



Perceived sense of control, power, and capacity in civic participation of aging immigrants in Edmonton, Canada

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Research Context

- ❖ Civic participation has been prioritized as a means to promote active and successful ways of aging (European Commission, 2012; United Nations, 2002)
- ❖ Civic engagement has significant meanings to older people and society in general (Hinterlong & Williamson, 2006/2007; Morrow-Howell, 2011).
- ❖ Aging immigrants are often perceived as vulnerable or powerless due to their status as both immigrants and older persons (Durst, 2005; Ley & Heather, 2000).
- ❖ Building the capacity for immigrant seniors to have their voices heard is essential to their full social and civic participation and a pathway to full integration.
- ❖ Research on how aging immigrants participate and perceive their own capacity and power in civic participation is lacking.

Research Objective and Questions



- ❖ **Objective:** to examine the perceived sense of control, power, and capacity of aging Asian immigrants in the context of civic participation

- ❖ **Research questions:**
 1. How do aging Asian immigrants in Edmonton, Alberta conceptualize the meanings, motivations, self-efficacy, and patterns of civic participation and experience?
 2. What are the gender differences in civic participation among aging Asian immigrants?
 3. What are the facilitators and barriers to civic participations for aging Asian immigrants?
 4. How do unique historical, cultural, political, and societal characteristics contribute to civic participation in different groups of aging immigrants?
 5. What strategies and approaches could be used to facilitate civic participation among aging immigrants?



Method

❖ Research Design

- A qualitative research design based upon constructivist grounded theory.

❖ Data Collection

- Face to face ($n=10$) and focus group ($n=2$) interviews with older adults (aged 55+) in each of five language groups (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Panjabi, Tagalog)
- Interviews were audio-recorded and lasted between 1 to 1.5 hours.

❖ Analysis

- Thematic analysis related to research questions.





Preliminary Findings

- ❖ To date completed interviews with 10 Chinese (6 Mandarin, 4 Cantonese), 7 Filipino (Tagalog), and 5 Indian (Hindi) older adults





Expectation of Civic Participation

I thirst for knowledge. I want to learn the Canadian way of politics. I will participate in any social action of any social activities here in Canada. Yes I would do it. Much to my delight.

-- 55 years old, Tagalog-speaking female, 13 years in Canada

I don't think that anyone who brings a wealth of experience and even expertise coming to Canada should not be allowed to use that in contributing to Canadian society

-- 67 years old, Tagalog-speaking, male, 31 years in Canada



Expectation of Civic Participation

Many old people don't concern much about voting. Old people don't understand different political parties here. We don't care who will be the president and whether they can promote social development when he becomes the president. Our participation is limited and we also seldom discuss it in public.

-- 70 years old, Cantonese-speaking male, 18 years in Canada

As a citizen, you should make contribution to the society, make some devotion

-- 61 years old, Mandarin-speaking female, 23 years in Canada



Powerless & Lacking Sense of Control

Our voices won't be heard as nobody will care about us. We also don't know where to express our ideas. You have ideas, you want to express, nobody know us...actually, to be honest, how will the government listen to underlying figures like us.

-- 68 years old, Cantonese-speaking female, 15 years in Canada

I haven't done anything famous, how can I influence people? -55 years old, Tagalog-speaking female, 13 years in Canada
I can show [change] but I can't change others nature.

--72 years old, Hindi-speaking Male, 5 years in Canada

Powerless & Lacking Sense of Control



As a small potato, whether participation or not doesn't make any difference.

-- 65 years old, Mandarin-speaking male, 22 years in Canada

I think the government of Canada are also willing to listen to the voices of the people, but relatively few of them are Chinese voices

--72 years old, Cantonese-speaking male, 20 years in Canada

It's not because we couldn't participate, it's because we didn't have the ability, thus we couldn't go, don't bring troubles to others

--61 years old, Mandarin-speaking female, 23 years in Canada

Those who have the ability to be involved in politics, they don't participate, the people like us that want to be involved have no ability

--78 years old, Mandarin-speaking female, 12 years in Canada

Individual-Level Barriers



Limited understanding, language, age, health status, finances, work.

Language

Because I didn't have a language barrier in the Mainland, transportation was convenient, I could go wherever I wanted. I can't go anywhere I want here. I also have language barrier here. *-79 years old, Cantonese-speaking female, 5 years in Canada*

Can't pass the language hurdle, making us feel unused, as the knowledge gained in China is not useful anymore. Even those with the best educated came here, they are also shorten half. *-69 years old, Mandarin-speaking male, 9 years in Canada*

Health status

Not that I already done a lot in my time when I was able to do it. Now its just my time and wanted to pull back a little bit and kick back because I've worked all the time, until I retired when I was 55 and that was 11 years ago and then because of my illness it dictated my time and I don't have the same amount of energy and stamina that I used to have. And I'm satisfied with all the work I did. *--66 years old, Tagalog-speaking female, 44 years in Canada*

My health isn't good, my vigor isn't good either, I don't want to use my brain too much. Now I just want to stay quiet to recuperate. I don't want to use my brain to think about any questions. I'm also so old, I rarely think of these questions. *--79 years old, Cantonese-speaking female, 5 years in Canada*

Family-Level Barriers:

Lack of family support, family responsibility



Family responsibility

We should call it not my priority for now, but not hindrance because now I have to prioritize my kids since they also lost their father. And for me, before you can serve others, you should serve your family first. And if they don't need me anymore, then that's the time that I will have more time in helping others.

--73 years old, Tagalog-speaking male, 4 years in Canada

We've been here for a short period of time, attending activities. We took care of children before, thus we lived at our son's house, they went to participate in some activities. They were the focus, we were just listening.

-- 70 years old, Mandarin-speaking female, 10 years in Canada



Community–Level Barriers

Lack of support services, transportation, weather

It is two days ago, people were talking about voting, who, who, could be voted, presumably X X X. I said “why did no one asked us to vote”. We don’t know why. We don’t know the ways to get the votes, and who can we ask. If we want to vote, a lot of things we do not know and need others help us.

-- 77 years old, Mandarin-speaking female, 12 years in Canada

Everyone should have an opportunity to participate and express their voice. I think there’s a lot of potential, its just that, the supports aren’t there.

-- 66 years old, Tagalog-speaking female, 44 years in Canada

If its winter and you don’t have a car or doesn’t know how to drive, how would you be able to go where the program is being held. And how will you understand what civic engagement is when you don’t have the means to go

-- 67 years old, Tagalog-speaking male, 31 years in Canada

I can’t fill out forms, nobody can help me. I can see the photos of candidates, but I don’t know their work performance, and who I can vote for. So, I don’t go.

-- 78 years old, Cantonese-speaking male, 14 years in Canada



Societal-Level Barriers



Cultural barriers and biases

The older people from China have spent half a lifetime in China and used to the life there. From birth to growing up life is always alike. Now, a complete change has happened, and it needs a process of adaptation. Right? Another issue is education. Anyway, the older people from Mainland were educated by the communists. Here (in Canada), there is too open and too much freedom, they are not comfortable and felt very strange.

--66 years old, Mandarin-speaking male, 15 years in Canada

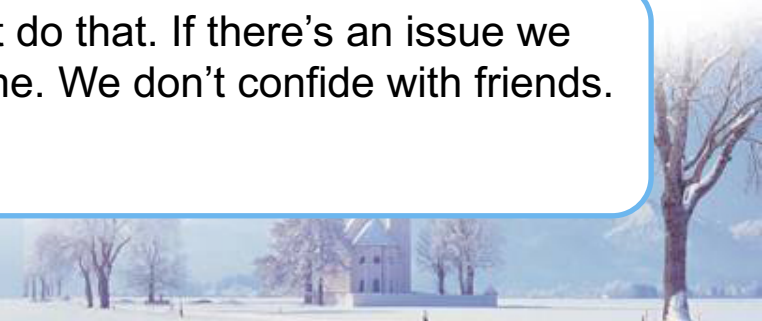
Historical factors

For us, Chinese immigrants from China are somewhat ingrained with old ideas...as I understand, it is democratic here. But, some old people dare not to say anything, as some of them experienced domestic political storms (in China). A lot of people are afraid to speak out too much, and then politics is not discussed. They talk about home and work, but not about politics and the community in general.

--71 years old, Mandarin-speaking female, 10 years in Canada

I have close friends but I never open up to them. We don't do that. If there's an issue we open up to our family. It's better to open up inside our home. We don't confide with friends. Just among our family.

-- 67 years old, Tagalog-speaking female, 21 years in Canada



Facilitators



❖ Friendship

❖ Community support

I have language problem, therefore I have one person who helps me to talk with Canadian people, MLA and solve other problems. He translates in Hindi very well for me. -72 years old, Hindi-speaking male, 5 years in Canada

❖ Awareness of benefits of civic participation

Socialization, it makes you busy and you enjoy the things you do and the skills you have. -67 years old, Tagalog-speaking female, 21 years in Canada

It helped to lower my depression and now am happy. -67 years old, Hindi-speaking male, 21 years in Canada

❖ Personal History

that same enthusiasm that you see in the Philippines that is here with the Filipinos involved with their political parties, it has the same enthusiasm just in the smaller scale -66 years old, Tagalog-speaking female, 44 years in Canada

❖ Assimilation of Canadian culture and value

Not that all public consultation do influence our politicians in making their decisions but at least there's an opportunity for the people to go to meetings and the politicians are very accessible you can call them and you can even right a letter directly to the mayor. -67 years old, Tagalog-speaking male, 31 years in Canada



Intra-group Similarities & Differences

- ❖ Common forms of civic participation
 - Voting, expressing opinion to government, volunteering, donating, involving in community, and church activities

- ❖ Differences in civic participation
 - Understanding meaning of civic engagement and in
 - willingness and types of civic activities

- ❖ Barriers and facilitating factors differ
 - Religion has a stronger influences among Indian and Filipino participants than Chinese participants





Discussion & Conclusion

While social and cultural differences exist in civic participation among three groups, **most wished to participate in Canadian civic life.**

- ❖ Opportunities for and the level of civic participation among aging Asian immigrants were quite limited.
- ❖ Most participants felt powerless and lacked a sense of control in their civic participation.
- ❖ Cultural biases, language barriers, transportation, and lacking of support services were perceived as barriers to civic participation.
- ❖ Professionals and agencies working with older immigrants need to
 - ❖ take into account diversity in civic participation among older immigrant adults
 - ❖ understand different levels of barriers and facilitators and how they play roles in older immigrants' civic participation
 - ❖ develop more channels and supportive service to enhance for civic participation
 - ❖ embrace older immigrant's voices in developing programs and social policies



Future Direction



- ❖ To continue data collection and analysis
- ❖ To apply theoretical frameworks in data analysis and interpretation
- ❖ Knowledge translation activities





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Questions?

