

Deskilling and Devaluation of Chinese Immigrant Women in Ottawa

Master's Research Paper Presented By:

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Abstract

Immigration stimulates Canada's economic development, cultural diversity and community growth (Basran & Zong, 1998; CIC, 2002a; Ng & Shan, 2010). Since 1987, the Chinese form the largest proportion of immigrants in Canada. Language deficiency, lack of education and gender bias make them vulnerable groups in Canadian society (Man, 2004). Some researchers (Iredale, 2001; Kilbride, 2007; Mojab, 2000; Ng & Shan, 2010; Preston, 2001) found that professional immigrant women encountered difficulties navigating the Canadian labour market and are in jobs for which they are overqualified. This research paper will use postcolonial feminist theory (Gandhi, 2011; Lewis & Mills, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Spivak, 1985; Minh-ha, 1989) and in-depth interviews to examine the working situation of Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The nature of immigration into Canada changed dramatically since the 1960s (Ng & Shan, 2010). After that, according to different labour market needs, Canada changed its immigration policy (Basran & Zong, 1998; Ng & Shan, 2010). According to Ng & Shan (2010), the number of Chinese immigrants has increased significantly after China signed the immigration agreement with Canada in 1995. Chinese immigrants became the largest immigration group that came to Canada since 1987 (Man, 2004).

Despite Canada's preference for skilled immigrants, "the problem of transferring educational equivalencies and work experience across international boundaries results in professional immigrants taking jobs for which they are overtrained, resulting in downward

occupational mobility relative to their occupations held before their immigrating to Canada” (Kazemipur, 2004, p. 14).

A study conducted in 2006 in Canada showed that there is a difference in the weekly wages of recent immigrants and their Canadian counterparts. These recent immigrants were in core working age (between 25 and 54) and have been in Canada 5 to 10 years. Their weekly wages were 20% less than their Canadian counterparts (Lewkowicz, 2008). To be particular in Toronto, recent immigrants earned 30% less than their Canadian counterparts (Toronto Training Board, 2009).

Many scholars (Basran & Zong, 1998; Drew, Murray & Zhao, 2000; Iredale, 2001; Ng & Shan, 2010; Tastsoglou & Jaya, 2011; Preston, 2001) have long been studying the issues and challenges of immigrant women. In particular, they examined the problems that working class and refugee women have faced while trying to find a job in Canada (Kilbride, 2007; Ng & Shan, 2010; Tastsoglou & Jaya, 2011; Preston, 2001).

Lack of proficiency in English was a barrier for a significant number of immigrant women (Han, 2012; Kilbride, 2007; Preston, 2001). Kilbride (2007) examined the challenges and opportunities for immigrant women learning English. Kilbride’s (2007) study cited several reasons that prevented women from gaining fluency in English: inconvenient class schedules and locations, financial issues, familial burdens, lack of available information about available services, teachers’ accent and mixed gender classes which went against their cultural norms. Reitz (2001) and Preston (2001) pointed out that lack of Canadian work experience is also a big challenge for new immigrants. “Other researchers have shown that immigrants, particularly immigrant women, including those

from China, are channeled into gendered and racialized sectors of the labor market” (Ng & Shan, 2010, p. 173).

Recently, more and more studies have focused on a specific segment of immigrant women, those who are highly educated and skilled professionals in their country (see Iredale, 2001; Preston, 2001). Compared with other less educated immigrants, they too encountered difficulties in finding a job equivalent to their qualifications (Man, 2004). Preston (2001) studied the employment difficulties experienced by well educated Chinese immigrant women in the Greater Toronto Area. She listed three major challenges: the employers did not value their credentials and the work experience they had in China; their English was not fluent enough to compete successfully in the labour market; and they had difficulties navigating their employment, language learning classes and domestic responsibilities (Preston, 2001).

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to contribute to our understanding of the working situation of Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa. Some of them are highly educated with education and credentials from China. In 2010, 52 per cent of populations in Ottawa were women (City of Ottawa, 2010b) and 22.3 per cent of Ottawa residents were immigrants (City of Ottawa, 2010a). Statistics from National Household Survey in 2011 showed Chinese immigrant women are the second largest immigration group in Ottawa and take up to 8.3 per cent in female immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2013). Therefore, the research objects, namely Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa, represent a large group in the society.

There are many scholars studying immigrant women’s issues and challenges in Canada, for example, their English deficiency (Guruge et al., 2009; Kilbride, 2007), the devaluation of

foreign credentials (Basran & Zong, 1998; Drew, Murray and Zhao, 2000; Man, 2004; Mojab, 2000; Shan, 2009), and their immigration and integration process (Biles, Burstein & Frideres, 2008; Biles & Winnemore, 2006; Da, 2008; Hum & Simpson, 2004; Tastsoglou & Jaya, 2011). However, there are not sufficient empirical studies examining the working situation of Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa using in-depth interviews particularly. The long and in-depth interview is a powerful and revealing data collection method for certain descriptive and analytic purposes (McCracken, 1988). Therefore, this study will remedy this deficiency and contribute to the scholarly literature by analyzing the difficulties Chinese immigrant women have encountered in the labour market in Ottawa using in-depth interviews.

There are several studies about Chinese immigrant women in Canada (Kilbride, 2007; Li, 2003; Reitz, 2001; Shan, 2009). Some studies have focused on Chinese immigrant women's issues in the Greater Toronto Area (Srigley, 2005; Preston, 2001). Informed by Preston's (2001) research about employment barriers experienced by Chinese immigrant women in the Greater Toronto Area, the research questions of this paper were developed. Existing research has found that the underutilization of newcomers has caused \$2-3 billion loss in Ottawa's economy (City of Ottawa, 2010a). Organizations that deal with Chinese immigrant issues in Ottawa include Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre, the Ministry of Citizenship and Education of Ontario and so on. By sharing personal stories about immigrant women navigating the Canadian labour market, the findings of this research could help other immigrant women by echoing their experiences, feel less frustrated when encountering difficulties and get some inspiration for future career opportunities.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions examined are as follows:

RQ1: What is the working situation of Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa?

RQ1a: How do they experience the employment process?

RQ1b: What challenges and barriers do they encounter when looking for employment?

In the next section, I will do a thorough literature review on immigrant women's issues and challenges in the integration process, as well as discuss postcolonial feminism theory.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research question is about the working situation of Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa. In the first part of the literature review, a clear definition of who an immigrant is and an analysis of Ontario's immigration strategy will give us a general idea about our immigration goals and immigrants' contribution to our society. Second, a broad background overview will help us know more about newcomers' living and working situation that has been studied by many scholars (Hanley & Shragge, 2009; Iredale, 2001; Man, 2004; Tang, 2008; Tastsoglou, 2011). The discussion about immigrant issues is mainly focused on the discussion of the integration of immigrants. I will focus on the social and economic integration aspects. Later I will discuss Chinese immigrants and Chinese immigrant women's issues in particular. Lastly, I will examine the theory that was used to guide the research.

2.1 Definition of Immigrant

The official and bureaucratic definition of immigrant refers to someone who has been admitted to Canada under various immigration categories but has not acquired Canadian citizenship (Han, 2012). It is a transitional period and this category of immigrants is called "Permanent Residents" (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, (OMCI) 2012a).

OMCI's (2012a) final report by Ontario's expert roundtable on immigration clearly defines permanent residents as "someone who has acquired permanent resident status by immigrating to Canada but is not yet a Canadian citizen. Permanent residents have rights and privileges in Canada even though they remain citizens of their home country" (p. 48).

"Opportunities Ontario: Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)" (OMCI, 2012a) mainly targets "international students who have recently graduated from an Ontario university with a Master's or PhD degree" (p. 48) or people who get job offers. International students and foreign workers get the opportunity to stay permanently in Ontario; employers and investors can retain the highly skilled workers. There are 1,300 nominations for Provincial Nominee Program capped by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in 2013 (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, (OMCI) 2012b).

On February 6th, 2014, Canada's Citizenship and Immigration Minister Chris Alexander unveiled the first comprehensive reforms to the Citizenship Act since 1977. The new act is called Bill C-24—the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act. After a period of continuous residence in Canada, immigrants can apply to become citizens. The residency requirement for the applicants in the old Citizenship Act is three years of continuous residence in a four-year period (Government of Canada, 2014a). In the new Act, the residency requirement is four years of continuous residence in a six-year period (Government of Canada, 2014b).

On the other hand in scholarly work, the term immigrant is used to refer to a large extent, racialized minorities in Canada (Bolaria & Hier, 2007; Galabuzi, 2006; Jamil, 2013; Li & Bolaria, 1983). In the history of Canada, discriminatory policies and racialized practices had existed for a long time (Galabuzi, 2006). Before the 20th century, the passing of Indian Act of

1876 made Aboriginal peoples “under the legislative and administrative control of the state” (Galabuzi, 2006, p. 34). Back in the first half of 20th century, to stop the flow of immigrants from China to Canada, the government imposed a “Head Tax” upon Chinese newcomers till 1949. The Head Tax was up to \$500 in 1903. The Head Tax was legal at that time but was admitted as race-based in the 21st century (Government of Canada, 2006).

Canada, a multicultural country, has three population groups: the national majority of white (Anglophone Canadians), the national minority of white (Francophone Quebecers) and racialized minorities including immigrants (Winter, 2011). These three groups are not equal and racialized immigrants were constrained by the power mediated through language and race (Jamil, 2013). In Li’s (2003) article, he mentioned the folk version of immigrants. Canada was first settled mainly by Europeans, so immigrants from Asian, African and other non-European countries are often viewed as outsiders by mainstream Canadians. The folk version of immigrants refers to foreign looking or non-white newcomers with different racial and cultural backgrounds (Li, 2003).

In this paper, I used the official definition of immigrants, namely people who have obtained permanent resident status and are not Canadian citizens.

In the next section, I will talk about Ontario’s immigration strategy and its targets.

2.2 Ontario’s Immigration Strategy

“A New Direction: Ontario’s Immigration Strategy” is a government document published by Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration on November 5, 2012. At the beginning of this document, the objectives of immigration in Ontario are clearly stated: “Attracting a skilled workforce and building a stronger economy; Helping newcomers and their families

achieve success; Leveraging the global connections of our diverse communities” (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, (OMCI) 2012b, p. 1). Ontario is the top destination for immigrants in Canada. Its economy is also the largest in Canada. In 2013, the proportion of economic immigrants was 52%. OMCI (2012b) hopes the number can be up to 70% by the end of 2014. As I mentioned above, the nominations capped for Provincial Nominee Program are 1,300 in 2013. OMCI (2012b) is also looking forward to increase the number to 5,000 in 2014.

Of the 14 targets of Ontario’s Immigration Strategy, 5 of them are pertinent to this study.

These 5 targets are (OMCI, 2012b, p.5):

- *Achieve employment rates and income levels for immigrants that are in line with those of other Ontarians;*
- *Maximize the potential and use of temporary foreign workers and international students;*
- *Increase employment rates of immigrants in fields that match their experience;*
- *Work toward a decrease in the unemployment rate of recent immigrants so that it is in line with that of other Ontarians;*
- *Increase the number of immigrants licensed in their professions.*

2.3 Background

The new Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) was implemented on June 28, 2002 and it replaced the Immigration Act of 1976 (Man, 2004). Citizenship and

Immigration Canada's primary goal is to ensure that immigration can bring the greatest economic and social benefits for Canada (CIC, 2002a).

Over the past 40 years, Canada received approximately 200,000 immigrants on average each year (Government of Canada, 2013). Many of them came with high levels of education and qualifications; but the jobs they got in Canada were not commensurate with their skills and experience (Hanley & Shragge, 2009). Systemic Racism, including non-recognition and devaluation of foreign credentials and working experiences, was one important factor that leads to employment discrepancies; waste of talents of new immigrants directly caused shortages in skilled workers and professionals (Tastsoglou, 2011).

The government was forced to take measures to attract more skilled workers and take advantage of immigrants' experiences to contribute to Canada's economic, cultural and social growth (Tang, 2008). According to Man (2004), in order to achieve competitive advantage in an era of economic globalization, the new immigration Act maintains the system by which immigrants are chosen for their skills, but with higher standards; immigrants' age, education, work experience, knowledge of official languages, adaptability and arranged employment in Canada are all part of the assessment.

Researchers (Iredale, 2001; Mojab, 2000; Raghuram's, 2000) have varied definitions about "skilled workers". For the word "skill" we can find a proper description as "mediated by the unequal distribution of power along the lines of gender, class, race, language, ethnicity, national origin and the state of the economy" (Mojab, 2000, p. 33). Iredale (2001, p. 8) thinks "highly skilled workers are normally defined as having a university degree or extensive/equivalent experience in a given field". Raghuram's (2000) definition of skilled

workers is those with “tertiary education” (p. 430), often a university degree and skills that are valued in the job market. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2002a) has a more practical definition. The new immigration regulations emphasize proficiency in the two official languages (English or French), education and work experience. Applicants have to have at least one year of experience working in an occupation in specified skill categories described in the National Occupational Classification developed by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). They also need to score a minimum of 75 out of 100 points to qualify. In this paper, I define “skilled worker” as discussed by Iredale (2001) and Raghuram (2000), which means someone either with a university degree or skills that are valued in the job market.

Since immigration policy changed, the demographic composition of immigrants also changed dramatically (Statistics Canada, 2014). Based on the statistics of Statistics Canada (2014, Table 282-0108), from 2006 to 2013, the population of “landed immigrants”¹ from Asia has risen by 34%; the population from Europe has dropped by 3%; the population from North America and Latin America has risen by 18%. In 2000, economic immigrants constituted 58% of all immigrants coming to Canada, which also included business immigrants as skilled workers (Man, 2004). 22.3% of Ottawa residents are immigrants and the immigrant population growth rate in Ottawa is twice that of the city’s general population (14.1% vs 7.1%) (City of Ottawa, 2010a).

¹ “A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities” (Statistics Canada, 2014).

The increasing mobility of skilled workers is one representation of the internationalization of professions or professional labour markets. However these highly skilled professionals are not hired permanently. Companies usually hire them temporarily to meet their skills shortages until their own skilled workers are trained (Iredale, 2001).

2.4 Social and Economic Integration of Immigrants in Canada

The discussion about immigrant issues is mainly focused on the discussion of the integration of immigrants (Biles, Burstein & Frideres, 2008). It is important for immigrants to successfully integrate into a host society. For immigrants, successful integration is good for their psychological well-being; for the host society, fully utilizing skilled immigrants promotes economic development and helps the country to compete in the global economy (Tang, 2008).

Integration can be defined as a process by which the immigrant group participates actively in the host society and maintains a distinct ethnic identity (Walters, Phythian, & Anisef, 2006). There are many dimensions in immigrants' integration: political, ethnic identity, social, economic, behavioural conformity and employment (Hum & Simpson, 2004). Barriers to integration come from several intersecting factors: class, gender, race and age (Harvey, 1990).

2.4.1 Social Integration

Social integration is an important aspect because it encompasses dimensions such as the labour market, education, housing and citizenship (Biles et al., 2008). Many scholars talked about Canada's two-way street model when referring to integration (see Biles et al., 2008; Biles & Winnemore, 2006; Tastsoglou & Preston, 2006). Two-way integration involves rights, responsibilities, accommodation and adjustments on the part of both new comers and

the host society (Biles & Winnemore, 2006). The society will help new immigrants find a place to live, find a job, protect their civil rights and liberties, give them more opportunities to participate in the social activities and so on; new comers could contribute to the communities without abandoning ethnic identities and cultural heritage (Biles et al., 2008; Tastsoglou & Jaya, 2011).

The Government of Canada developed many programs to facilitate the settlement and integration process of immigrants, including the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), and the Host program (Biles & Winnemore, 2006).

Neighbourhoods and networks are usually where social integration happens and associational networks within neighbourhoods could develop further social capital for members of the community when they affect and interact with the society and country (Jentsch, 2007). The cultural boundaries of Canada had expanded during the past quarter century of immigration and immigrants could choose which ethnic community they would like to integrate with (Biles et al., 2008)

Some Chinese immigrants are willing to abandon their cultures and conventions for a better life in Canada; some of them find that the fit in process is difficult and need more time; while some immigrants think the fit in process could make them know more about the host society and have similar experiences as those of their neighbours in the same community. A study conducted by Walters et al. (2006) shows that compared with South Asian immigrants, Black immigrants and other visible minorities, Chinese immigrants were the most likely to adopt the ethnic identity of the host society.

2.4.2 Economic Integration

Economic integration is also very important for immigrants because it can assess their economic performance in the host society, including their participation in the labour market (Sweetman & Warman, 2008). Entrepreneurial activity, investment activity, labour market performance, and ownership of capital are major indicators to evaluate their economic integration; to be specific in the labour market the indicators include working hours, earnings, wage rate, employment rate, occupational status, tax contributions and so on (Hum & Simpson, 2004; Li, 2000)

Many reasons could impact the economic integration process of immigrants, such as education, qualifications, working experience, gender, racial origin, immigration status, family issue, and visible minority status (Li, 2000; Tastsoglou & Preston, 2006). Tastsoglou and Preston (2006) discussed the labour market integration process from feminist and anti-racism perspectives, and theorized integration as “racialized gender parity” (p. 2). They discovered that higher education does not always increase immigrant women’s labour market participation, and does not reduce the chances of unemployment. Statistics showed that immigrant women were less likely to participate in the labour market, had a higher unemployment rate, and earned less than the Canadian-born women and immigrant men (Tastsoglou & Preston, 2006).

Table 1²:

Economic Integration of Immigrant Women, 2001				
	Women		Men	
	Immigrant	Canadian-Born	Immigrant	Canadian-Born
Labour force participation (%)	75.01	82.4	89.8	92.4
Unemployment rate	8.9	6.1	6.9	6.6
Manual Workers (%)	11.7	5.9	13.6	15.3
Average full-time employment income (\$)	33,613	35,372	45,231	48,063

Next I will discuss the statistics about Chinese immigrants in general and then focus on Chinese immigrant women's issues and challenges.

2.5 Chinese Immigrants

Based on the Census conducted in 2006, Chinese form the largest portion of immigrants in Canada from 1991 to 2006, which is also stated in Man's article (see Man, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2009). Before 1991, immigrants from China comprised only 3.9% of the whole immigration population; the number rose every year and reached up to nearly 14.0% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2009).

To be specific in Ottawa, the whole population increased by 7.9% since 2001; the number is higher than Ontario's growth rate (6.2%) and Canada's rate (4.8%) (City of Ottawa, 2014). The population of Ottawa is still growing and immigration is a major reason that Ottawa's population is growing faster than that of Ontario and Canada (City of Ottawa, 2014).

² Source: Statistics Canada, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d; Retrieved from Tastsoglou & Preston, 2006, p. 12, Table 1.

Immigrants to Canada tend to settle in big cities like Vancouver or Toronto and these two cities are receiving the most immigrants among the nation's big cities (City of Ottawa, 2014; Han, 2012). Between 1996 and 2001, Ottawa had the third highest immigrant population growth rate (14.7%), tied with Toronto and following Vancouver (16.5%) and Calgary (15.5%) (City of Ottawa, 2014).

Table 2³:

National Household Survey, Ottawa, CV, Ontario, 2011			
Immigrant status and selected places of birth	Total	Male	Female
Total population in private households by immigrant status and selected places of birth	867,085	421,310	445,780
Immigrants	202,610	94,710	107,895
United Kingdom	17,780	8,730	9,055
China ⁴	16,125	7,145	8,980

From the table above we can tell that immigrants from China form 8 per cent of the whole population of immigrants in Ottawa, which is the second largest immigrant group following the United Kingdom (approximately 8.8 per cent). The percentage of Chinese immigrant women among female immigrants in Ottawa is up to 8.3 per cent, which is almost the same as that of the United Kingdom (8.4 per cent).

³ Source: Statistics Canada. 2013. Ottawa, CV, Ontario (Code 3506008) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa. Released September 11, 2013. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed January 5, 2015).

⁴ China excludes Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Macao Special Administrative Region.

Talking about the Chinese community in Ottawa, Ottawa has the smallest Chinese community among Canada's five largest centers, but the community's growing rate was fastest (65%) between 1996 and 2001 (City of Ottawa, 2014).

According to Conference Board of Canada (2004), "Underutilizing the skills of internationally-trained individuals is estimated to cost Canada between \$3.4 – 5B per year in lost productivity" (as cited in OMCI, 2012b, p. 5). How typical is that in the Canadian immigrant population, especially in the case of Chinese women immigrants? Are valuable immigrant skills, which are in great demand all over the world, being wasted in Canada? All these questions should be considered by the policy-makers to attract more ideal immigrants.

2.6 Chinese Immigrant Women's Issues

2.6.1 Employment Disadvantages

In Preston's (2001) study, many well educated Chinese immigrant women who immigrated from Hong Kong and China experienced rapid downward mobility in the labour market in Canada; a lack of Canadian work experience and unfamiliarity with the Canadian labour market has made their credentials and work experience in Hong Kong and China less valued by the Canadian employees. With regards to deskilling and devaluation, native-workers may also face the same situation as immigrant workers. The question is to what extent are the immigrants more vulnerable than the native-born?

From 1980 to 2000, employment rate and wage discrepancies between recent immigrants and the Canadian-born became so different (Tastsoglou, 2011). According to the statistics from Statistics Canada (2010, as cited in OMCI, 2012b), "Among those employed in 2006, 62 per cent of the Canadian-born were working in the regulated profession for which they trained compared to only 24 per cent of foreign-educated immigrants" (p. 10). To be specific

in Ottawa, immigrant women's unemployment rate is 6 times higher than Canadian-born women, and 2.5 times higher than immigrant men (City of Ottawa, 2010a). This clearly shows immigrant women are less likely to work in the professional fields for which they are trained as compared to their Canadian born counterparts or immigrant men.

Chinese immigrant women may experience non-recognition of foreign professional experience or credentials either by Canadian licensing bodies for professions and trades or by employers (Reitz, 2001). Actually the foreign professional or trade standards are equal to Canadian standards. The first situation, which is non-recognition by Canadian licensing bodies, happens when people who used to work in a specific area in their countries face difficulties in getting a parallel license to work in Canada. For example, Chinese immigrant women who used to work as engineers, nurses or physicians have been denied licenses to work in their fields in Canada. In the second situation, immigrant women are rejected by the employers who question the quality of their foreign backgrounds. Although their foreign credentials have been recognized by the Canadian licensing body and a license has been issued, the new employers think their foreign background is not sufficient for the job position.

Immigrants with foreign experience, which is relevant to the Canadian workplace, are usually underutilized. Employers will ignore the applicants' credentials and working experiences and channel them into entry level positions (Salaff & Arent, 2006). Some employers are aware that the applicants could be qualified for the job; they just want to hire them with less salary (Basran and Zong, 1998). When talking about working experience, the employers usually demanded for "Canadian experience" (Reitz, 2001, p. 352).

Compared with the general population of Canada, the Chinese immigrant women who came to Canada between 1980 and 2000 had a much lower income (Wang & Lo, 2004). The table below shows the average income of Chinese immigrants, and as a percentage of income of the Canadian general population in 1999.

Table 3⁵:

Average Income of Chinese Immigrants and as Percentage of Income of the Canadian General Population (\$)				
By sex	Total income		Employment income	
	Chinese	% of general population	Chinese	% of general population
Male	17,922	47	25,518	77
Female	12,046	52	18,334	87
By sex	Self-employment income		Investment income	
	Chinese	% of general population	Chinese	% of general population
Male	8,267	78	4,269	178
Female	6,406	98	3,920	153

The average total income for Chinese immigrant women was a little bit more than \$12,000, which was only 52% of that for the general population. The employment income was 13% less than the general population. The self-employment income was almost the same as that of the general population. The only income that was higher than the average was the

⁵ Source: Statistics Canada 2002; Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, 2001; Retrieved from Wang & Lo, 2004, p. 23, Table 5.

investment income. However, the investment income was less than \$4,000, which made it the smallest income compared to the other income categories.

Communicate skills and interpersonal relationships in the workplace are also challenges for many Chinese immigrant women. Due to language barriers, immigrants may be experts in their jobs but have poor communication skills and not therefore be able to maintain interpersonal relationships with other colleagues (Reitz, 2001). Being kind of “isolated” in the workplace will impact their chance of promotion to be in the management position or to be a leader.

2.6.2 Domestic Responsibilities

The study conducted by City of Ottawa (2014) which examines the basic situation of women in Ottawa shows that, while gender roles are changing over the past few decades, and men are taking more responsibility at home and women are entering the labour market in droves, women are still taking the primary responsibility in caring for the home and families, doing housework and supporting children and the elderly. In China, housewives could ask relatives or paid baby-sitters to help with child care and housework; in Canada, immigrant women are often solely responsible for housework because they are far away from their relatives and they could not afford the expensive domestic help (Preston, 2001).

For those Chinese immigrant women who stay at home and act as family caregivers, they could not meet the families’ needs if they remain linguistically isolated from the Canadian society (Kilbride, 2007). Education issues for the youth, health care issues for the elderly and other family issues exist. For those who work outside, Preston (2001) finds that most of them are working because of financial necessity and the need to earn a living. They feel impelled to find a job and are struggling in the workplace with many deficiencies; while women with

greater affluence were able to withdraw from the labour market and continue their studies for a better career option.

Staying at home most of the time and taking care of families alone make Chinese immigrant women feel increased isolation (City of Ottawa, 2010a). As a result, many Chinese immigrant women seek spiritual comfort and social support through religious participation (Da, 2008). There are 11 Chinese language based churches in Ottawa⁶, for example Ottawa Chinese Alliance Church, Chinese Christian Church of Ottawa and Emmanuel Alliance Church of Ottawa. Chinese immigrant women usually find help and advice when they encountered difficulties in life and they were more easily able to navigate challenges in society by participating in church activities (Da, 2008).

One of the participants in Kilbride's (2007) study also pointed out that her families will not be happy if she goes to take an English class instead of doing housework at home; besides her family will not support her in speaking English at home and she will be criticized if she did so.

2.6.3 Language Barriers

Although more than 90% of immigrants come to Canada with official language (ie. English and French) abilities, language barriers are still one of the biggest challenges; besides, women are less likely to have opportunities to improve their language abilities when they do not work outside as men to have more exposure to English or French language use (City of Ottawa, 2010a).

⁶ The list of Ottawa Chinese Church is available at <http://belllist.com/chinese/ottawa/otChurch.html>.

Many Chinese immigrant women do not have enough proficiency in English due to the conflict between finding time for learning English and their role of family caregivers. Others think they do not have enough information about available services and language training classes or they drop out of the classes due to the cost, inconvenient class schedules or locations, teachers' accent and so on (Kilbride, 2007). Some women prefer to have classes in the daytime while their children are in school; while some women would rather use their weekends to learn English. Some have transportation challenges and hope to attend classes within walking distance of their homes or during school hours in the schools their children are attending.

The Government of Canada provides a free language training program in English and French for new immigrants called The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). Many Chinese immigrant women did not know about this program when they arrived in Canada; once they got to know about this, they were no longer eligible to take it for free and needed to pay (Guruge, S. et al., 2009).

The table below provides the number of all Chinese immigrant women who arrived in Ottawa-Gatineau Area before 2006, their proficiency in either English or French, or both languages or neither.

Table 4⁷:

Ottawa-Gatineau Area							
Native language group	Immigrant status and period of immigration	Knowledge of official languages					
		Total	English only	French only	English and French	Neither English nor French	Neither - %
Mandarin	Total	2,780	2,085	20	250	425	15%
	Before 1991	225	180	0	20	30	13%
	1991 to 2000	1,075	910	0	85	80	7%
	2001 to 2006	845	625	15	20	185	22%
Cantonese	Total	2,905	2,000	10	425	475	16%
	Before 1991	1,205	855	0	100	245	20%
	1991 to 2000	735	540	0	45	150	20%
	2001 to 2006	165	105	0	20	40	24%

From Table 2 we can find, 15% of Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrant women and 16% of Cantonese-speaking Chinese immigrant women came to Ottawa without official languages abilities before 2006. Between 2001 and 2006, the percentage was up to 22% and 24%.

2.6.4 Gender Bias

Raghuram (2000) noticed that “the nature and extent of migration of skilled women is closely related to the migration of skilled men” (p. 438); however the presence of women in skilled migration is often ignored or presented as gender-neutral in the theorizations of skilled

⁷ Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-557-XCB2006021.

international migration. Despite their training and educational background, many Chinese immigrant women came to Canada either as dependents or as sponsored family members of their husbands, who applied as principal applicants under the economic class category (Ng, 1993). It is better for the most eligible member of the family to apply as the principal applicant and other family members to apply as the dependent or as a sponsored applicant (Man, 2004). In this case, Chinese immigrant women usually come to Canada without meeting the language proficiency criterion used for principal applicants (Kilbride, 2007). The gender differentiation in immigration status, rendering one spouse (typically the wife) legally dependent on the other, structures and points to the gender inequality in the family and society (Ng, 1993).

In the next section, I will discuss the theories that I have used.

2.7 Postcolonial Feminist Theory

In the 19th century, due to the expansion of the European empires, 90% of the world was conquered by Europe and its power; this is when the division between west and non-west people became clear (Young, 2003). Looking back to the European colonizing cultures, we can also find where the phrase “the Third World”, originated as “worlding” (Spivak, 1985, p. 306), came from (Spivak, 1985).

During the colonial period, many Western women used their campaign skills to fight for the legal rights for the oppressed colonized women, such as women from India, Africa and other Third World areas (Burton, 1992); Third World refers to “distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact literary heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized” (Spivak, 1985, p. 243). The campaigns were questioned by many Western feminist

postcolonial theorists because the experience of Third World women from diverse countries cannot be generalized; so for the Western women, can they really represent and speak for the colonized women and to what extent had the oppressed women's lives been changed (Burton, 1992; Lewis & Mills, 2003)?

The term sisterhood is used to build an inclusive feminism (Shital V. & Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, 2012). In the early days of second wave feminism, feminist theory and practice was assumed to create women's common identity as "women" and fulfill a global sisterhood (Ang, 1995). White and middle-class women were portrayed as the representatives of the word "women". The feminists assumed that the concerns of white women were the concerns of all other women, and this made Black and Third World women all silenced in the early Anglo-American feminist theory (Lewis & Mills, 2003).

However, Spivak (1988) concluded in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" that the subordinate and colonized people were not represented by the early feminists because feminists thought these oppressed groups are not representative. Colonial people were always portrayed as feminine, inferior, unable to look after themselves, and need the paternal rules of the west for their best interests; while the western culture was treated as civilization (Young, 2003). Spivak (1988) also rejected that white and middle-class women's concerns could be generalized to all other women.

Later, feminists realized even western women were not sharing the same interests and the same experience of being a woman, not to mention other women who were affected by race, class, nationality, ethnicity, and so on (Ang, 1995). The experiences of women, who were born and raised in former colonies of Western imperial powers and those of women from

Western countries, are different (Lewis & Mills, 2003; Shital V. & Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, 2012). Feminist theorist Mrinalini Sinha (1995) also argued the behavior of male British imperialists cannot stand for the behavior of other men. Therefore sociologists decided to use gender to talk about femininity and masculinity, and gender was widely accepted because it was less biologically determined compared to sex (Brah, 1997).

Postcolonial feminist criticisms challenges women's stereotype portrayed both in colonial and postcolonial literature and society (Lewis & Mills, 2003; Young, 2003). "Since the 1980s, differences between women, particularly differences of race, ethnicity and sexual orientation, have been at the forefront of feminist theory and practice" (Malpas, as cited in Shital V. & Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, 2012, p. 285). Modern postcolonial feminist theorists focus on the works of Third World women and provide insights into the lives of women who did not have a voice in the past and are struggling to have one at present (Ang, 1995; Gandhi, 2011; Lewis & Mills, 2003; Schwandt, 2001; Wilkinson, 2011). Modern postcolonial feminists also adopt an interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary perspective. For example in the academic field, postcolonial feminists think the work of Third World women are undervalued; the Western academia often question the imagination and subjectivity of these work (Shital V. & Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, 2012)

Ang (1995) thought that trying to construct a voice for self-presentation in the context inhabited by Western feminism will definitely pose difficulties. Besides focusing exclusively on the Third World women, Spivak (2006) argued it is also important for the First World women to stop feeling privileged as women.

Women of different cultures, ethnicities, classes and regions cannot comprise a generic group and by using the term “gender” we cannot talk about women as a coherent group (Lewis & Mills, 2003); Anderson (1983) came up with the concept of an “imagined community” and suggested we could get away from the traditional postcolonial feminist struggles and fulfill collaborations across different boundaries. It is a political rather than cultural or biological collaboration to achieve the potential opportunity for sisterhood.

Postcolonial feminist theory has been used to explore the different interests and experiences of Third World women in western society (Ang, 1995; Gandhi, 2011; Lewis & Mills, 2003; Schwandt, 2001; Shital V. & Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, 2012; Spivak, 1988; Wilkinson, 2011). This study tries to build a connection between postcolonial feminist theory and the working situation of Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa. Guided by the theoretical framework of postcolonial feminist theory, aspects of postcolonial feminist theory that have been explored in this study include problematizing and arguing that women living in non-western countries or women from Third World countries who are now living in western countries are misrepresented; arguing that the term “woman” cannot be defined only by gender, but should also include dimensions such as social class, race, nationality and ethnicity; allowing Chinese immigrant women to articulate their experiences and express their feelings; exploring interests and experiences that may not be the same among diverse women; and promoting a wider viewpoint of oppression that exists within society.

The next chapter is about the research design and methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Research Method

I used a qualitative approach to guide my study. “The intent of qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group, or interaction” (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987, as cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 205). Qualitative research is an investigative process. By comparing, contrasting, cataloguing, replicating and classifying the object of study, researchers try to make sense of a social phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Generally speaking, qualitative research uses many humanistic and interactive methods (Creswell, 2003). I used in-depth interview as my data collection tool and I was fully engaged in the interview process: preparing questions and asking questions. According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research always happens in natural settings, workplace or home, where the participants’ daily behavior occurs. The data in qualitative research consists of descriptive words rather than numbers. They may appear as participants’ words or pictures (Creswell, 2003).

3.2 In-Depth Interview

Interviews have many forms in qualitative research. For instance, conversations, focus group interactions, structured interview settings, sharing of information through storytelling (McCracken, 1988). For data collection, I used long and in-depth interviews.

Long and in-depth interviews are a more open-ended and unstructured way to collect data (Thurlow, Mills & Helms Mills, 2006). “The long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory. For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing” (McCracken, 1988, p. 9). Hennink, Bailey & Hutter

(2011) defined in-depth interview as a data collection process, during which an interviewer and an interviewee discuss specific topics in depth.

The interview format is semi-structured. The interviewee is sharing his/her stories and the interviewer is asking questions and engaging in the dialogue. However they need to react to each other's identity, appearance and personality, which will influence how the issues are discussed in the interview (Hennink, Bailey & Hutter, 2011). One of the advantages of the in-depth interview is that there is time for the participants to answer questions and give further explanation without being interrupted or disturbed by other respondents.

McCracken (1988) suggests the interviewer should be neutral, accepting, curious and benign. Even the body language of the interviewer may have an influence on the interviewee. "Interviewers should appear slightly dim and too agreeable rather than risk upsetting the atmosphere of safety for the respondent" (McCracken, 1988, p. 38, as cited in Pringle, Konrad, & Prasad, 2006, p. 226).

3.3 Interview Questions

To conduct a good interview, we need to prepare clear and well-conceived questions. Kirby and McKenna (1989, p. 142) describes in their research:

"the basis of all interviews is the question...You must transform your research focus from one research question into many specific questions that will help you, the interviewer, stay close to the research focus and help the participant respond to questions about her or his own experience in an insightful and thoughtful way. The way in which you word the questions, the order in which you ask them and what the participant thinks you might be seeking are components of the interview process."

My questions mainly focused on four aspects: (1) Interviewees describe their educational background and occupations before immigration; (2) Their expectations and knowledge of the Canadian labour market prior to immigration; (3) Their stories navigating the Canadian labour market; (4) Their stories in relation to the social and economic conditions in which their experience was situated.

A complete list of my interview questions is at the back of the paper (please see Appendix A and Appendix B).

I will discuss the sampling method in the next section.

3.4 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling, also known as selective, subjective or judgmental sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling method widely used in both qualitative and quantitative research (Tongco, 2007). Among different types of purposive sampling, Maximum Variation Sampling aims to capture and describe the core themes and shared outcomes (Patton, 1990). Maximum variation sampling method was often used among a large number of participants with either extreme characters or typical patterns related to the research (Given, 2008).

There could be a problem using maximum variation sampling method within a small group because the individuals are so different from each other and the outcomes could not be generalized to all other people. Patton (1990) argues that a small sample can guarantee high-quality and detailed descriptions of each case in the outcomes and we can thoroughly describe, analyze and understand the variations between different participants while investigating central themes and general outcomes at the same time.

I interviewed four female immigrants who have come from China (Mainland and Taiwan). The age range was 22-65. Most Canadians get a university degree at the age of 22 and start working until the standard age to begin receiving their retirement pension, which is 65 in Canada (see Service Canada People Serving People, 2014).

3.5 Research Ethics and Integrity

The research project involves human participants. Ethical clearance has been obtained from the ethics board of University of Ottawa.

During the interview, no scientific equipment involving direct or indirect physical contact was used. The interviews with four participants have been audio recorded. No video recording or photography was used in the study. The participants were not compensated.

The personal information of participants (names, ages, contact information, educational background (after high school), places of residence, marital status, if they have children or not, their occupation and place/s of work) has been protected by the use of pseudonyms to protect their identities.

The complete consent forms (English and Chinese version) are at the back of the paper (please see Appendix C, Appendix D).

3.6 Data Analysis Method

The interviews had been transcribed after being tape recorded. The interviews were conducted in Chinese and then translated after transcribing. When transcribing data, the transcription was verbatim. However, background noises, interruptions, and silences have not been recorded. Non-standard grammar, slang, and dialects have been standardized. No special formatting was needed to meet the requirements of qualitative analysis software. I

have checked the transcription against the audiotape for accuracy and all the transcribed interviews were sent back to the participants for checking for accuracy, unless they declined to read the transcripts.

Coding is a major step in analyzing qualitative data. It helps to organize large amounts of text and find patterns. As outlined by Bogdan and Biklin (1998), first of all I got familiar with the data. Then I used initial coding to label data. I generated numerous category codes, wrote notes and diagrammed relationships. Lastly, I used focused coding to combine, eliminate and subdivide coding categories and find repetitive ideas and larger themes to connect codes. After I developed the coding categories, I made a list that assigns each code a description.

Software programs can be helpful in coding interview data. I used software Atlas.ti in my data analysis to find recurring themes and converging patterns.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Recruitment of Participants

My research was conducted in Ottawa. I started by conducting in-depth interviews with Chinese immigrant women. I reached out to the participants through the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre, which is a non-profit, charitable organization committed to integrating Chinese newcomers to Ottawa. One of their departments is In-TAC (International-Talent Acquisition Centre). It aims to help immigrants improve their working skills and get jobs. Immigrants can sign up for its free classes including interview skills, social manners, language learning program and so on. It can also help immigrants get to know people from HR from small companies or get internship opportunities.

I attended some of their free classes and made an announcement about my research and recruitment after the class. I also talked to the immigrants in the class in person to see if they were interested. I stopped the selection process once I got four participants.

A few days later, I got all four participants: Respondent A, Respondent B, Respondent C, and Respondent D. At the time of the interviews, all of the respondents were between 25 to 50 years of age. All except for one were married and none of them had children. Before immigrating to Canada, all of them had a bachelor's degree and one of them had a master's degree. Their fields of studies covered Finance and Financial Journalism, Accounting, English education, Artistic Designing and Art Education. One of them got her immigration under the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP); the rest got their immigration under the Skilled Migration Program.

The interviews have been conducted at their homes and averaged one hour. The interviews have been tape recorded with the consent of the participants. They all had experiences working in traditional fields such as newspaper, broadcasting station, logistic industry, education industry, marketing and financial industry, in both China and Canada. The interviews covered participants' life and work experiences since they graduated in China, with particular focus on the difficulties, as well as the struggles they had while trying to find a job in Canada.

I will briefly discuss my data analysis process in the next section.

4.2 Data Analysis Process

Thematic analysis is an analytic method used in qualitative studies to identify, analyze and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After reading all the transcripts at

least twice during long, undisturbed periods, I started to use different colors to label some keywords by software Atlas.ti. By doing this, I generated a large number of unordered, initial codes. Then I began searching for themes among these codes. As Braun and Clarke (2006) defined, “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p. 82).

Based on the initial codes, several themes came out clearly as difficulties they all had encountered during the job search process: identity, language, information, work experience, internal referral and promotion space. I reviewed these themes and named them as: identity limitation, language barriers including English deficiency and bilingual restrictions, blocked access to information, lack of Canadian working experience, lack of internal referral and limited space for promotion.

The Table below is a brief description about my data analysis process.

Table 5:

Codes	Organising Themes	Named Themes
Permanent Resident	Identity	Identity Limitation
Canadian Citizen		
Chinese		
Government Job		
Nationality		
English Not Fluent	Language	Language Barriers (English Deficiency & Bilingual Restriction)
Can Not Speak Or Understand French		
Not Confident In English		

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Communication		
Bilingual Requirements		
Communication Skill		
Prefer To Work With Chinese People		
Need To Take Intensified Language Class		
Two Official Language		
Job Searching Process So Slow	Information	Blocked Access To Information
Lost		
Limited Information		
No Useful Suggestion And Help		
Open Positions On Internal Webpages		
Never worked in Canada Before	Working Experience	Lack of Canadian Working Experience
Cheap Labour		
Working Experience In China Did Not Count		
Entry Level Work		
Nepotism	Internal Referral	Lack of Internal Referral
Competition		
Preferred By Canadian Employers		
Limited Social Network		
Small Sized Company	Promotion Space	Limited Space for Promotion
Not Enough Experience		
Part-Time and Volunteer		

Stable Company Structure		
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The following section is about my research findings.

4.3 General Findings

4.3.1 Identity Limitation

Being a permanent resident in Canada means one can stay in Canada permanently, have rights and privileges in Canada and can apply to become citizens after four years of consecutive residence in a six-year period (Government of Canada, 2014b). Permanent residents keep their original nationalities. All respondents said they have been asked a least once by the interviewers about their future plans. To be specific, respondent C pointed out “they asked have you ever thought about going back to China again or do you prefer to apply for the Canadian citizenship?” Respondent B expressed she can understand what the employers are worried about; “some of my friends would still go back to China for better job opportunities or keep their families accompanied after living in Canada as permanent residents for many years. The employers do not want to lose employees they have trained and have a new recruitment in the future.”

Jobs in government are valued by many Chinese people. They usually call these kinds of jobs the Iron Rice Bowl, which means a stable and lifelong job that they would never lose whether they work hard or not. “My parents want me to find a job in the government. So I went to the job fair held by University of Ottawa and got some posters about the government positions” said Respondent A. As a permanent resident, Respondent A thought it might be easier for her to get a job. She searched the administrative jobs posted on the website of Government of Canada (job.gc.ca) and noticed that under the requirement of citizenship, it is clearly stated that “Preference will be given to Canadian citizens. Please indicate in your

application the reason for which you are entitled to work in Canada: Canadian citizenship, permanent resident status or work permit” (Government of Canada, 2014c). Respondent A thought “it is unfair and makes you feel uncomfortable when other people are competing with privilege just because of their identities. You can always apply for the job but you know you can have a bigger chance if you are a Canadian citizen.”

4.3.2 Language Barriers

When being asked about the barriers they had encountered when trying to find a job in Ottawa, all of the respondents mentioned language barriers in the first place. As a multicultural city, Ottawa has two official languages: English and French. Language barrier means that the respondents’ English skills are not sufficient enough for the job position and some jobs even have bilingual requirements.

4.2.2.1 Lack of English Proficiency

As a student of Communication, “my understanding of what I am learning is the exchange of message between sender and recipient. Verbal language, communication skills, and written skills are highly involved in the exchange process” said Respondent A. Respondent A got to know English at an early age and was raised in a family that valued English education. She kept learning English from elementary school to university, got a good grade in the IELTS test and went to Australia for graduate study for half a year. Her English is quite proficient in many aspects of life.

However, working in media is not like working in some other technological industries, like engineering. Respondent A thought “language is the basic and the most important factor in communication. Media has a higher standards and higher demand for language. Like I always said, ‘no matter how much you know about a language and how excellent you master

a language, you can never talk like a native'. You are not linguistic competitive and hiring the native can also help to solve the local employment problem, why would they offer the job to you?"

Born in the 1960's, Respondent B never experienced a nationwide enthusiasm for English learning. Compared with Respondent A, who was born in 1989, English learning has always been a big challenge for Respondent B. When she first landed in Canada, due to the lack of language proficiency, she had to work in a CD factory owned by Hong Kong people. "I worked 40 hours or a little bit more every week. I earned the minimum wage \$10.25 per hour. The job was quite easy: watch and make sure the machines that were producing CD packages were running well; move the packed boxes and use computer to control machines for delivery. Whether I accept it or not, I felt like I was a cheap labour. All the workers and managers were Chinese people. You barely need to speak English while working. I think that is also the reason why I was working there."

Respondent D was the only one who had obtained her master's degree in China. She focused on artistic designing and art education for both her bachelor's and master's degree. Before immigration, she had 6 to 7 years of experience teaching art and graphic design in a university in China. Although having a good educational background and many years of working experience, "English really got me stuck in the mud of job market. I was surrounded by so much information in English. Every step seemed to be so difficult: comparing and choosing different websites that had job posting; understanding the requirements and qualifications needed to apply; preparing all the materials for application and practicing interview questions. The job searching process was really slow." Although having two part-

time jobs now, Respondent D still chose to go back to school for intensified language and professional skills learning.

Respondent C was born in the 1970s. Since China's reform and opening up in the 1970s, this generation began to know the importance of opening up and learning from the world. "Learning English was quite a fashion at that time. So I chose English education as my major while I was in the university." After graduation, she began to work as a third part logistic manager in a logistic industry company. Although this work was not related to her educational background, her 2 years of work experience still helped her get her first job in Ottawa.

For other respondents, English in the workplace may have been the biggest challenge. For Respondent C, lack of proficiency in English deficiency means the lack of knowledge of the colloquial language and slang. "The first year in Ottawa, I worked in an import and export trading company run by Chinese people. Most of the workers are Chinese. Almost all the foreign workers were in my department, which is in charge of contacting other logistic companies and retailers." Respondent C found her English was good enough to accomplish her job. What bothered her was that English was an integral part of daily life and culture. "I don't know how to joke with my colleagues. I don't know the celebrities and competitions they were talking about. All I learned is the English used in formal situations. I still prefer to hang out with Chinese people. I did not feel so comfortable working in my department."

Besides, all four Respondents were married to Chinese men. When being asked have they ever tried to practice English at home with their families, they all said yes. In the early days after they came to Canada, they thought they could become more fluent in English if they

could keep practising English at home. “It was nothing but weird trying to speak English with someone (my husband) who is also poor at English.” Said Respondent D, “If our parents were with us, they would get mad at me because they could not understand a little bit English and they do not know why I have to do this at home. I just want to have more opportunities to practise.”

4.2.2.2 Bilingual Restriction

When Respondent A first started her master’s degree at the University of Ottawa, she decided to find an on-campus part-time job to cover her living expenses. However, as a bilingual university, nearly all the on-campus jobs required being bilingual. This was where Respondent A first realized she may be turned down for job opportunities as she can not speak French.

Later on Respondent A noticed some of the jobs posted on the website of Government of Canada have clear requirements for the language. For instance, for the Human Resources Advisor or Public Relations Officer, Communications and Arts Promotion Division, it says “this position requires the use of both official languages. The requirements in the second official language are: an advanced level in oral and reading comprehension and an intermediate level in writing” (Government of Canada, 2014c). For the Social Media Coordinator or Intermediate Financial Officer, they have imperative bilingual restriction — “the linguistic profile of position to staff immediately is: Bilingual Imperative-Level: CCB/CCB” (Government of Canada, 2014c). “I can not understand or speak even a little bit of French. Bilingual requirement completely shut the door upon my face” helplessly said Respondent A.

4.3.3 Blocked Access to Information

“Lost” was the word that all participants used to describe the job search process. There was so much information in the labour market. Without any help and advice, they did not know which way to go. As a result, they were just trying in different directions and relying on limited resources. For Respondent A, all her friends who had the same educational background as her were still in school now. They did not have more experience than her in the labour market. Basically she relied on job fairs and some websites, such as monster, csiscareers, linkedin or career builder. Respondent C was now a full-time student in Algonquin College and had finished two terms of Co-op. Her job searching tools were Algonquin College job search website and PlacePro. Respondent D, who wanted to be an art teacher, focused on junior high school or elementary school’s Human Resources Department looking for Careers or Job Opportunities.

Browsing the recruitment information pages of different companies and sending resumes are time-consuming tasks. All the respondents need to spend a long time reading job description, desired skills and experience and about the company. “I can’t meet all the requirements that were listed under ‘desired skills and experience’. These requirements make me feel disappointed and less confident to apply for the position” said Respondent D. Respondent A felt the same about all the detailed desired skills and experience, she decided to send out bulk applications, which means apply for a position without reading all the descriptions and requirements as long as the job is related to her field. She thought letting the employers view her resume and make the decision about whether she is qualified for the job will save her a lot of time.

Respondent C once talked with her friend who worked in an electronic communications company in Kanata. She surprisingly found that some companies will open positions on their internal webpages, which can be accessed only by their employees. People that are not in the company cannot see the recruitment and apply for the job unless they got friends working in the companies. This made her realize how important it is to have a wide social network and open information access.

4.3.4 Lack of Canadian Working Experience

Reitz (2001) mentioned the discounting of foreign experience by Canadian employers. “When they say working experience, they actually mean the Canadian working experience” said Respondent B.

Respondent B once applied for a position in an Indian TV station. The job was very elementary. “It was just running a machine, which can be learned in a very short time. Only the students graduated from university who has no working experience will do this kind of jobs. But I was still turned down because of the so called ‘working experience’.” Before her immigration, Respondent B was working as media planner and editor in an interactive media company in China. “Without Canadian working experience or specific skills, even the easiest job could be difficult for you, unless you want to be the cheap labour.”

Respondent A had a similar experience to Respondent B. She had an internship in CRI (China Radio International) after she got her bachelor’s degree in China. As a state-owned international radio broadcaster of China, CRI’s 24 hours English broadcast covers many aspects of our lives. Respondent A was working as a finance and economics editor for its newspaper. However, this experience did not help her stand out in the application for a local newspaper in Ottawa. “The employer asked about my working experience and I mentioned I

had worked in CRI. I clearly remembered he revised his question as ‘Oh, I mean, have you ever worked in media in Canada?’ This really made me feel very disappointed.”

4.3.5 Lack of Internal Referral

In China, internal referral is often connected with nepotism, which is kind of sensitive because people may provide labour market assistance to someone on purpose for some benefits (Wang, 2013). On the contrary, employers in Canada take internal referral positively as a way to recruit more skilled workers through the reference of their existing workers. Respondent D was the only one who experienced internal referral. Despite her lack of English proficiency, she still successfully got two part-time jobs because of internal referral.

“I am now the art teacher in a Chinese school and Ottawa Catholic School Board. These two jobs were all recommended by my friends who were teachers in those two schools.” Said Respondent D; “I have tried to apply in other local elementary schools or junior high schools. But I never heard from them. The human resources department of these two schools contacted me shortly after my friends recommended me, which made me really surprised. Although they are part-time jobs and I only earned a little bit better than the minimum wage, I am still grateful to my friends for their help.”

As compared to Respondent D, the remaining three respondents were not as lucky as her. One reason was they did not have many friends working in their specific fields which could have enabled their friends to recommend them. Another reason mentioned by Respondent C provides an interesting insight. “Since ancient times, Chinese people have the sense of competition. They are not willing to recommend their friends to work in the same company because they might be afraid of the competition between friends. I am not saying anything

bad about my friends. It is just sometime I may also assume what if my friends have a better performance than me that may make me lose my job.”

4.3.6 Limited Space for Promotion

When it comes to the reasons as to why they left the job they had in Ottawa or what their expectations are for the future about their current position, most of them stated they did not see much scope for promotion in the future. So they quit or were not satisfied with their situation. The key words they mentioned were small-sized company and lack of experience.

Respondent A used to be a part time financial products sales representative in a marketing company. She got the interview in a career fair. The department was the only branch of the company in Ottawa. “It was a really small department: six part-time sales and one full-time manager. The work is selling master card, additional card and other financial derivatives. We earned the minimum wage \$10.25 with extra bonus.” After three months she realized, she will be doing the same work as long as she is in that department. The only difference was the number of cards she has sold. “You might get the chance to be the manager, which seems only possible when the manager gets promoted, or you will always be the sales.”

Respondent B’s experience was quite similar to that of Respondent A. She worked as a part-time editor and media planner in a Chinese newspaper. It is a small-sized company with one publisher, two chief editors, one part-time editor and several volunteers. “My experience was not enough to be the chief editor and I could not count on this to be my full-time job because there was not that much work to do. I really did not see the future development working here.”

Chapter 5: Discussion and Interpretation

Based on the findings of this study, several insightful interpretations were drawn to reveal the research question: what is the working situation of Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa? How do they experience the employment process? What challenges and barriers do they encounter when looking for employment?

5.1 RQ1a: How do they experience the employment process?

First of all, all of the respondents' qualifications and working experiences in some sense have been undervalued or non-recognized. Respondent A had an internship in CRI (China Radio International) in China; however this experience did not help her stand out in the application for a local newspaper in Ottawa and she had been asked particularly about her Canadian work experience in the interview. Respondent B worked as media planner and editor in an interactive media company in China and was rejected by an entry-level work in an Indian TV station. Respondent C used to work as a third part logistic manager in a logistic industry company in China for 2 years, now she is a full-time student in Algonquin College to intensify her language skills and other professional skills. Respondent D had her master's degree in artistic designing and art education, and had almost 7 years of experiences teaching art and graphic design in a university in China before immigration, now she only has two part-time jobs and earns a little bit more than the minimum wage.

Second, their experiences in the labour market go hand in hand with the social integration process. A two-way social integration model requires both rights and obligations on the part of both newcomers and the host society (Tastsoglou & Preston, 2006). The new comers had accepted to undertake their responsibilities before they became Permanent Residents, but the city was not giving them equal opportunities. New immigrants with Chinese nationality and

Canadian Citizens are competing unequally because you can find “Preference will be given to Canadian citizens” (Government of Canada, 2014c) in some of the job postings.

Thirdly, social relations and networks are important in immigrants’ job hunting process and daily lives. Good social networks can bring you more information and resources about how to find jobs. They can give you access to the positions posted on some companies’ internal webpages. Sometime you can even get a job by internal referral from your friends. That is how Respondent D got two part-time jobs. Neighborhood, communities and religious groups also provide social support and spiritual comfort for some Chinese immigrant women (Da, 2008).

5.2 RQ1b: What challenges and barriers do they encounter when looking for employment?

As presented in the findings, there are six major challenges they have encountered in the Canadian labour market. First of all, their identity as permanent resident had some competitive disadvantages in some employment positions. Preference given to Canadian citizens was seen by the respondents as unfair and made them uncomfortable.

Language barriers as many scholars (Guruge et al., 2009; Kilbride, 2007) have studied are one of the biggest challenges that immigrant women are dealing with every day. Insufficient reading and writing skills slowed down their job search process. Lack of proficiency in spoken English blocked development of interpersonal relationships. Bilingual requirement made the situation even worse because the respondents could not understand French at all.

Blocked access to information can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, all kinds of open positions and company information are on the internet. Without any help and advice, job searching could be a time-consuming process. On the other hand, some positions are

posted on companies' internal webpages and can be accessed only by their employees. If you do not have a friend who is working in that company, maybe you will miss that opportunity. In addition, internal referral from a friend can also help increase the chances for the interview or even the job offer.

In the end, a relatively stable structure of a company left less room for promotion. Respondents feel a lack of motivation and are less competitive if they keep doing the same job year after year.

5.3 Advance Analysis and Interpretation

The Government of Canada has developed many programs to facilitate immigrants' settlement and integration process, such as the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), and the Host program (Biles & Winnemore, 2006). These programs could help newcomers promote their language skills and participate positively in the society and compete in the labour market. However the participants were not aware of these programs when they first came to Canada. They hoped the government could have more lectures within communities, religious groups and other networks to inform them about these programs.

Moreover, it is surprising that none of the respondents mentioned gender bias in the workplace. On the contrary, some of them talked about the advantages of being female in the workplace. For example, being an art teacher in an elementary school, Respondent D felt loved by her students and their parents because of her gentle and maternal status. Being a financial products sales representative as Respondent A and media planner as Respondent B, they usually had better results than their male colleagues because their customers were more

polite and did not feel disturbed easily when the respondents were promoting the products or advertisement.

As mentioned by many feminist scholars that women from different cultures, ethnicities and classes cannot share the same interest and same experiences, even within the same country (Ang, 1995; Lewis & Mills, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Gandhi, 2011; Shital V. & Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, 2012; Spivak, 1988). Due to the small interview groups and their personal experiences, the interpretations including their experiences toward gender bias may be limited to generalize to all other Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa. But they did admit they are still taking the primary responsibility in caring for home and families, doing housework and supporting the elderly.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The findings of this research paper revealed some major difficulties encountered by Chinese immigrant women in the labour market of Ottawa. This will make more people, organizations and government aware of their working situation and may contribute to the further changes. However, due to several methodological limitations, such as small sample group, the findings were inconclusive and limited when generalized to other immigrant women in Ottawa. In this chapter I will examine first the significance of the study. Next I will discuss the limitations of this research and provide suggestions for the future research. Finally I will end with some concluding remarks.

6.1 Significance

The increasing mobility of skilled workers is one representation of internationalization and globalization (Ng & Shan, 2010; Raghuram, 2000; Tastsoglou & Jaya, 2011). There are

many studies about skilled professional immigrant women encountering difficulties in finding employment commensurate with their qualifications in the new country (Basran & Zong, 1998; Iredale, 2001; Man, 2004; Mojab, 2000; Ng & Shan, 2010). I used in-depth interviews to know participants' life and work experiences after they graduated in China, with particular focus on the difficulties, as well as the struggles they had while trying to find a job in Ottawa.

First of all, they mentioned the identity limitation. Permanent residents face more uncertainty and instability compared with Canadian citizens. Preference is given to Canadian Citizens in many government jobs. Secondly, language barriers have been the biggest challenge for all of them: Lack of proficiency in English in the workplace, Lack of proficiency in English in daily life, high standards and demand for English in particular fields. Some jobs' bilingual requirements made the situation even worse. Thirdly, some of the positions were posted on the companies' internal webpages, which can be accessed only by their employees. People that are not in the company cannot see the recruitment advertisement and apply for the job unless they have friends working in the companies.

Besides, as Reitz (2001) has mentioned, the discounting of foreign experience by Canadian employers made respondents' experiences worthless. Lack of Canadian working experience forced them to start with the most basic jobs, jobs for which they were over qualified, jobs that were not commensurate with their educational background and they even had to go back to school for future education. Internal referral was also one of the factors the employers valued when doing the recruitment. One of the respondents got two part-time jobs because of internal referral. The remaining respondents were still waiting for a chance. Within a small-sized company, the staff composition was relatively stable and simple. There

was not much space and opportunity for personnel change, which was not good news for the respondents who had just started their careers in Canada.

This study reveals some major difficulties encountered by Chinese immigrant women in the labour market of Ottawa. Their credentials in some sense had been undervalued and they were still in unsatisfactory positions or waiting for employment. Their job hunting process also interacted with their social and economic integration process. This study did not find much gender bias through participants' experiences; however gender inequality was not excluded from the workplace.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

In this research paper, I focused on some of the difficulties Chinese immigrant women have encountered when navigating the Canadian labour market and their experiences, and provided some insights. The findings were interesting but inconclusive, due to several methodological limitations. The sample of respondents was too small to determine whether findings were representative for other immigrant women in Ottawa. Some of the terms were ill-defined, for example identity limitation and blocked access to information. Due to the time frame of the study and the difficulty in interpreting and analyzing the interviews, some difficulties respondents mentioned could not be coded and presented in the conclusion.

In future studies, a larger sample group can be used in order to investigate deeper and provide a more comprehensive and representative conclusion. Moreover, future studies can focus on uncovering how Chinese immigrant women manage and negotiate the labour market situation. There are some programs and groups helping immigrants in the resettlement process. For example, the Ministry of Citizenship and Education of Ontario "is funding

‘bridging programs’ to provide newcomers with education and skill assessment, skill training, workplace experience, assistance in license or certification examination, language training and individual learning plans” (Ng & Shan, 2010, p. 2). Some of the Chinese associations such as the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre are also providing help to newcomers for their transitional periods. Lastly, the relationship between lifelong learning and Chinese immigrant women negotiating Canada’s labour market can be examined in future research. Ng & Shan’s (2010) study viewed lifelong learning as a way to strengthen language skills, remain competitive and keep up with the pace of technological change.

6.3 Conclusion

This research study has shed light on the working situation of Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa. By analyzing and interpreting the interviews of four Chinese immigrant women, this research paper revealed several challenges they have encountered when looking for employment. For example, language barriers, lack of Canadian working experience, lack of internal referral and limited space for promotion. Other immigrant women may identify with the respondents’ experiences and feelings in this study, feel less frustrated when encountering difficulties and get some inspiration for future career opportunities. Making more companies, organizations and the government aware of their working situation will also help in bringing about change. Future research can focus on a larger sample group to investigate deeper and provide a more comprehensive and representative conclusion.

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Appendix A

Introductory Interview Questions

NOTE: All the following details will be kept confidential.

1. What is your name?
 - a. Surname _____
 - b. First Name _____
2. Contacts:
Address: _____

Phone # _____(Home) _____(Office)
E-mail _____
3. How old are you? _____
4. What is your marital status? _____
5. Which category did you apply for the immigration? _____
6. What is the date of your arrival in Canada? _____
7. When did you get your immigration? _____
8. What is your educational background (after high school) in China?

9. What is your occupation before immigration (part-time and/or full-time)?

10. What is your current job (part-time or full-time) in Ottawa?

11. What is the size of your company/organization? _____
12. How many hours do you work every week? _____

Appendix B

Interview Questions
Q1: What were your expectations of the Canadian labour market prior to immigration? For example, how much can you get paid (the minimum wage in Ontario is \$10.25)? How many hours do you need to work every week?
Q2: How long did it take for you to get your first job (part-time or full-time) after immigration? What kind of jobs did you apply for? How many interviews did you get?
Q3: What kind of difficulties (language, gender, race, ethnicity and so on) have you faced while navigating the Canadian labour market?
Q4: Do you think you can get promoted or get a higher salary in the next few years?
Q5: Do you know the percentage of Canadian citizens and new immigrants in your department?
Q6: Are you satisfied with your current job? If yes, why? If no, then what is your expectation for the future?
Q7: What circumstances influenced your job search?
Q8: Would you like to share more stories about your experience in the workplace?

Appendix C

Consent Form

Title of the study: Deskilling and Devaluation of Chinese Immigrant Women in Ottawa

Principal Investigator:

Name: Xin Guo

Phone No.: 613-700-5971

Institutional Affiliation: Faculty of Arts, Communication

Project Supervisor:

Name: Peruvemba S. Jaya

Address: DMS, 55 Laurier Avenue East, Room 11152

Phone No.: 613-562-5800 ext 2538

Institutional Affiliation: Faculty of Arts, Communication

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Xin Guo and her supervisor Peruvemba S. Jaya.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to discuss the working situation of Chinese immigrant women in Ottawa; to discuss how they experience the process of looking for jobs and what kind of barriers they have encountered when trying to find a job equivalent to their qualification.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of participating in interviews. The interviews will be audio recorded. The estimated time for the interview is one to two hours. I will only be interviewed for one time.

The interview will take place outside of my class/working time. I can choose where I want to be interviewed, for example, coffee shop near my home.

During the interview, I will be asked about the questions focusing on four aspects: my educational background and occupations before immigration; my expectations and knowledge of the Canadian labour market prior to immigration; my stories navigating the Canadian labour market; and my stories in relation to the social and economic situation.

Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I volunteer some personal information and this may cause me to feel upset if recalling difficult employment situations. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks. When this situation happens, the researcher will change the subject and give me some time to have my mood eased. The researcher will also come up with some suggestions and employment resources.

Benefits: My participation in this study will help to shed light on the labour market situation of Chinese immigrant women and their experiences and provide some insights.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the purpose of this study about the working situation of Chinese immigrant

Appendix D**同意书**

研究题目: 中国移民女性在渥太华的非技能化和被贬值状况研究

主要研究者:

名字: 郭欣

电话: 613-700-5971

所属机构: 文学院, 新闻传播专业

项目导师:

名字: Peruvemba S. Jaya

办公室地址: DMS, 55 Laurier Avenue East, Room 11152

电话: 613-562-5800 ext 2538

所属机构: 文学院, 新闻传播专业

应邀参加: 我应邀参加由郭欣和她的导师 Peruvemba S. Jaya 进行的调查研究。

研究目的: 这项研究的目的是探讨中国移民女性在渥太华的工作状况, 分析她们在寻找和自身资历匹配的工作的过程中有什么经验和感受, 遇到了什么困难。

参与过程: 在这项研究中, 我将主要通过接受采访进行参与。采访过程会被录音。采访预计会进行 1-2 个小时, 在整个研究过程中, 我只需要接受一次采访。

采访活动不会占用我的学习/工作时间, 我可以选择在哪里接受采访, 例如: 我家旁边的咖啡厅。

在采访过程中, 采访问题主要涉及四个方面: 我的教育背景和移民之前的职业状况; 在移民之前我对加拿大劳工市场状况的了解; 我在渥太华的就业经历; 我的就业经历和加拿大社会经济形势的关系。

潜在风险: 在参与研究过程中, 我将主动提供我的部分个人信息, 在回忆起之前求职的种种困难经历时, 我可能会感到沮丧。研究者已经向我保证, 会尽一切努力减少这种风险。如果我确实感到沮丧, 研究者会通过转移话题让我平复心情以及向我提供一些求职资源来宽慰我。

效益: 我的参与将帮助揭示中国移民女性在渥太华劳工市场的工作状况, 并为研究提供一些见解。

RESEARCH PAPER

保密和匿名: 研究者已经向我保证, 我在采访过程中分享的信息会被严格保密。我明白我分享的信息将被用于研究中国移民女性在渥太华的工作状况, 而我的保密性将会受到保护。采访的文字记录将通过我的审阅, 研究者会把文字记录通过邮件发给我, 邮件会使用密码保护。

匿名性会通过以下的方式进行保护。研究者会通过假名保护参与者的个人信息, 研究者和她的导师有权通过假名了解参与者的信息。当呈现研究结果时, 参与者在采访过程中分享的信息会被引用。所有参与者提到的、可能揭示他个人信息的内容都将被编码, 例如参与者提到的学校、公司或组织的名字。

数据保护: 收集的书面记录和采访录音将被以安全的方式保存。原始数据(包括文字记录和采访录音)将被保存在导师的办公室, 该数据的副本将被保存在研究者的家中。电子资料(包括文字记录和研究报告)将被同时保存在研究者的电脑和硬盘中并加密, 需要使用密码解压缩文件。研究者和导师有权访问数据。在完成研究报告后, 数据将被保存 5 年。保存期结束后, 所有的纸质材料将被粉碎, 所有的电子数据将被永久删除。

自愿参与: 我没有义务参与该项研究, 如果我选择参与, 我可以随时从研究过程中退出或者拒绝回答任何问题, 并且不会受到任何负面影响。如果我选择退出研究, 所有在我退出之前收集到的资料将被处理, 所有纸质材料将被粉碎, 所有的电子数据将被永久删除。

接受参与: 我, (参与者名字), 同意参与由文学院新闻传播系的郭欣开展的并在其导师 Peruvemba S. Jaya 监督下的研究。

如果我对研究有任何疑问, 可与研究者或她的导师联系。

如果我对这项研究的道德行为有任何疑问, 我可与渥太华大学 Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research 联系, 地址是 Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

电话: (613) 562-5387

邮箱: ethics@uottawa.ca

同意书一式两份, 我将保管其中一份。

参与者签字: (签字) 日期: (日期)

研究者签字: (签字) 日期: (日期)