styles, Moy was committed to spreading Taoist religion and philosophy in the West as a devoted Taoist missionary. In 1981,

Moy and lay members established the FLK in Toronto to formally preach Taoist arts, including studying scripts, chanting, and holding rituals and ceremonies. This institute became the religious arm of the TTCS. Three years later, Moy opened another Taoist temple and shrine near Orangeville and made it the headquarters of the organization.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Moy frequently delivered lectures on and demonstrations of his Taoist Tai Chi and Taoist arts in different cities across Canada and internationally. He also supported his students in establishing branches in their local areas. In 1997, Moy and his followers established the Taoist Health Recovery Centre at the Orangeville headquarters. This centre provided holistic health treatments for people who suffered from physical or mental issues, helping them pursue Tao through various health and ethic practices such as Taoist Tai Chi and meditation, chanting, and voluntary services (TTCS, n.d.-c). In 1998, the year of Moy's passing, the TTCS had expanded to over 400 teaching locations in more than 20 countries (International Association of Tai Chi and Lok Hup Academies, n.d.). His passing marked the end of an era for the TTCS, yet his legacy continued to influence the practice of Tai Chi and Taoism in the TTCS and the Western countries. After his passing, Moy has been enshrined in the Orangeville center of the TTCS.

Moy's success in linking and disseminating Tai Chi and Taoist arts in Canada can be attributed to various factors. The growing Western interest in Asian health practices and philosophy that were particularly spurred by the New Age Movement (NAM) in the 1960s created a fertile ground for Moy's Taoist teachings. For the majority of members who were only interested in alternative health medicine, Moy emphasized the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of Taoist Tai Chi over the mysticism and religious aspects of Taoism. His pragmatic approach integrated common New Age metaphors and narratives such as subjective well-being

and the interconnectedness of mind and body. In 1990, with the translation help of his non-Chinese followers, Moy published an English and French book introducing Taoist Tai Chi to the West. In his book, Moy deliberately downplayed the esoteric connections of Taoist Tai Chi to religious concepts, instead presenting it as a holistic health practice (Moy et al., 1990). However, the book also emphasized Tai Chi's roots in Taoist philosophy and explained how Taoist Tai Chi can merge with modern Western medicine discourse and bring health and spiritual values in contemporary society.

Moy's monastic background and his separation from the political climate of the PCR government allowed his Tai Chi to remain uninfluenced by the official suppression and intervention of traditional Tai Chi and culture in the modernization of China. This separation and personal monastic experience enabled Moy to unrestrictedly use Taoist spirituality and philosophy as a theoretical base for the construction of his Tai Chi and other internal arts. Consequently, Moy established the legitimacy of traditions of Taoist Tai Chi in the Western world in a separate path from the Tai Chi modernization in China over the last century. As early as 1978, the TTCA was registered as a charitable organization and formalized its aims and objectives to promote Taoist health arts through a lay approach to improve mind-body health, cultural exchange, and help others (TTCS, n.d.-b). Therefore, it is unsurprising that the TTCS comprised members from different belief systems and cultural backgrounds. After Moy's passing, the TTCS continued to expand its teaching locations, Taoist temples, and health recovery centers both in Canada and internationally. By 2016, the TTCS had more than 40,000 participants across 26 countries, including 12,000 in Canada (TTCS, 2017). A survey conducted that year revealed that 97% of the members in Canada were aged 40 or above, and 76% were female. The top five reasons for practicing Taoist Tai Chi were exercise (72%), alleviation of

health issues (42%), improvement of mental health (24%), social or community interactions (22%), and spiritual interests (11%) (TTCS, 2017). Due to Ottawa being the capital city and its proximity to the Orangeville headquarters, the Ottawa branch was one of the first to be established and has maintained a close relationship with the headquarters.

In 1977, Moy and twelve students performed Tai Chi publicly in Ottawa and established the Ottawa branch with 20 members at the first class (TTCS Editors, 2012). During the 1980s, the Ottawa branch continued cooperation with the municipal government by providing Tai Chi classes in senior centers while developing its own programs. In the early 1990s, the branch applied for a grant from the municipal government to support Moy's initiative for a Golden Age program, which aimed at helping seniors by offering free Taoist Tai Chi classes and other voluntary services. In 2012, the branch had grown to 600 members in 10 locations across Ottawa and near cities including Gatineau, Kemptville, and Cornwall (TTCS Editors, 2012).

In accordance with the curriculum set by the headquarters, the Ottawa branch offers introductory and continuing classes as well as workshops in Taoist Tai Chi, with an emphasis on health and non-competitive nature. Beginners are provided with a bilingual pamphlet (in Chinese and English) that explains the Taoist health philosophy and each movement. After completing the four-month introductory course, participants can continue practicing in the beginner class or improving their movements in the continuing class.

In addition to holding regular Tai Chi classes and workshops, the Ottawa branch frequently organized public Tai Chi demonstrations and performances to align with the founder's mission of making 'Taoist arts available to all' and promoting cultural exchange (Moy et al., 1990). Some of these activities were conducted in cooperation with the municipal government and local churches. As the national capital, Ottawa was also an important venue for the entire

TTCS to hold various health-related events, enhancing its profile nationwide. In 2008, the TTCS celebrated the International Awareness Day (initiated by Moy) in Ottawa. Hundreds of members from Ontario, Quebec, and the northeastern United States and delegates from other countries gathered on Parliament Hill to demonstrate Taoist Tai Chi and propagate the founder's Taoist visions of health and social well-being ("Many activities in Ottawa," 2008). Following the performance, the TTCS members marched in a Chinese dragon dance parade through downtown. In a series of public events in 2017, the Ottawa branch held Taoist Tai Chi demonstrations and free classes weekly in July and August in front of City Hall as part of the city's summer programming (International Blog Editor, 2017).

According to Amez's (2015) study on the TTCS, the organization is deeply embedded in the mainstream community with a predominantly non-Chinese membership (including the governing body) and English as the primary language. While the TTCS has few organizational links to China, it emphasises the spectacle of Chinese culture and heritage through Tai Chi. Therefore, Amez (2015) believed that the TTCS can be viewed as a hybrid organization that represents a post-oriental and pluralistic dialogue between Chinese philosophy and Western culture through the practice of Taoist Tai Chi and other arts.

This dialogic theme is evident throughout the TTCS's activities and marketing materials, which synthesized Taoist mind-body cultivation with Western health ideals and reinvented Taoist arts as an attitude of mind rather than a strict religious system. Thus, it created an inclusive space for individuals from different cultural backgrounds to learn about Tai Chi and broader Chinese culture, allowing space for multicultural exchange and interactions between Chinese and non-Chinese practitioners in Canada.

While the TTCS and its Ottawa branch made an impact on the promotion of Taoist Tai Chi culture, Moy's construction of Tai Chi did not go unchallenged. In particular, debates have arisen around the legitimacy of Moy's lineage and the non-martial nature of Taoist Tai Chi taught through accelerated training sessions (Immortal4life, 2011). However, the meditative-based and gentle movements of Taoist Tai Chi may be one of the reasons that the Ottawa branch and the entire organization is primarily comprised of senior members who prioritized holistic health and low-impact exercise. The different popularity of Taoist Tai Chi in Chinese and non-Chinese communities in Ottawa and a broader Canadian society further reflects the complexity and even potential conflicts between the different "authentic" traditions constructed around Tai Chi within different cultural contexts.

Reflections on the Development of the OTCA and TTCS in Ottawa Since 1970

Since the 1970s, the increasing influx of immigrants of Chinese origin to Canada significantly facilitated the development of Tai Chi in Ottawa. The two associations examined in this study, OTCA and TTCS, were both established by Hong Kong immigrants during the 1970s and 1980s. The migration trajectories of the key individuals who created or taught in the associations, from a homeland (mainland China) to a new homeland (Hong Kong), and from a new homeland to a new country (Canada), had significantly influenced the nuanced forms and philosophies of Tai Chi that have been practiced within the Chinese diasporic spaces and a broader society in Ottawa.

The development of the OTCA was closely linked to the local Chinese diasporic community, whose expansion provided necessary Tai Chi resources (e.g., Tai Chi instructors and members). These resources and the international promotion of Tai Chi by the Chinese government directly or indirectly facilitated OTCA to offer sustainable and diverse Tai Chi

courses, establishing a connection to the notion of Tai Chi as a national culture, martial art, and competitive sport. Throughout its history, OTCA had primarily been comprised of the first-generation Chinese diaspora who were especially relevant to the Ottawa Chinese language school. Their Tai Chi practices were anchored in a connection to their “homeland”, that is, their memories, values, or traditions from their places of origin. In this vein, the OTCA was aligned more with the characteristics of an “exclusive” organization—one that prioritizes cultural preservation and internal community cohesion over broader intercultural engagement (Van Gorp & Smets, 2015). Nevertheless, OTCA also tried to reach out to the mainstream community after 2000 through providing inclusive class and participating in multicultural events.

In contrast, the TTCS’s founder bypassed China’s official nation building through Tai Chi, instead infusing Tai Chi with Taoist traditions and successfully integrating it into New Age wellness and health initiatives. The TTCS had attracted a wide audience from diverse cultural backgrounds and evolved into a network of spiritual-health satellite branches with a Sino-Western hybrid identity that have extended across Canada and other Western countries. The TTCS had centred its practices around Taoist arts and holistic health cultivation, rooted in the teachings introduced by its founder, and continuously upheld by its practitioners from various cultural backgrounds to fit social and psychological situations embedded in the western context. In this way, the TTCS had established a cross-cultural community that transcends the Chinese diaspora where diverse groups connect through common values centered on Taoist health and spirituality, and developed a broadened sense of cultural belonging and identification among the multicultural groups of practitioners.

The differences between OTCA and TTCS regarding their missions and approaches to Tai Chi reflect their multifaceted roles in engaging with diasporic practices, communities, and

histories in diverse ways. Over several decades, these associations have evolved in response to the needs of both the Chinese diasporic community and Canadian society. Therefore, their development, to some extent, mirrors the subcultural diversification within the Chinese community in Canada, and its changing relationship with the host society. Furthermore, by providing a range of inclusive and adapted Tai Chi activities, the OTCA and TTCS have created spaces for the Chinese migrants not only for practicing their traditional bodily movement and connecting to their people who share same cultural and migratory backgrounds, but also for learning and interacting with Canadian culture and values.

In sum, over the past 50 years, the OTCA and the TTCS have promoted Tai Chi as an effective mind-body exercise that preserves and reinterprets traditional bodily techniques and cultural heritage, fostering a transnational or a cross-cultural diasporic community to varying degrees. OTCA and TTCS have played an important role in sustaining cultural continuity, developing leisure space for Chinese immigrants, and in supporting cultural cohesive and inclusive community building from the grassroots. The OTCA and TTCS allowed space for Tai Chi to be developed and practiced in novel and traditional ways in Ottawa. Thus, in the diasporic and mind-body practice spaces created by the OTCA and TTCS, Tai Chi has become more than a traditional practice; it has developed into a living tradition that embodies the cultural resilience and continuity of the Chinese community, their outlook on health life, and has facilitated mutual understanding and shared values among diverse groups that beyond cultural boundaries.

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**Chapter Three: Exploring the Practice and Meanings of Tai Chi Among Chinese-speaking
Practitioners in Ottawa, Canada**

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Abstract

The principles around movement and harmony in traditional Chinese culture and medicine have long influenced the development and practice of Tai Chi globally, and within Chinese communities in the diaspora. In Canada, the growth of Tai Chi can be contextualized within Chinese immigration patterns since the 1970s. There is a growing body of literature on the importance of Tai Chi in improving physical and psychological health outcomes. Yet, understanding the development of Tai Chi practices and the meanings it holds for its practitioners is relatively understudied. This study adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology that includes the method of semi-structured interviews with seven Chinese-speaking immigrants to examine why and how they practice Tai Chi in Ottawa. Their personal perceptions and experiences of Tai Chi were explored against the backdrop of diaspora recreation and integration processes. Our reflexive thematic analysis revealed that Tai Chi was practiced holistically for four main reasons: physical health, mental health and mindfulness, martial techniques, and social connections and well-being, with varying levels of emphasis. The study participants utilized a variety of resources within and outside the community to sustain and adapt their Tai Chi practices to the environment of the host society and their personal time availability.

Introduction

Tai Chi, or Tai Chi Chuan, Taijiquan, is a traditional Chinese physical exercise that combines combat techniques with gentle and intentional movements, a meditative state of mind, and controlled breathing (Lin, 2016; Robins et al., 2012). Since the mid-twentieth century, Tai Chi's popularity and global reach have expanded significantly, fueled by Chinese immigration, transnational human movements, and Western interest in Asian holistic health and martial arts (Ryan, 2008). The principles around movement and harmony in traditional Chinese medicine

(TCM) have long influenced the development and practice of Tai Chi globally, and within the Chinese immigrant communities in the diaspora (Wu et al., 2007).

In Canada, Tai Chi practice developed in tandem with immigration from Hong Kong and mainland China in the 1970s and is still recognised as a popular form of exercise within Chinese communities in the diaspora (Lu et al., 2008; Ng, 2011; Jette & Vertinsky, 2011; Lu, 2018). The growing scientific and clinical studies on Tai Chi since the end of the 1980s provide solid experimental and biomechanical evidence of its physical and psychological benefits. However, little is known on the meanings and experiences of practicing Tai Chi among practitioners in a multicultural city such as Ottawa (Canada), home to a growing Asian immigrant population. As such, we seek to gain insight into the Tai Chi experiences of Chinese-speaking immigrants and how health and leisure benefits intertwine with cultural bodily traditions and personal histories.

We focused our study on Ottawa, the capital city of Canada where Chinese immigrants and their descendants account for 4.58% of the city's population and are among the fastest-growing racialized population groups (Statistics Canada, 2023). This study seeks to gain an understanding of Ottawa Chinese-speaking practitioners' practices and perceptions of Tai Chi and its benefits to health, well-being and social integration within the diaspora. More specifically, we explored the purpose and modalities of Tai Chi practice among a sample of Chinese-speaking practitioners who belong to Ottawa-area Tai Chi associations established in the 1970s by Chinese-speaking immigrants. This study is part of a larger MA thesis project that explores the development and meanings of Tai Chi among Chinese-speaking practitioners in Ottawa.

Literature Review

The Health Benefits of Tai Chi

In the past four decades, researchers in the Western bio-physical sciences investigated health benefits of Tai Chi, contributing evidence-based recommendations on the modality and impacts of Tai Chi improving fitness, psychological health and reducing various chronic and geriatric-related diseases. Huston and McFarlane (2016) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of studies on Tai Chi over the past 45 years. They identified more than 500 clinical trials and 120 systematic reviews published in English on the impacts of Tai Chi on general physical fitness and a variety of health benefits (Huston & McFarlane, 2016). *The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi: 12 Weeks to a Healthy Body, Strong Heart & Sharp Mind* (Wayne & Fuerst, 2013) provided a comprehensive account of the health advantages of practicing Tai Chi, highlighting the positive effects of Tai Chi on one's heart, bones, nervous system, muscles, immune system, and mind.

Other studies have demonstrated that Tai Chi can enhance aerobic capacity, muscle strength, balance and motor control, making it a suitable exercise for balance and falls prevention in older or physically compromised adults (Choo et al., 2020; Tousignant et al., 2011). Moreover, Tai Chi was found to be an effective form of rehabilitation for specific health conditions, such as reducing pain from osteoarthritis, treating chronic obstructive pulmonary, stroke diseases, Parkinson's disease, cognitive performance and dementia (Ghaffari et al., 2014; Tousignant et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2009).

Beyond its physical benefits, Tai Chi is well recognised for its psychological advantages, including stress reduction and the promotion of mental well-being through its meditative and calming movements (Potes et al., 2017; Zheng et al., 2018). To a lesser extent, some studies have

explored Tai Chi as a religious-spiritual experience with cultural and philosophical connotations, emphasizing the self-awareness of Tai Chi in enhancing mental clarity, emotional stability, and spiritual growth (Amez, 2015; Pérez-Gutiérrez, 2014).

Tai Chi Experiences of Chinese Immigrants in the Diaspora

In North America, Tai Chi is widely practiced through community-based programs in various locations such as community centres, parks, seniors' centres, schools, or private studios (Hallisy, 2018; Shah et al., 2015; Wayne & Fuerst, 2013). It is also integrated into some wellness programs at healthcare facilities, rehabilitation centers, and workplaces to address specific health concerns (Pearman, 2023). Indeed, Tai Chi has become more associated with health promotion and rehabilitation rather than its original use for self-defence and combat training among global practitioners. This trend resonates within the global spread of traditional Chinese medical practices.

In research examining lifestyles and health practices of Chinese-speaking immigrants, Tai Chi is often studied to better contextualize health beliefs and practices related to leisure and well-being. Pringle and Liu's study (2023) on middle-aged Chinese immigrants and their sports participation in New Zealand highlighted that Chinese immigrants tended to avoid mainstream sports involving intense physical contact or risk of injuries, such as rugby and netball. Instead, the participants preferred passive, peaceful exercises like Tai Chi that they considered a practice "inherited from their ancestors" (p. 735) and crucial for their health and well-being. Jette and Vertinsky (2011) found that Chinese female immigrants over the age of 65 in British Columbia, Canada viewed Tai Chi and other traditional bodily practices as aligning with the principles of TCM, embodying inherent bodily cultural habitus. They practiced these activities to achieve a "oneness" of mind and body and to maintain balance for overall health.

As a traditional physical activity, Tai Chi can provide Chinese-speaking practitioners in the diaspora a practice to express and enjoy their cultural heritage. This appeal of Tai Chi is not simply practical health efficacy, but it also encompasses aesthetic or ideological dimensions that relate to their heterogeneous cultural identities. Ng (2011) found that Chinese seniors in Vaughan, Canada, practiced Tai Chi to explore and engage with their traditional culture, helping them connect to their cultural roots and values.

Furthermore, at an interpersonal level, Tai Chi classes provide an important space for social interactions among Chinese-speaking practitioners in the diaspora, which, in turn, can reduce their social isolation and improve psychosocial health through enjoyable social interactions and making friends (Zhu & Zhang, 2019). Wayne and Fuerst (2013) suggested that Tai Chi should be viewed best as a dynamic living practice, evolving with changing cultural needs and social landscapes. This embodied understanding enables us to appreciate Tai Chi not merely as a physical activity but as a practice enriched by its cultural heritage, adaptation to various contexts, and personalized experiences. Building on this perspective, we argue that Tai Chi holds particular significance for Chinese-speaking practitioners in the diaspora due to its deep cultural and contextual relevance.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the meanings and purpose of Tai Chi practice among Chinese-speaking practitioners in Ottawa. The research questions for this study were to examine why and how Chinese-speaking immigrants practice Tai Chi within the context of diaspora recreation and integration processes. We utilized qualitative methods to explore Tai Chi experiences of Chinese-speaking immigrants in Ottawa. This approach allows for an in-depth

exploration of practitioners' purposes and the modalities of Tai Chi practices from their perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed the concept of diaspora imagination (Burdsey, 2016) as its theoretical framework, which positions leisure in the diaspora as homeland-rooted activities while simultaneously adapting to the new environment. As such, leisure in the diaspora can contribute to health and well-being, but also self-perceptions, daily life organization, and a sense of belonging. "Homeland" in this context, however, does not always refer to a geographic state of location; more often, it is an imagined, utopian homeland of nostalgic and emotional significance. Burdsey (2016, 2017) suggested that diasporic leisure practices are deeply intertwined with the reconstruction of emotions and memories associated with spatial and temporal dimensions. This perspective emphasizes the dynamic interactions and transformation of the triadic relations between homelands, leisure bodies and host lands as experienced by diasporans. Diasporic leisure, therefore, can serve as a means of rebuilding their ideal homeland in the host land and in different forms of activities and expression (Joseph, 2021). The diasporic imagination framework aligns with the premise that modern diaspora leisure should be approached through an intersectional lens that consider various factors beyond inherited ethnic labels and geographic boundaries, such as individual migration history and transnational links. The concept of diaspora imagination is based on recognizing the roots of heritage and its practices, the fluidity of boundaries, and the evolving multiple sites of belonging within the context of transnational human movements. The theory argues that migrants' leisure involves interaction between identity and space, individual and group activities, inclusion and exclusion, intercultural and intracultural exchange, and transnational links (Burdsey, 2017). This theoretical

lens allows for a profound exploration of how diasporic experiences and consciousness can be linked to migrants' health and well-being practices, facilitating a nuanced understanding of leisure's role in facilitating social adaptation and promoting self-realization and construction.

Building on this theory, this study emphasizes the influence of personal immigration histories, other life experiences, and contextual circumstances of time and place in shaping the health and well-being of Tai Chi practitioners, as well as their practicing modalities in this study. Furthermore, the semantic significance of diaspora also extends to the diasporic status of Tai Chi itself. As Tai Chi disseminates globally, it has undergone constantly innovative adaptations and reinventions to suit a modern lifestyle while preserving its Chinese-inspired cultural ties.

Methodology

As the purpose of this study is to understand why and how individuals within the Chinese-speaking community in Ottawa practice Tai Chi, we selected qualitative descriptive methodology (QDM) for this research. This methodology is aligned with a constructionist paradigm to explore and seek understanding of participants' experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding Tai Chi practice within the context of diaspora imagination. QDM aims to uncover the who, what, where, why, and how of events or experiences, directly gaining insights, attitudes, and beliefs from informants (Kim et al., 2017). Although QDM is featured by creating comprehensive descriptions by primarily using participants' language, it does not negate researchers' voices and theoretical inclinations. Instead, it allows for interpretations that are data-driven or data-near (Sandelowski, 2010).

Methods

Research Sample

Our research protocol was approved by the University Office of Research Ethics and Integrity. Interview recruitment and consent forms were prepared in English and in Chinese and distributed to potential participants at Tai Chi classes held at local Tai Chi associations in Ottawa. Seven individuals expressed interest in participating, signed the consent form and agreed to an audio-taped interview.

Study participants were recruited through purposive non-random sampling and snowball sampling strategies at two Ottawa local Tai Chi associations, the Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS) and the Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association (OTCA), founded by Hong Kongers in the 1970s. The inclusion criteria for participants included individuals who identified as being of Chinese descent (an immigrant from China or born to a parent of Chinese descent), had practiced Tai Chi in Ottawa for at least six months, and were able to understand the Chinese language (i.e. Mandarin or Cantonese). The purpose of Chinese language requirement was to recruit participants who could engage with the traditional philosophies, cultural values, and nuanced teachings inherent in Tai Chi, which are often best conveyed through the Chinese language. A total of seven respondents (men $n=4$ and women $n=3$) participated in this study. The average age was 63.5 years. On average, they had resided in Ottawa for 28.9 years and had practiced Tai Chi locally for 23.7 years. All respondents were actively involved in the Tai Chi community at the time of recruitment. Five participants had been teaching Tai Chi in Ottawa for over five years, while two others had served as volunteers in their Tai Chi associations. Some of them had perform Tai Chi at various community and cultural events. For their education backgrounds, two participants completed junior high school in mainland China, while another five participants held

a university degree or higher from institutions in Canada. One respondent was born and raised in Canada to parents who identify as second-generation Chinese-speaking immigrants, while the other six participants immigrated from mainland China, Hong Kong, or other countries in Asia.

Semi-structured Interviews

Seven 60-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with the participants. We divided our interview questions into four segments according to the research objectives and questions. For the first segment, we asked the background questions about the participants' immigration histories and their perspectives on cultural identity (identities), providing context for their lives before and after moving to Canada. During the second interview segment, we asked participants about their reasons for practicing Tai Chi. Specific prompts for this segment questions include initial reasons, long-term motivations, and effects of practicing Tai Chi. For the third interview segment, we asked how they integrated Tai Chi into daily lives, such as locations and frequency of practice, adaptations, facilitators, and challenges. In the final interview segment, we explored participants' links of Tai Chi to cultural traditions and heritage. We also provided participants with an open moment to share other perceptions or experiences on Tai Chi.

The researcher conducted interviews between December 2023-March 2024, in local coffee shops or on the university campus. Interviews were recorded using an audio-recording device and transcribed. The respondents were emailed their transcriptions to review and confirm the accuracy of the transcripts. If needed, the transcripts were then translated from Chinese to English using deepL translation software. Transcripts were verified by the advisory committee, including a Chinese-speaking researcher working in the field of Tai Chi.

Data Analysis

The current study follows Braun and Clarke's (2019) model of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) to analyze the interview transcripts of Tai Chi practitioners. RTA involves six recursive and iterative steps: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Specifically, we used an inductive, "data-driven" approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in tandem with semantic coding to identify patterns across the data set, which is consistent with the QDM. The inductive and cyclic analytic processes are labeled in QDM to capture participants' direct views and generate thematic representations and categories that are closely tied to their nuanced and multifaceted Tai Chi experiences in a unique state (Kim et al., 2017).

Consistent with using RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2019), we believe our positionalities are salient to the data analysis. The principal researcher's physical identity is inherently Chinese. Since childhood, he has been immersed in martial arts (including Tai Chi) culture through Chinese Kong Fu movies and performances, education, and personal training experiences. The principal researcher has lived in Ottawa for several years and have developed connections with the local Chinese community through social interactions, such as participating in Chinese cultural events and Tai Chi classes. These experiences influenced his perspective as both an insider and an outsider, as someone who is culturally familiar with the Chinese heritage embedded in Tai Chi, yet also as someone interpreting these practices within the context of the Chinese diaspora in Ottawa.

Meanwhile, the researchers acknowledged the potential biases and cultural presumptions that came with the background and followed the reflexive questioning and member checking in

the research process to ensure that the findings were rooted in the participants' realities rather than overly influenced by the researcher's preconceptions. The researcher pilot tested the interview guide with one member of the advisory committee and a lab member, making necessary revisions for greater clarity and transition between questions. Two members of the advisory committee reviewed all transcripts, conducted independent reflexive thematic analysis and assisted the researcher in their manual data coding and analysis. One member of the advisory committee reviewed the audio interviews in Chinese to corroborate the researcher's transcription and translation in English.

Findings

This study explored why Chinese-speaking practitioners engaged in Tai Chi and how they incorporated it into their lives in Ottawa. Through Braun and Clarke's (2019) RTA of the data, several main themes emerged from the data on the motivating factors to practice Tai Chi. These include physical health, mental health and mindfulness, martial arts techniques, and to create and maintain social connections in the diaspora. All participants demonstrated varying degrees of adaptability in their practice, particularly in navigating social contexts and managing personal time constraints.

In the following sections of findings and discussion, each participant was given a pseudonym (A through G) to ensure that their identity remained anonymous.

Motivations for Practicing Tai Chi

Health and Mindfulness

Some participants began practicing Tai Chi to seek relief from chronic illnesses and considered Tai Chi an integral healing practice within the framework of TCM. For instance, Participant F lived in mainland China for over 60 years and practiced Tai Chi to cure their

hypertension and constipation. He explained the link between Tai Chi and principles of TCM:

Tai Chi gradually improves bodily functions because the more ‘Zhengqi’ (positive energy) you have, the less ‘Xieqi’ (negative energy) would invade. Why do people get sick? It's because their ‘Zhengqi’ is weak. That is why Tai Chi focuses on the ‘Dantian,’ our repository of essence. If our spirit is lacking, our essence replenishes it. If our energy is lacking, it replenishes our energy.

Participant D has lived in Canada for over three decades and started practicing Tai Chi to improve his physical fitness. He believed that Tai Chi is not as enigmatic and arcane as traditional medicine texts portray it. However, he greatly appreciated its soft, non-aggressive, and low-intensity movements, which align with his exercise preference. He stated that the slow pace and fluid movements of Tai Chi make it an ideal alternative to high-intensity sports: “in my understanding, Tai Chi makes me feel comfortable. After practicing a session, I don’t feel as exhausted as other people do after playing tennis or hockey. Instead, I just feel that my body is reinvigorated.”

Several participants’ descriptions of their reasons for practicing Tai Chi reflect that the Western and Eastern health perspectives were integrated into their understanding of Tai Chi for health promotion. Participant B, who has an educational background in Canada, initially suffered from knee discomfort and sought Tai Chi to alleviate the pain as suggested by a doctor.

Participant B stated:

It’s beneficial, especially for older adults, because it helps maintain balance and enhance flexibility. It’s recommended by (Canadian) doctors. It appears slow and easy, but it requires a lot of muscle strength, endurance, balance, and training. And in fact, my knee pain has been reduced.

Similarly, participant A, who is active in sport, appreciated Tai Chi for its benefits to “body balance and flexibility, muscle strength, and the lower limbs,” which she believed complemented her other more intense physical activities and enhanced her performance in these activities, such as running and workouts.

The mind cultivation aspect of Tai Chi is geared towards mental health and mindfulness subcultures. All participants acknowledged Tai Chi as a “mind-body” exercise that enhanced both their physical fitness and mental well-being. The participants, who were employed at the time, particularly emphasized the mental health benefits for them. They indicated that the movements of Tai Chi are low intensity and fluidity, with the absence of competitive pressure, fostering a great meditative state that reduced their stress associated with work and other daily life obligations and enhanced concentration. For instance, participant B shared her mental experience when practicing Tai Chi:

I found that when I practice Tai Chi, I am truly relaxed. I feel calm and peaceful. And I was focused at that moment when I did it. So those are kind of like Zen in the sense that we relaxed at that moment. So, Tai Chi is your mind, and you need to have a very good sense of mental map.

Likewise, Participant C emphasized that the mental benefits are unique to Tai Chi:

Tai Chi is not just beneficial for your physical health, but it also aids in self-healing, maintaining mental capacity and sharpness. These mental benefits are not as prominent in many other physical activities, and it goes a lot further than what I have seen with other martial arts so far.

Some participants developed deep mindfulness and spiritual dimensions built upon their long-term practice of the techniques and meditations. Notably, the mindfulness practices shared

by the long-term participants reflected the Chinese cultural contexts in which they had lived or received education for years. The participants suggested that the values gained through moral internalization in their practice resonated with the philosophical foundations of Tai Chi informed by a syncretic blending of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. For example, participant D, who immigrated from mainland China in 1990s and is skilled in Chinese calligraphy, discussed how Tai Chi affected his values:

My continuous practice is because of its cultural richness, not just as a form of physical exercise but as a mental discipline. Tai Chi itself promotes the concept of Yin and Yang, which represents complementarity and inclusiveness. This principle of inclusiveness promotes my own values of kindness and integrity in interactions with other people in this multicultural environment.

Participants F and G, who immigrated to Canada in their 60s after 2010, a period during which Canada has continued to experience significant immigration from mainland China, explained that the Chinese philosophy and spirituality associated with Tai Chi have played a significant role in their inner-reflection and self-cultivation, nurturing their sense of validation and happiness.

Participant F described how Tai Chi has profoundly shaped his spiritual practices and interactions with others:

Tai Chi is essentially a method of cultivating personality and nurturing spirit, such as the Taoist concept of Yin-Yang balance and the Confucian principles of propriety and benevolence. In fact, practicing Tai Chi has truly changed me a lot, including my personality and the way I interact with others, both in China and in Canada.

Similarly, Participant G shared the transformative impact of Tai Chi on her personal life, emphasizing how Tai Chi had changed her perspective on external and internal demands:

To this point, I come to feel that I have much fewer demands on the external environment. I could live comfortably amidst the hustle and bustle in China, and I can do the same here in the much quieter life in Canada. This is all from my Tai Chi practice; my external demands have decreased while my demands on myself have increased.

Chinese Martial Arts

For all participants, Tai Chi remains deeply embedded in the paradigm of Chinese martial arts. The underlying martial arts aspect of Tai Chi has significantly enriched both the enjoyment and depth of their practice journey. For instance, participant C, who had intensive training and competition experiences in Tai Chi and other martial arts, emphasized that his reason for practicing Tai Chi was drawn to its martial components, “Tai Chi is a martial art, and it is a great one. I will spend a lot of time learning and training.”

Participant E, who immigrated to Canada in the 1970s, stated that his vivid childhood memories of a strong martial arts culture in his hometown propelled him to switch from practicing karate and Aikido to learning Tai Chi after immigrating to Canada:

My background is within the Chinese culture, absorbing many demonstrations of Kung Fu all the time in my hometown when I was a kid. So, I was very interested in martial arts and had always been trying to find some Chinese martial arts. Then, I went to learn Tai Chi in the library, and later followed different masters.

Participants who practiced Tai Chi as a fitness and leisure activity still appreciated the martial arts aspect of Tai Chi and discovered significant enjoyment and content with their continuous practice. Participants B and D highlighted that the aesthetic allure of Tai Chi, especially the

“very beautiful” and “graceful” movements derived from its martial stances and principles, very much appealed to them. Similarly, Participant A found great enjoyment in the exploration of diverse styles. As she noted, “The different fun of different styles - I practiced all those things because it is kind of cool.”

Social Interactions in the Diaspora

Tai Chi is a social activity. The social networks built through Tai Chi had a favourable impact on the participants’ Tai Chi skills and psychosocial well-being. All participants unanimously considered Tai Chi to be a group activity and generally showed a preference for group practices. The term “friends” frequently surfaced as a central theme in discussions about socialization throughout the interviews. All participants have engaged in Tai Chi group sessions for at least two years and have built positive social contact and interactions within a larger community of regular Tai Chi practitioners.

Participant A, who immigrated to Canada in 1980s from the mainland China and relocated to Ottawa in 1990s, stressed that making friends is an essential aspect of her practice:

Friends are the number one reason why I practice Tai Chi. Friends were how I started Tai Chi. I enjoy the social aspect with my friends. I met friends in the Tai Chi club, and they have continued to be my friends for all these years.

Tai Chi classes and related group activities provided participants with an opportunity to make connections with other Chinese-speaking individuals and facilitated the re-establishment of their social networks in a novel environment. Participants F and G, who immigrated to Ottawa in their 60s and had limited English skills, emphasized the significance of Tai Chi as a communal pursuit that helped them build connections with fellow Chinese acquaintances in their post-immigration lives. They expressed a strong positive sentiment regarding the significance of the

Tai Chi group in mitigating feelings of monotony and isolation. Participant F reflected on the impact of Tai Chi on his social connections and the sense of community, stating:

Life here is monotonous for me, and I do not speak English. It would be more comfortable to spend my retirement in China. So, most of my friends here are those I have met through practicing Tai Chi. Spending weekends practicing Tai Chi together and exchanging ideas with them is pretty good.

Participant G echoed these sentiments and emphasized that Tai Chi is an important part of her social life:

I also have many friends who practiced Tai Chi with me here, and I'm very happy that they enjoy practicing with me. For me, there are two main things now: learning English and practicing Tai Chi, with Tai Chi being the foremost. It's an important way of life for me here. If I didn't practice Tai Chi and just stayed at home all day, I would feel bored.

Participant C, who is the second-generation Chinese immigrant and is the youngest practitioner among the participants interviewed, noted that participating in Tai Chi classes enabled him to connect with people who share a similar cultural heritage and develop a deeper appreciation for Chinese culture. He stated,

My students are a mix of people who speak Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. It may be because more Chinese or Asian people are open to try Tai Chi that I have made many Chinese friends in classes. Many of my friends might be 10, 20, 30 years older, but you still develop a closeness because they are your brothers, and they are very knowledgeable about Chinese culture and life.

The teacher-student relationship is a central aspect of the participants' social interactions and facilitated the formation of solid and meaningful interpersonal ties with other students or

instructors, which contributed positively to their psychosocial well-being. For instance, participant E felt “very lucky” to have met his master, while Participant A and Participant B appreciated “the effort that teachers put in.” This admiration and gratitude facilitated their favorable and enduring bonds with the instructors. Several participants in the study have followed their Tai Chi masters for over ten years. The Tai Chi instructors interviewed indicated that sharing their knowledge with others brought them a sense of fulfillment and self-worth. For example, Participant E expressed his positive psychological experiences while teaching Tai Chi, “I enjoyed teaching the group because they found the exercise very useful, and they were very enthusiastic and appreciative of me teaching them. I gained much satisfaction and self -worth from teaching students who appreciated my efforts.”

The cultural capital that Tai Chi brought to the participants also provided a platform for them to interact with individuals from other cultural communities who shared an interest in Tai Chi. These interactions are particularly valuable for individuals who might have limited opportunities to communicate with other cultural groups in their daily lives, as they can help these participants develop a greater appreciation for cultural diversity, leading to positive emotional experiences. For example, Participant D shared his experiences of intergroup interactions through teaching Tai Chi, which helped him experience cultural exchanges and develop closer relationships with the local community:

Practicing Tai Chi has also provided opportunities for me to meet people from different cultural communities...People found value in my Tai Chi skills and then became interested in me. For example, when I was teaching Tai Chi, some of my students were not Chinese. We talked about everything, not just Tai Chi. One student, also a guitarist,

introduced me to Canadian music and various music festivals. At that moment, you feel like you are part of this multicultural society.

Similarly, participant E noted that the activities and social gatherings that occurred after Tai Chi classes can be an important social space to promote inter-cultural group communication and cultural understanding between the Chinese community and a broader society. He stated:

Because we don't just come to class and do Tai Chi. We have activities outside of class that might be centred around a Chinese cultural activity, such as the Chinese New Year. This allows other cultural members to experience these traditions and understand our cultural significance. Another example is that classmates would go out together after class or a demonstration event and have Chinese food. This promotes good communication and exchange because the older Chinese love to eat and chat over food. It creates a better understanding, and they (Western people) would try different food. Chinese people can also learn something from Western people during such events. It's a two-way thing.

Furthermore, the participants' cultural awareness and ties were strengthened further when practicing with members from other cultural groups; this is evident in the barriers they mentioned in translating Tai Chi words and observations on the different practices stemming from cultural disparities. For instance, participant C, who had instructed a wide range of multicultural students, noticed variations in physical characteristics and movement patterns associated with different cultural origins. He explained:

Many of the Caucasian people cannot do a horse squat whereas Asian people are very comfortable. Because they (Western people) have not been immersed in this culture, the body movements and understanding are different. So, I find that they are harder to teach

in the sense that even when you do this, they cannot follow it and do that. The Western people do it in a different way, but that does not necessarily make their practice worse.

Adapting Practices: Navigating Social Environments and Personal Time Constraints

The participants indicated that their practices were in various settings—from formal, seasonal group classes and workshops organized by local associations to online sessions and personal practice, which were largely influenced by social environment and personal time availability. These influences were intertwined with the constraints and the social supports they perceived, and the adaptations they made to their Tai Chi routines and approaches. Most participants have learned various forms of Tai Chi, including traditional forms and simplified variations (were devised by the government of the People’s Republic of China). Over time, these participants tend to concentrate on one traditional form to further practice and master. In this part of the study, we explored how participants engaged with and develop embeddedness in their local spaces while maintaining cultural and emotional attachment to their homeland through practicing Tai Chi. Meanwhile, the personal life commitments had significantly influenced the frequency and form of their Tai Chi practice.

As indicated in the previous section, the participants predominantly engaged in group Tai Chi practice. From September to April, they participated in formal indoor sessions provided by the Tai Chi associations, while in summer, they took part in casual outdoor classes supported by the Tai Chi associations. All the participants have had experience with online group practice either in the past or for now due to the demographic dispersion, especially since the onset of COVID-19.

When asked how they practiced Tai Chi, the participants who had prior Tai Chi experience in China tended to emphasize the influence of their new social environment. For

example, participant G, who had practiced Tai Chi in a warmer Chinese city for 25 years, discussed how she practiced Tai Chi in response to a different geographic environment:

Here, it's not easy to find a place to practice Tai Chi because the winter is long, and everyone has to practice indoors. Indoor practice requires paying rent, which is expensive if we only have few people. In the summer, it's fine because we can practice in the park, and I like to practice outdoor. It's also difficult for everyone to gather and practice every day because we live so far apart. However, the association set up a Zoom session, and we could practice together online every morning.

Similarly, participant F recalled his experiences of practicing Tai Chi in China, and he stated that his group practice reduced while personal practice increased after immigrating to Ottawa because of the limited number of people doing Tai Chi in the area. He explained:

Compared to China, there are too few people over here, not many practicing Tai Chi neither. I only have one or two classes a week; most of the time, I practice by myself at home. Back in China, it was totally different; we practiced together every day, morning and evening.

Participant C, who was born in Canada and has made several Tai Chi trips to China, highlighted his dedication to maintaining the frequency of practice and improving skills by actively taking various opportunities. Aside from his regular weekly classes at the association, he has organized other personal classes and often embarked on week-long journeys to other countries to attend workshops.

Most practitioners also recognized the positive effects of the multicultural-supportive social environment on their Tai Chi practices, facilitating their public performances and engagement in meaningful cultural communication. For instance, Participant D mentioned that

the supports from the Chinese community and Tai Chi association provided him with many opportunities for participating in various activities related to Tai Chi, which fostered him a sense of belonging to the local community as well as cultural pride:

In fact, I have participated in many activities here. I have led my students in performing Tai Chi at events held by the Chinese school, the Chinese community center, and our own association. Our association also holds workshops sometimes. We also participated in various multicultural events where everyone showcased their country's traditions: some people dance, some people sing, and we perform Tai Chi. I am happy to take part in these activities and practice Tai Chi. I believe that since we come from different places and countries, it's important to get along harmoniously.

In addition to group practice, personal practice is an integral part of the Tai Chi routine for the participants interviewed, as it provides them with the flexibility to practice Tai Chi at their own convenience, without being confined to the scheduled times of formal classes. For instance, participant B shared her experience of personal practice:

sometimes if I had been sitting for two or three hours, I just stand up and practice Tai Chi for ten minutes and would feel very comfortable afterward. It's very flexible as you can practice everywhere not just in class.

Moreover, studying of Tai Chi literature and videos in Chinese language was an essential part of their personal practice. Participant F stressed the significant influence of Tai Chi literature on his comprehension of Tai Chi knowledge:

I like to read Tai Chi books and watch Tai Chi videos sometimes. Some of them are very interesting. I don't always agree with everything in the books and videos, but some

classic Tai Chi books are well-written and explain everything about Tai Chi. I always read these books and can even recite some great parts of them.

While personal practice provided the participants with flexibility to practice Tai Chi and access to a wealth of learning resources, they acknowledged facing challenges in allocating time for group practice. All participants experienced time constraints for practicing Tai Chi due to work and family obligations, which impacted the frequency and consistency of their group practice sessions, especially for those employed full-time at the time of interviews. For instance, participant A, who sometimes had to skip group practices, acknowledged that other life commitments have affected her practice:

Two weeks ago, I was in another city because of work. The 9:30 a.m. class here is at 6:30 a.m. at the time there. So, I just turned on Zoom and said, I would like to sleep. So, you know, I sometimes just skip classes due to work. And I don't mind paying the money when I go on vacation and not doing it.

Participant B, who had an extended hiatus from practicing Tai Chi due to work and family obligations, explained how familial responsibilities affected her ability to sustain dedication to group practices.

Because of different commitments, I am unable to make it all the time to every class. This year I'm doing a bit better. So far, I have attended every lecture and class because my daughter is out of town, so I have more time for myself. And in previous year, I went back to visit my mum and things like that, so I had to skip class.

Discussion

Based on the perspectives of seven Chinese-speaking Tai Chi practitioners who immigrated to Ottawa, Canada, this study demonstrates how Tai Chi was an important component to good

health and well-being, cultural preservation and continuity, diasporic consciousness construction, social interaction and adaption, and community integration. Consistent with Burdsey's (2016, 2017) concept of diasporic leisure as a practice of interaction across personal memories and emotions, diasporic moments, homelands and local societies, this study found that Tai Chi provided participants not only with an activity but also with a temporal and spatial anchor that connects their past experiences to the present and their homeland to the host land, fostering cultural continuity and multifaceted sense of belonging within the Canadian multicultural landscape.

Specifically, the findings indicate that Tai Chi allowed the participants to improve their health and well-being in ways that align with their health beliefs rooted in TMC that emphasize the “oneness” of mind and body. It also reflected physical activity preferences and the importance of passivity, moderation, balance, harmony, and holistic care. As a traditional physical activity, Tai Chi strengthened their understanding of and connection to traditional culture and values. It also helped them establish social networks within the Chinese community and with other cultural groups (i.e., cross - cultural interactions) and develop a sense of belonging to the multicultural community, while also reifying their imagination of, and attachment to their “homeland.” Moreover, the local Tai Chi associations played an important role in providing Tai Chi classes and opportunities for cultural connections within the Chinese community, and with a broad Canadian society in urban settings over the last 50 years.

Consistent with previous studies suggesting that immigrants tend to retain culturally meaningful activities (Kim et al., 2015; Kim et al, 2019; Stack et al., 2009), this study found that participants considered Tai Chi to be a special activity that is integral to their health and cultural tradition. Iwasaki and Bartlett (2006) and Kim et al. (2011) defined culturally meaningful activities as deriving their significance from shared social, cultural, and historical contexts within

a particular ethnic or racial group. Such activities can enable ethnic minorities to experience meaningful leisure and provide them with physical, psychological, cultural, and social benefits (Iwasaki & Bartlett, 2006). Although all participants in this study have resided in Canada for more than 13 years, their core Chinese cultural and health beliefs remained largely unchanged, manifested by their perceptions and experiences of Tai Chi and other Chinese-related health practices. The participants' discussions of their reasons and motivations for practicing Tai Chi at the intrapersonal level delineate the holistic approach of Tai Chi, encompassing physical health, mental health and mindfulness, and martial arts techniques, despite their varied orientations towards either the therapeutic or martial arts aspect of the art. The participants integrated holistic Tai Chi practice to achieve balance and equilibrium in their daily health and well-being maintenance.

The study demonstrated that Tai Chi not only resonated with their cultural background but also furthered the participants' understanding of the traditional health values within broader Chinese culture and philosophy. It is, however, important to stress that the sample in this study has significant heterogeneity (marked by immigration history, educational background, practice duration, intensity, and level of mastery of Tai Chi), which influenced their nuanced perceptions and experiences of Tai Chi. As Mukherjee (2021) argued, the understanding of intangible cultural heritage among diasporic individuals is not monolithic but is internally divided based on factors such as social class, religion, education, and gender. While all the participants shared a foundational recognition of Tai Chi as an embodiment of TCM principles and "Qi" practice, personal migratory and educational backgrounds impacted on their varied articulation of how these health values are embodied and linked to their individual needs. For participants who spent most of their time in China and immersed in Chinese education, their understandings of Tai Chi

health practices were confined to the paradigm of TCM, regarding Tai Chi as an effective preventative treatment and holistic health approach distinct from Western medical practices. In contrast, the participants who resided in Canada for an extended period and studied in Canada tend to understand Tai Chi in a way that is highly mixed with modern western health culture and traditional health beliefs.

Although all the participants unanimously saw Tai Chi as a culturally Chinese practice, Tai Chi can take on distinct meanings across generations in the Chinese diaspora. The first-generation, especially relatively recent, Chinese-speaking immigrants indicated that practicing Tai Chi enhanced their grasp of Chinese cultural and philosophical traditions. This, in turn, strengthens their traditional values and self-identity constructions in ways that aligned with culturally defined and expected norms through mindfulness and spiritual involvement in Tai Chi within a new environment. Therefore, Tai Chi created a lived and concrete connection to their specific homelands that they physically left behind. However, as the youngest practitioner who was born and raised in Canada in the study, participant C's understanding of cultural concepts of Tai Chi, such as yin-yang, primarily stemmed from his focus on the technical movements of Tai Chi rather than its broader and tangible connections to his ancestral homeland.

Nevertheless, the participants' mindfulness cultivations through Tai Chi exemplifies Amez's (2015) argument that Tai Chi exerts transformative forces at the individual level, promoting inner spiritual growth that is then reflected by practitioners outwardly into a broad social milieu. As the participants in this research engaged in long-term practice, there was a discernible shift towards inward spirituality and self-cultivation. This illustrates the potential of Tai Chi to improve diaspora's emotional stability and overall mental toughness, thereby helping them navigate the complexities of life and adapt to uncertainties in a new environment.

The study results also highlight the critical role of culturally physical activity, Tai Chi, in promoting the psychosocial well-being of immigrants, reflecting the major findings of Iwasaki et al.'s study (2009) on culturally meaningful leisure and immigrants. The study practitioners described their participation in Tai Chi to establish positive connections to and make friendships with others who shared similar interests in Tai Chi. For some senior participants facing adaptation challenges related to negative psychological symptoms, such as feelings of loneliness and isolation, Tai Chi provides opportunities for making interactions with the people of same ethnicity and enhancing their positive feelings and emotions, which demonstrates that culturally meaningful leisure can be an important means to bring psychological benefits for Chinese immigrants in facing acculturative stress (Walker et al., 2011; Zhou et al., 2018). Notably, the shared teacher-student relationship promoted harmonious interpersonal contacts and interactions, which significantly impacted the psychological well-being of the individuals involved. This relationship cultivated a feeling of self-worth for the teachers and appreciation from the students, resulting in favourable social exchanges and establishing a basis for forming intimate and solid relationships.

Moreover, diasporic leisure not only allows individuals within the diaspora to express themselves and their cultural heritage but also creates shared spaces that foster viable intercultural dialogues among different diasporic communities and within the host society (Burdsey, 2008). The shared pursuit of health, philosophy, and martial skills of Tai Chi fostered intergroup communication and cultural understanding of the participants. These social interactions, learning, and sharing go beyond the formal class setting to after-class casual communication and social gatherings. These Tai Chi-related opportunities were important in promoting their social interaction and integration into a multicultural community they had not

experienced in their homelands (Stack et al., 2009). Leisure activities can also contribute to understanding cultural differences during cross-cultural interactions, thereby amplifying cultural ties and in-group connections (Kim, 2012). Comparing their Tai Chi practice with other cultural individuals reinforced a sense of culturally collective identity among the participants, manifested by terms such as “them,” “foreigners,” and “Western people.” Yet, this observation of practice differences due to cultural roots strengthened their connections to their cultural heritage and may lead to group separations at a subtle level. For example, most participants preferred to practice Tai Chi with Chinese instructors as they understood Chinese instructors’ knowledge and experiences in Tai Chi, which also helped reducing Tai Chi-related communication barriers due to language.

The study supports the idea that diaspora leisure is an embodied and spatialized activity, whereby the relationship between migrants and the places they live, and play becomes co-constitutive: the space underpins their leisure activities, and their leisure pursuits facilitate an ontological engagement and embeddedness with the locations (Burdsey, 2016, 2017). The participants’ Tai Chi practice was significantly influenced by the available community resources, including the accessibility of open spaces, support from the local Tai Chi groups, and transportation to classes. Through daily practice, participants had actively developed embodied knowledge of the local space, which manifested themselves in physical and emotional ways. The outdoor space is a significant practicing setting for the participants. It not only helps them save on rental costs but also is aligned with their cultural health beliefs about the integrity of humans and nature. Traditionally, connecting with nature can be an integral part of Tai Chi training. Practicing Tai Chi outdoors can provide a sense of being recharged or nourished by the

natural environment and foster participants' emotional attachment and deep engagement with the places of residence (Stodolska et al., 2017; Wayne & Fuerst, 2013).

The study found that personal practice offers significant flexibility for the participants and becomes “out of place” practices through their engagements with related literature and online resources in the Chinese language. This flexibility enabled the participants to incorporate personalized elements not typically included in the class, such as listening to Chinese style music or playing Tai Chi weapons at home, thus enhancing their overall practice experience and enjoyment. Such divergent personal practices indicated that diasporic leisure practice can be a very individualized expression of their personal needs and understanding of cultural heritage (Mukherjee, 2021).

Undoubtedly, advancement in media and communication technology had greatly facilitated their transnational diasporic leisure practice by consuming Tai Chi resources from their homeland (Burdsey, 2016; Pasura, 2014, 2022). As McSweeney and Nakamura (2020) suggested that media can act as a vehicle through which diaspora are constructed. Chinese Tai Chi literature and Tai Chi videos have expanded their knowledge and understanding of Tai Chi theories in terms of the philosophical, historical, technical, and functional aspects of Tai Chi. This self-directed reading and watching practice further fueled their imagination and enriched their cultural ties to Tai Chi and cultural identities (e.g., the chivalric spirit in Chinese martial arts) (An & Fan, 2018).

Participants also illustrated the ongoing constraints in their practice. Weather challenges and time constraints on leisure participation are prominent themes in studies on Canadian Chinese immigrants and their leisure experiences (Brunette, 2017; Da & Garcia, 2015; Di, 2018; Xiong, 2006). The participants with prior Tai Chi experiences in China were sensitive to the

changed social environment. Those participants, who came from specific warmer areas in China where they used to practice Tai Chi in outdoor neighborhood parks year-round, highlighted the constraints related to the weather conditions. Therefore, from the perspective of practicing Tai Chi, they negatively viewed the cold winter climate in the place of settlement, as they had to adapt to indoor practice throughout the winter. In addition, the smaller scale of the Tai Chi community and the dispersed Tai Chi population meant fewer opportunities for their collective practice than their homeland. Consequently, they had experienced online class sessions to maintain group practices.

Furthermore, full-time employed participants were more likely than the retired participants to face time constraints resulting from work and family responsibilities that influenced the timing and frequency of Tai Chi participation. However, participants with a strong enthusiasm for Tai Chi, particularly its martial techniques, tended to take a more proactive approach to uphold frequent formal practices despite their limited availability. On the other hand, participants who engaged in Tai Chi primarily for leisure and health reasons were generally less concerned about occasional interruptions in their group practice due to other life commitments and priorities. Nevertheless, most participants' positive feelings toward Tai Chi are little affected by these external and internal constraints. They set reasonable expectations for Tai Chi and adapted their practice to the challenges they encountered. As argued by Ito et al. (2020), leisure participation is essentially shaped by and responds to the available resources and constraints within the environment.

In general, the findings suggest that participants acquired physical, psychological, cultural, and social benefits through Tai Chi in their new home, which is supported in the literature on Tai Chi (Hallisy, 2018; Kim et al., 2015; Lu, 2018). Therefore, it is arguable that the

Canadian multiculturalism discourse which recognizes the presence of Canadians from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and prescribes self-sufficiency of ethno-cultural traditions mainly within the private sphere not only acts as an inhibitor limiting immigrants' access to the host society's leisure activities but, more importantly, enables them to produce culturally meaningful leisure experiences and develop multiple senses of belonging and embeddedness across geographic and cultural boundaries in the diaspora (Caperchione et al., 2009; Giles & Golob, 2011; Ho, 2018).

Conclusion

This investigation explored guiding research questions on the meanings and motivations to practice Tai Chi and the modalities of practice among the Chinese-speaking practitioners in Ottawa, Canada. Drawing on seven participants' descriptions and reflections on their Chinese-inspired health practices, we demonstrated that Tai Chi was practiced holistically for four main reasons: physical health; mental health and mindfulness; martial techniques; social connections and well-being. The participants utilized a variety of resources within and outside the community to sustain and adapt their Tai Chi practices in different formats and settings to the social environment of the host society and their personal time availability.

Building on Burdsey's perspective of diaspora and leisure (2008, 2016, 2017), this study contributes to our understanding of Chinese immigrants' health beliefs and practices by examining how our study participants conceptualized Tai Chi as a holistic practice that improves their health, well-being, harmony, and equilibrium in Ottawa. Our study demonstrates the importance of a culturally meaningful and embodied activity like Tai Chi in maintaining cultural ties, facilitating positive social interactions, and developing multiple senses of belonging to the specific homelands they physically left with their new territory of residence. This study

highlights the significance of Tai Chi in immigrants' health and well-being during their adaptation and integration process and sheds light on diasporic leisure practices within Ottawa.

Study Limitations and Areas for Future Studies

This study was limited to a small sample size of seven respondents who met our research selection criteria of identifying as Chinese-speaking immigrants and has practiced Tai Chi in Ottawa for at least 6 months. Of the seven respondents, six are first-generation immigrants and one is second-generation immigrant. The scope of this study was also limited to those residing in the Ottawa area and available for a taped interview session between December 2023-March 2024. Moreover, the current study did not explore the impact of demographic factors such as citizenship, gender, and socioeconomic status on Tai Chi practice.

Future research could expand the sample size and include different geographic areas to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Tai Chi in various Asian diasporic communities. Lastly, as the Tai Chi community organizations play a key role in providing group practice opportunities and other learning resources, future studies are needed to explore the sustainability of Tai Chi community organizations in supporting Tai Chi practice and diasporic spaces.

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Chapter Four: Discussion

The aim of this research study was two-fold: 1) to examine how Chinese-speaking immigrants sustained the development of Tai Chi in Ottawa by exploring the origins of two Tai-Chi associations, the OTCA and TTCS; 2) to explore the personal experiences of seven Chinese-speaking Tai Chi practitioners within the Chinese immigrant diasporic population. In this discussion chapter, I will discuss overall research findings, conclusion, study limitations and provide recommendations for future research.

This study explored the development of two local Tai Chi associations in Ottawa – the Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association (OTCA) and Taoist Tai Chi Society (TTCS) and their role in creating diasporic spaces for Chinese-speaking immigrants to practice embodied leisure, express their culture and traditions through Tai Chi. The origins of OTCA and TTCS were closely tied to the growth of Chinese diasporic communities in specific regions in Canada after the Canadian government adopted a points-based immigration system, prioritizing skills and education over country of origin since 1967.

Beginning in the 1970s, immigrants from Hong Kong, mainland China, and Macau were primarily middle-class and highly educated, seeking to settle in urban towns and cities primarily in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. Among these diasporas, Tai Chi professionals and enthusiasts established Tai Chi associations such as OTCA and TTCS that served to facilitate and promote gathering space among residents to practice Tai Chi. Since the 1990s, the Chinese community in Canada has constantly undergone diversification regarding subcultures and demographic composition, and has particularly seen a great number of immigrants from mainland China, which propelled the development of the OTCA and TTCS. Concurrently, the proliferation of academic research on the health benefits of Tai Chi, the ease of global travel, and

advancements in communication and media technologies have undoubtedly catalyzed the growth of both associations. Over the 50 years, the OTCA and TTCS has played a significant role in bringing together local practitioners to learn, practice, and celebrate Tai Chi and other Chinese-inspired health traditions. These Tai Chi associations provided Chinese-speaking immigrants a space dedicated to (re)connecting with their cultural heritage and continue their lifelong learning in Tai Chi. Moreover, these Tai Chi associations fostered intercultural interactions between Chinese diasporic practitioners and those from other cultural backgrounds by organizing a series of modified, inclusive, and integrative Tai Chi activities.

Drawing upon Burdsey's (2008, 2016, 2017) theory of diasporic consciousness and leisure space, and Van Gorp and Smets' (2015) classification of diasporic organizations into "exclusive" and "mixed" types, the findings of this study indicated that the OTCA and TTCS differed significantly from each other in their historical roots, goals, approaches to Tai Chi practice, cultural activities, membership composition (especially board members), and sphere of community influence. These notable differences have led to the unique ways of maintaining their Tai Chi cultural boundaries and their roles in the creation of diasporic spaces and multifaceted cultural belongings among the Chinese diasporas.

The Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association (OTCA) was founded in the 1980s by immigrants from Hong Kong who were active in preserving language and culture in their new environments by establishing informal schools to teach language, heritage and arts, and leisure traditions in Ottawa. It is community-based and acts as a repository of Tai Chi resources, teachings, and practices they honed over time during their settlement in Hong Kong and later their re-settlement in Canada. The OTCA offered Tai Chi practices inspired from those officially and/or widely practiced in Asian countries, but adapted for practice in Canada due to climate, transportation,

municipal park policies and smaller class sizes. While the association attracts a few practitioners from a broader demographic who do not speak Chinese as a first or second language, the majority of its volunteers and students are immigrants from Hong Kong, China, Macau, and other Asian countries. Together, they created a shared cultural space for knowledge exchange, diasporic networking and Tai Chi practices among the Chinese diasporic members. Through the promotion of shared traditional health practices, such as Tai Chi, that parallel those in their homelands or across global Chinese diasporic communities, the OTCA brought together Chinese immigrants from diverse migratory backgrounds, thus constructing a horizontal transnational imagined community that represents a symbolic and a concrete bodily vision of “Chineseness.” It has played an important role in forming a united and harmonious pan-cultural identity among different Chinese diasporic subgroups that goes beyond political or ideological stances.

In parallel, the TTCS oversees local Taoist Tai Chi branches in over 20 countries, including Canada. This association is centred on the spiritual principles of “Tao” and health cultivation transmitted by its founder, Moy Lin-Shin, in Toronto. The TTCS attracts individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, irrespective of ethnicity, nationality, or religion. The founder’s expertise in Taoist practices, coupled with his successful adaptation of traditional Tai Chi to suit the priorities of therapeutic, meditative, and spiritual benefits in Western contexts, has drawn a complex mix of Chinese diasporic and non-Chinese practitioners. As Moy passed away, his multicultural senior followers had continued his teaching and spread elements of traditional Chinese culture, spirituality, and health practices in the western world which has significantly bridged the Eastern and Western culture (Amez, 2015). However, the multicultural board members and TTCS’s unique adaption of Tai Chi to fit Western health culture may have caused concerns within certain Chinese diasporic practitioners about cultural “othering,” and the dilution

and distortion of Tai Chi's traditions. This can partly explain its demographically primary multicultural Tai Chi audience and why it has less engagement with Chinese-speaking Tai Chi practitioners in Ottawa. In this veil, the TTCS can be perceived as what Van Gorp and Smets (2015) called, an "mix diasporic organization," that primarily aims at bridging diasporic culture and host society culture by creating a cross-cultural Taoist Tai Chi community. The multicultural environment that TTCS successfully created has shown that diasporic leisure practice, such as Tai Chi, is not fixed, localized, or owned by a specific cultural group. Instead, diasporic leisure activities can be shared, adapted, and reinterpreted across different cultural and geographic boundaries (Burdsey, 2008, 2016; McSweeney & Nakamura, 2020). Nevertheless, the differing targeted audiences and approaches to Tai Chi between the OTCA and TTCS suggested that cultural conflicts and tensions may arise among different groups of practitioners when adapting Tai Chi to fit a new society, particularly around debates on cultural authenticity, ownership, and identity.

Whether viewed through the ethnocultural lens of OTCA or the more Taoist-related spiritual and cultivation approach of TTCS, both associations contributed to the dissemination of Tai Chi and other traditional Chinese health practices within Ottawa's multicultural landscape in different ways. Diaspora is a collective process that involves a shared recognition and attachment to a (n imagined) community (Van Gorp & Smets, 2015). The OTCA and the TTCS have been instrumental in cultivating tangible communities of Tai Chi practice by organizing classes and events for their members and the broader society, thus facilitating the physical togetherness and social connections among the practitioners from the Chinese diasporic community, other diasporic communities, and the mainstream society.

Moreover, as they reinterpreted and adapted their Tai Chi practices in the host country, the two Tai Chi associations also provided a significantly symbolic cultural space as they forged the multidimensional aspects of identity constructions and imagination of the homeland culture (to Chinese diasporas) or Eastern exotic mind-body or Taoist practice (to non-Chinese members) in distinct ways.

Drawing upon seven semi-structured interviews with Chinese-speaking Tai Chi practitioners living in Ottawa, this study reveals that their motivations for practicing Tai Chi include the respect for traditional Chinese health and medicinal practices, philosophical beliefs, martial arts techniques, and for social interaction to varying degrees. Through their involvement in the local Tai Chi associations and participation in Tai Chi classes, they forged cultural and social connections in the diaspora based on their cultural heritage. More specifically, as an embodied practice, Tai Chi allowed the participants to improve their health and well-being by bodily engaging with the health beliefs rooted in TCM that emphasizes passivity, balance, harmony, and holistic care. Simultaneously, for the participants, Tai Chi is a culturally meaningful activity rooted in traditional Chinese philosophy, which strengthened their connections to traditional values and traditional cultural narrative through mindfulness practices in a new geographic space. While Tai Chi is mainly practiced for health benefits in modern life, it connected the participants with familiar connotations of Chinese martial arts, regardless of whether they focus on specific combat techniques, the more general aesthetic forms, or martial concepts.

Participants' understanding and motivations for practicing Tai Chi were not static but rather an ongoing process of self-cultivation and self-expression. It is important to emphasize that Tai Chi is commonly considered a lifelong learning process. Diaspora is also an

individualized process, influenced by a wide range of factors (Burdsey, 2016; McSweeney & Nakamura, 2020). Consequently, the meaning and significance of Tai Chi for participants was multifaceted and contextualized, which is not only shaped by (and shaped) their experiences with Tai Chi but also associated with their cultural backgrounds, migration histories, personal practical needs, and other factors. For example, participants who had been resettled in Canada for a longer period and were more engaged with the mainstream society tended to appreciate and resonate more deeply with the connection between the yin-yang philosophy of Tai Chi and the principles of multiculturalism.

This study advances the argument that diasporic leisure is an embodied practice in which physical, cognitive, and emotional interactions with places of resettlement are paramount in identity negotiation (Burdsey, 2016, 2017). As Mata-Codesal, Peperkamp, and Tiesler stated (2015), “through embodied leisure practice, diasporas are not only in the place where they happen to live, they also become of that place” (p. 2). For the participants, Tai Chi is not only a mind-body practice itself that originates from traditional Chinese philosophic ideas and TCM, but also helped them in establishing diasporic consciousness and emotions, multiple senses of attachment and embeddedness in the interaction with local social and geographic spaces in a bodily way.

The analysis of this study shows that the participants experienced positive social and cultural interactions through participating in collective Tai Chi practices, such as performing Tai Chi in the multicultural events. Those Tai Chi related social engagement reinforced their connections to the Chinese community and cultivated their ties to other diasporic communities and the mainstream society, thus facilitated their positive interpersonal relationships. Their socially Tai Chi practice also provided a source of cultural empowerment as they found self-

confidence and self-worth in performing and teaching Tai Chi in a multicultural setting, which further fostered their cultural resilience.

Moreover, Tai Chi practitioners engaged in meaningful exploration of their living environment in the diaspora through making use of local ready made Tai Chi community resources, establishing knowledge of their surroundings of place. The modalities of participants' practice were closely responsive to the local urban landscape (e.g., weather), and available community resources including the accessibility of open spaces, support from local Tai Chi associations and Chinese community, and transportation to classes. Their adaptive practices reflect the realities of how the environment and available resources shape their practice, and in turn, how their practices transform the significance of these spaces. In this veil, they were not only physically in Ottawa, but also of Ottawa. Meanwhile, their Tai Chi practice was also personally relevant. Participants' varying enthusiasm and commitment to Tai Chi influenced practice time they dedicated and their specific methods of practice.

Burdsey (2016) suggested that people in a diaspora exist in a subtle “in-between” status, as they navigate identities that neither solely align with ancestral cultural expectations nor fully fit to the mainstream society. Therefore, diasporic identities are fluid and multifaceted, often shaped by the interplay between time and space; they are embedded in the interaction between constructions of past and present, here and there (Burdsey, 2016; Van Gorp & Smets, 2015). For the Tai Chi practitioners in this study, this sense of “in-betweenness” was deeply felt while they participated in Tai Chi classes and performances with multicultural members in Ottawa, had less groups practices compared to those in China, accessed homeland-related resources such as Chinese books and videos, and chatted online with their Tai Chi friends in China.

The participants' practices were associated with a rich tapestry of memories, emotions, and reflections, blending past experiences with their present lives. These complicated emotions and thinking evoked by practicing Tai Chi significantly fostered a fluid and evolving diasporic consciousness, as practitioners navigated their multiple senses of belonging and embeddedness to their land of origin and their present lives in Ottawa. In this light, Tai Chi, as an embodied practice, offered a journey through which personal identity and collective heritage intersected across different temporal and spatial dimensions. Ultimately, Tai Chi emerged as a living tradition, imbued with symbols of belonging, adaptability, and cultural resilience within the venture of diaspora. It exemplifies the resilience and dedication of diasporic individuals to proactively build meaningful lives and make new "home" within a multicultural environment through a bodily engagement.

Conclusion

This thesis explored the development and practice of Tai Chi within the Chinese community in Ottawa by examining the role Chinese diasporas played in the creation of Tai Chi space and exploring the personal practice experience in Ottawa. This research argues that the OTCA and the TTCS were pivotal in creating a space for culturally meaningful leisure, health, and social connections among Chinese diasporic Tai Chi practitioners and those from other cultural backgrounds in Ottawa. Through the efforts of these associations, Tai Chi philosophic concepts coupled with beliefs in health, leisure and martial arts were reproduced and infused with new significance in promoting cultural heritage and social integration.

The findings from the individual practitioners revealed the primary motivation to practice Tai Chi included optimizing physical health, mental health, mindfulness, and social connections as well as learning martial arts techniques. As a culturally meaningful activity, the study

respondents revealed that Tai Chi practice positively impacted their personal health and well-being and provided an enjoyable means of cultural expression and social connections among others in the diaspora. Participants adapted to resources both within and outside the community, flexibly adapting their Tai Chi practice to the climate and environment of Ottawa, as well as the practical needs of their personal lives. For the participants, Tai Chi allowed them to maintain continuity with their cultural heritage and build meaningful connections to their past and present, all while contributing to their holistic well-being in a lifelong journey and in multicultural environment.

In summary, to the OTCA, TTCS, and the individual practitioners in this study, Tai Chi is not bound to a common homeland, mythic and historical past and accounts. Rather, it is a living tradition, one that pulses with both collective shared experiences and personal meaning in the midst of diaspora and multiculturalism. Through Tai Chi, the Chinese diasporans did not merely remember or replicate their cultural traditions; they reimagined, reinterpreted, and expanded the meanings of this art, weaving it into a fabric of the process of building a healthy and meaningful life, making a “home,” and creating the mind-body practice communities in Canada.

Thesis Contributions

To the best of my knowledge, this study represents the first qualitative study on the development and practice of Tai Chi in the Chinese diasporic community in Ottawa. From a historical perspective, this study sheds light on how diasporic and volunteer-based leisure organizations originated and evolved to the changing demographics and community needs, and took on diverse roles in creating inclusive leisure activities, fostering cultural continuity, social integration, and community belonging among groups of people over time. Thus, this research

reinforces the importance in providing targeted physical and financial resources, and logistical support for community organizations within their diasporas. It could also inform community leisure providers in their inclusive leisure program planning and evaluation to better address the unique needs and cultural practices of immigrant communities.

Second, by examining how the participants conceptualize Tai Chi as a practice that enhances their health and psychosocial well-being, cultural ties and social interactions, this research sheds light on the transnational leisure practices and traditional health values of the Chinese diaspora community in Ottawa. It also demonstrates the potential of Tai Chi as a holistic health practice that enacts cultural empowerment, intercultural exchange and mutual appreciation, social integration among diverse cultural groups who share a common health and cultural interest. As Tai Chi is practiced globally, this study adds to our understanding of the roots of its development in Canada's capital city.

This study contributes to the understanding of diaspora as a fruitful theoretical concept to study the meaningfulness of leisure for people who live in the countries outside of their (ancestral) homelands. The leisure experiences of migrants revolve around interactions with space and time, identity construction and self-expression, and the multifaceted nature of belonging. The concept of diaspora can offer a flexible and versatile framework through which researchers can explore how embodied leisure practice, community, and diasporic consciousness are intertwined and co-constructed. This study illustrates the applicability of diaspora within the sociology of leisure by examining Tai Chi as a vibrant form of cultural expression and a means of creating diasporic leisure and cultural spaces.

This study also expands Burdsey's concept of "diaspora imagination" to the specific geographic context of Ottawa. Unlike Burdsey's focus on a small British coastal town with a

limited number of Asian immigrants, this study examined the collective and individual Tai Chi practices within the Chinese diasporic community in a multicultural Canadian city through both historical and personal lenses. In doing so, this study demonstrates that the practice of Tai Chi is not simply a manifestation of cultural heritage but an active engagement in the creation of inclusive leisure communities in Ottawa, thus deepening the theoretical scope of diasporic imagination.

Limitations and Recommendations for the Future Research

Several limitations are noted in this master's research study. First, the data of this research is limited in sample size given the parameters of this MA thesis project. This study included seven semi-structured interviews and the historical descriptive study from two Tai Chi associations. Future qualitative research could expand the sample size to include interviews with more practitioners within a broader demographic and geographical area to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the development and practice of Tai Chi within Chinese diasporic communities. Notably, incorporating individuals with different migratory statuses, such as intergenerational immigrants, refugees, temporary migrants, and long-term residents, could further enrich the understanding of Tai Chi practice within the diasporic context. Given the size of the sample in this study, the discussion on potential cultural and ideological differences among Tai Chi practitioners from Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, and Macau within Chinese-speaking diasporas was limited.

Future directions for research could include in-depth intersectional analyses of the diasporic practitioners, including socioeconomic status, gender, age, and Tai Chi experience (e.g., Tai Chi styles). Future research with a larger and broader sample of Tai Chi practitioners would allow enhanced discussion on the sociocultural complexity and diversity within Chinese

diasporic communities. Future directions could also include ethnographic fieldwork of local Tai Chi groups and practitioners to observe practices, designated practice space, and interaction patterns between instructors and students to provide a deeper understanding of the practices of Tai Chi in specific settings.

Finally, while this study focused on the conventionally collective and individual practice of Tai Chi among Chinese-speaking practitioners within the framework of diasporic imagination, it could be worthwhile to explore emerging factors influencing the global development of Tai Chi such as global migration as well as media and digital platforms. It would be interesting to compare Tai Chi practices within diasporas throughout Canada and internationally. Also, advances in electronic communication and media facilitated the speed of transnational dissemination of Tai Chi knowledge and practices into more accessible formats. It is foreseeable that new media will increasingly influence the development and practice of Tai Chi, and the (re) establishment of diasporic spaces and identities across transnational boundaries, an insight shared among several respondents in this study.

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Appendix A: Ethics Certificate

06/12/2023

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

H-11-23-9630

Titre du projet / Project Title

Keep the Tradition Alive:
Contextualizing the Development
of Tai Chi in the Chinese
Diaspora in Ottawa, Canada
Thèse de maîtrise / Master's
thesis

Type de projet / Project Type

Statut du projet / Project Status

Approuvé / Approved

Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

06/12/2023

Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

05/12/2024

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Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

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06/12/2023

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Kim THOMPSON

Responsable d'éthique en recherche / Protocol Officer

Pour/For **Daniel LAGAREC** Président(e) du/ Chair of the **Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences de la santé et sciences / Health Sciences and Sciences Research Ethics Board**

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Appendix B: Archival Documents Acquired from the Ottawa Tai Chi Chuan Association

Calendar

1. OTCA 2018-19 Calendar, January 2019
2. OTCA 2017-18 Calendar, January 2018
3. OTCA 2016-17 Calendar, August 2016
4. OTCA 2015-16 Calendar, May 2015
5. OTCA 2014-15 Calendar, August 2014
6. OTCA 2013-14 Calendar, September 2013
7. OTCA 2012-13 Calendar, September 2012
8. OTCA 2011-12 Calendar, February 2012
9. OTCA 2010 Calendar, October 2010
10. OTCA 2009 Calendar, September 2009

Classes, Workshops, and Other Programs

11. Workshop – Holly, November 2023
12. Workshop – Yuan, November 2023
13. Taichi Coaches Development Program, January 2018
14. OTCA Master Teach Certificate - Q & A, January 2018
15. 渥太華太極拳學會教練證書 V7_with translation [OTCA Coaching Certificate V7_with translation], January 2018
16. OTCA Workshop, February 2016
17. Workshop - Qigong, September 2014
18. Workshop - Chen Taijiquan Silk Reeling, no date
19. Workshop - Hunyuan Ruler-bang, January 2014
20. Workshop, March 2014
21. 陳氏太極拳實用拳法 [Practical Method of Chen Style Taijiquan], September 2014
22. OTCA Taiji Brochure, June 2013
23. Workshop - TC Styles, January 2013
24. Workshop – Qigong, July 2012
25. OTCA Hunyuan Taijiquan Qigong Practical Method, July 2012
26. Workshop Evaluation, February 2012
27. 陳式太極拳講習會 [Chen Style Taichi Workshop], May 2011
28. 48 Step Class, January 2011
29. 24 Step Class, January 2011
30. Kee Hong Workout 2010 Class, October 2010
31. Workshop 太極拳體用 [Taijiquan Practical Application], no date

Articles and Personal Accounts

32. 渥太華太極拳學會 30 年 (30 Years of OTCA), May 2015
33. OTCA Grows with OCLS - Chinese Version, July 2013
34. OTCA Grows with OCLS, July 2013
35. 渥太華中文學校和我 [Ottawa Chinese Language School and Me], August 2013

- 36. OTCA 25 (rev. 1), no date
- 37. OTCA 回顧與展望 [OTCA Review and Outlook], no date

Correspondence

- 38. 袁老師 [Letter to Teacher Yuan], December 2017
- 39. 張老師 [Letter to Teacher Zhang], November 2011
- 40. 王老師 [Letter to Teacher Wang], June 2009

News, Reports, and Meetings

- 41. OTCA Brochure, 2017-18
- 42. OTCA Brochure, 2015
- 43. OTCA Brochure, May 2013
- 44. Chairman AGM Report, May 2013
- 45. OTCA News, July 2013
- 46. OTCA News, June 2013
- 47. OTCA News, May 2013
- 48. OTCA Executive Meeting, May 2013
- 49. 2013 Directory, May 2013
- 50. OTCA News, April 2013
- 51. OTCA News, December 2012
- 52. OTCA News, September 2012
- 53. OTCA Executive Meeting, September 2012
- 54. OTCA News Media, August 2012
- 55. OTCA News, August 2012
- 56. Chairman Report 2011-2012, July 2012
- 57. Dragon Boat Performance, July 2012
- 58. Minutes Dojang Meeting, July 2012
- 59. 2012 Directory, July 2012
- 60. OTCA Executive Meeting, June 2012
- 61. OTCA News, June 2012
- 62. OTCA May 12 Minutes, May 2012
- 63. OTCA News Media, February 2012
- 64. OTCA News, February 2012
- 65. OTCA News, January 2012
- 66. OTCA News, July 2011
- 67. 2011 OTCA Directory, June 2011
- 68. OTCA News, June 2011
- 69. OTCA News, May 2011
- 70. OTCA News, April 2011
- 71. OTCA News, March 2011
- 72. OTCA News, February 2011
- 73. OTCA News, January 2011
- 74. OTCA News, January 2011
- 75. OTCA News, July 2010

- 76. OTCA News, September 2009
- 77. OTCA 30 Years Executives, no date

Pictures

- 78. 25th Anniversary, November 2023
- 79. OTCA 2011 Pictures Compress, November 2023

Videos

- 80. 19850615 OTCA 成立大會 [OTCA Founding Ceremony], November 2023
- 81. 20050204 OTCA 20th Anniversary, November 2023
- 82. 20100721 OTCA 25th Anniversary Pictures, November 2023
- 83. 20150418 OTCA 30th Anniversary, November 2023

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Interview: Part A

Introductory Question

1. How long have you lived in Canada and Ottawa?
请问您在加拿大和渥太华生活了多久
2. Could you please tell me more about your migration history and cultural backgrounds?
您能否谈谈您的移民历史和文化背景？

Interview: Part B

Initial Tai Chi Experiences (If participants started Tai Chi before resettling in Ottawa)

1. How did you happen to start practicing Tai Chi? What influenced you to try it? Which style of Tai Chi and why that style?
您是如何开始练习太极拳的？是什么促使您尝试的？您练习的是哪种太极拳风格？为什么选择这种风格？
2. When did you start practicing Tai Chi? (Approximately how many years/months ago?) Where did you start practicing Tai Chi? Has the location of your practice affected your practice?
您是什么时候开始练习太极拳的？（大约是几年前/几个月前？）您是在哪里开始练习太极拳的？练习地点是否对您的练习产生了影响？
3. Do you practice in groups or follow a particular person? If yes, what group/person did you first start Tai Chi with? Have you always practiced Tai Chi with this group/person? If so, why? If other groups/people, which ones, why did you switch groups/learn from different people? What are the differences among the groups/people to you?
您是否加入了某个太极团体/个人练习太极呢？如果是，您最初是跟哪个团体/个人一起开始练太极拳的？您一直都是跟这个团体/个人练习的吗？如果是，为什么？如果跟其他团体/人练过，哪些团体/个人，为什么更换团体/个人呢？这些团体/个人对您来说有什么不同？

Interview: Part C

Tai Chi Experiences in Ottawa

1. In Canada, Leisure often refers to the amount of time people spend on socializing, sports and exercise, games and puzzles, reading, TV, music, radio and other recreational activities. How do you understand leisure? What does Tai Chi mean to you in your leisure time, can you please describe it?
在加拿大，休闲是指人们花在社交、运动和锻炼、游戏和谜题、阅读、电视、音乐、广播和其他娱乐活动上的时间。您如何理解休闲？太极拳在您的休闲时间中意味着什么，您能否描述一下？

2. How did you get in touch with or discover opportunities to practice Tai Chi in Ottawa?
Can you tell me about some initial Tai Chi experiences when you resided in Ottawa?
您是如何在渥太华接触到或发现练习太极拳的机会的？您能否谈谈您在渥太华居住时的一些初期太极拳经历？
3. What role do you feel Tai Chi plays in your daily life in Ottawa? And, has it changed over time?
您觉得太极拳在您在渥太华的日常生活中扮演了什么角色？这种角色变了吗？
4. Has practicing Tai Chi strengthened your connection with individuals of the same ethnic background in Ottawa? Are most of the people you practice Tai Chi with Chinese immigrants, or do you interact with some non-Chinese friends through Tai Chi in Ottawa?
练习太极拳是否加强了您与在渥太华的同族背景人士之间的联系？您练太极拳的伙伴大多数是华人移民吗，还是您通过太极拳与一些非华人朋友有互动
5. Do you believe that practicing Tai Chi hinders or promotes your integration into the mainstream society in Ottawa, and also into the Chinese community?
6. 您认为练习太极拳是阻碍还是促进了您融入渥太华主流社会，还有华人社区呢？
7. Has your way of practicing Tai Chi changed compared to how you did it back in your home country? If so, what are the changes? What do you think are the reasons for these changes?
与您在祖国的练习方式相比，您在渥太华的太极拳练习方式是否发生了变化？如果有，是什么变化？您认为这些变化的原因是什么？
8. Do you get any help and support in practicing Tai Chi in Ottawa from other people, your Tai Chi association, local community, etc.? And, have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in practicing Tai Chi?
在渥太华，您是否从其他人、您的太极拳协会、本地社区等获得了练习太极拳的帮助和支持？在练习太极拳过程中，您是否遇到过任何挑战或障碍？
9. How do you view the phenomenon of Tai Chi being practiced and developed within the Chinese community in Ottawa? And what factors do you think that have contributed to the practice and development of Tai Chi in Ottawa?
您如何看待太极拳在渥太华的华人社区内的练习和发展现象？您认为有哪些因素促成了太极拳在渥太华的练习和发展？
10. Do you observe some practice differences between Chinese and non-Chinese Canadian Tai Chi practitioners? Can you please describe it?
您是否观察到华人和非华裔加拿大太极拳练习者之间的差异？您能否描述一下？
11. Do you think that Tai Chi promotes intercultural communication and understanding between the Chinese community and other cultural groups in Ottawa, if so, how?

您认为太极拳是否促进了渥太华的华人社区与其他文化群体之间的多元文化交流和理解吗？如果是，在哪些方面？

Interview: Part D

Perceptions of Tai Chi and Chinese Culture

1. Do you think practicing Tai Chi has facilitated your understanding of Chinese culture?
How do you perceive the relationship between Tai Chi and Chinese culture?
您认为练习太极拳是否加深了您对中国文化的理解？您如何看待太极拳与中国文化的关系？
2. How do you perceive your cultural identity/identities, and do you believe that practicing Tai Chi influences your connection to those identity/identities and your sense of belonging in Canada and/or your ties to your homeland?
您如何看待您的文化身份/认同？您认为练习太极拳是否影响了您与这些身份/认同的联系，以及您在加拿大的归属感以及与您家乡的联系呢？
3. Apart from practicing Tai Chi, have you participated in any activities, customs, or traditions related to Tai Chi? If yes, could you provide examples? Did these activities promote your understanding and practice of Tai Chi and Chinese culture?
除了练习太极拳，您是否参与过与太极拳相关的任何活动、习俗或传统？如果有，能否举例说明？这些活动是否促进了您对太极拳和中国文化的理解和实践？

Interview: Part E

Conclusion

1. Is there anything we haven't talked about today that you would like to share?
您是否有今天我们还没有谈到但您想要分享的内容？