



Canada's Super Visa Program: Opportunities, Challenges and Social Justice Implications

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ABSTRACT Canada implemented its Super Visa initiative in 2011 to facilitate family reunification of parents and grandparents with their immigrant children and grandchildren. We conducted a qualitative study in Toronto with Chinese immigrants and their parents to explore their experiences with the Super Visa program. Our findings reveal that the program is helpful for family reunification, especially for those whose regular visitor visa applications are unsuccessful. However, the Super Visa is still a visitor visa, and at the time of the study, parents were required to leave after two years. We found that the temporary status of their parents did not promote a sense of belonging among immigrants in Canada, and instead reinforced their feeling of being treated as a “foreigner.” Our findings also debunked misconceptions that older parents are non-contributors and a burden to Canadian society. We argue the policy change to a Super Visa for parents and grandparents is rooted in the state’s neoliberal governmentality, grounded in market norms and mechanisms. The present neoliberal immigration regime remains structurally raced, gendered and classed, although in more implicit forms. Our findings indicate that social justice concerns extend beyond direct social distribution, and can be integrated into immigration policy design, formation and enforcement.

KEYWORDS Super Visa; parents and grandparents immigration policy; neoliberal governmentality; immigration injustice; social injustice; Canada

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ISSN: 1911-4788



Introduction

In November 2011, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC; formerly CIC: Citizenship and Immigration Canada) paused its immigration program for Parents and Grandparents (PGP) for the following two years (2012, 2013), and instead introduced a new Super Visa program that allows parents and grandparents to visit their children and grandchildren for a longer period (IRCC, 2011a). The IRCC claims that the Super Visa is a creative “fast and convenient option” (IRCC, 2011a) to facilitate family reunification because firstly, compared with the PGP immigration program, the processing time for a Super Visa is exceptionally shorter (eight weeks versus eight years, on average); secondly, compared with a regular visitor visa that only allows parents or grandparents to stay up to six months upon each entry or re-entry, at the time of the study, a Super Visa allowed them to stay for up to two years at a time (IRCC, 2011a).¹

However, a Super Visa application requires that the adult children or grandchildren who invite their parents or grandparents fulfill three specific conditions: (1) they must prove a minimum family income above the annual Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) that is specified by the Canadian government; (2) they must purchase a minimum \$100,000 coverage of private medical insurance for at least one year for each parent or grandparent who will come to Canada; and (3) the parents and grandparents must undergo and pass a medical examination (IRCC, 2011b, 2022). In the limited literature, the Super Visa initiative has been criticized for its added costs that thwart family reunification, and that it is not a viable alternative of immigration for parents and grandparents (Bragg, 2014; Bragg & Wong 2016; Neborak, 2013; Zhou 2013). The literature indicates that there is a mismatch between the stated objective of the Super Visa and its actual outcome.

We examined the Super Visa initiative in the context of changes to the PGP immigration policy using a neoliberal governmentality lens. Through a qualitative cross-sectional study design, we explored immigrant families’ experiences with and perspectives on obtaining a Super Visa, examined the roots and ideological assumptions underlying the policy development, and analyzed issues of social justice in terms of policy design and implementation, drawing from literature related to neoliberal biopolitics and racism in immigration.

¹New Super Visa policy: as of July 4, 2022, the maximum stay has been changed from two years to five years.

Theoretical Framework

The governmentality perspective on power challenges the conventional views of the state as the sole and terminal point of power. It recognizes the various authorities that conduct governance in different sites with different objectives, and makes power more visible and tangible (Rose et al., 2006), thus serving as an effective theoretical framework when examining concrete and practical conduct of governance in everyday life, particularly why and how contemporary social policy has orientated toward promoting enterprise of choice, autonomy, entrepreneurism, self-dependency and self-reliance (Garrett, 2019; Inda, 2006; Mavelli, 2017; Rose et al., 2006; Shan, 2015); it also helps clarify how immigration policies and programs have affected people's daily lives. Michel Foucault extended the initial definition of governmentality as a governing activity on individuals by authorities to a broader understanding of governmentality as "techniques and procedures for directing human behavior," which emphasized the idea of governing the "whole population" (Rose et al., 2006, p. 83). This broadened definition views the "collective social bodies" as object of the new technology of power – biopolitics (Mavelli, 2017; Vitales, 2020, p. 168) – and helps explain why and how the interests of some minority groups or populations are sacrificed by the state for the benefit of the so-called general public (read: the dominant population) by issuing new social policies or changing old ones.

Departing from welfarism in all aspects from the mid-seventies, contemporary neoliberal governmentality underscores people's freedom of choices (although this freedom might be obliged) and personal responsibility to secure their own and their loved one's wellbeing under the market mechanism (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 88; Rose et al., 2006). A feature of neoliberalism that differs from liberalism is that it requires the state to proactively support and protect its existence and proper functioning (Mavelli, 2017; Shan, 2015). Neoliberal governmentality involves programmatic features (Gudmand-Hoyer & Lopdrup, 2009; Inda, 2006; Miller & Rose, 2008), and the state employs immigration programs and policies as a technique to govern population flow, meet labour market needs and preserve or transform a population's characteristics, while bringing in the "right people" and excluding those deemed undesirable (Chen & Thorpe, 2015). Some scholars see this kind of cherry-picking as a form of "social eugenics" (Siemiatycki, 2015) because it targets the most robust workforces of other countries who are considered as "ideal citizens" based on market norms and an intersecting hierarchical system of race, class, gender, country of origin, socioeconomic status, human capital, age, health status, etc. (George & George, 2013; Mavelli, 2017). Another important feature of the neoliberal governance regime is that the state is no longer obliged to take the primary responsibility in dealing with social ills or in providing collective security to its population, and instead displaces its responsibility to other governmental entities as well as individuals and families through privatization and promoting

entrepreneurism and self-government (Dean, 2002; Ilcan, 2009; Inda, 2006; Miller & Rose, 2008).

Mavelli (2017) notes that “biopolitical racism is an essential component of the biopolitical governance of neoliberalism” and “biopolitical racism displaces the sources of risk, dispossession and inequality from the neoliberal regime to ‘inferior’ populations” (p. 489). Mavelli highlights that biopolitics’ endeavour to promote the life and well-being of populations does not equally apply to all, rather, it is protecting “the general population” by sacrificing or excluding those deemed “inferior” or seen as a threat to the population that the state aims to flourish, proliferate, and expand (p. 501). Turnbull (2017) observes that “whiteness” and “non-whiteness” still functions to categorize certain groups of people as inherently undesirable, detainable, and deportable by the states in liberal democracies. The state attempts to demonstrate its “race-neutral” position by promoting diversity and neutralizing its immigration policy through de-gender and de-ethnicity, however, race remains the key technique used to manage access to legal belonging and the distributed protection of the state (Turnbull, 2017); injustice and racialization remain evident in the state’s behaviours, actions, attitudes, and the “hostile environment” generated by immigration policies that render the unwanted population’s life “increasingly difficult, circuitous, and precarious, particularly for those who are poor and racialized” (Turnbull, 2017, p. 143).

We propose that the Super Visa initiative in the context of PGP immigration policy change is reflective of a racist, neoliberal government, and indicates that Canada’s biopolitical immigration governance still includes race-, gender- and class-specific dimensions, but has shifted from obvious and blatant discrimination and injustice to subtle and implicit forms of differentiation and exclusion.

Super Visa: Regulations, Critiques, and Ideological Underpinnings

When the (then) CIC announced the moratorium of PGP immigration program, it simultaneously released the Super Visa program, which was described as an alternative to the PGP program in the “Phase I of the Action Plan for Faster Family Reunification.” The Super Visa program took effect officially on December 1, 2011 (IRCC, 2011a). Since the announcement, the policy changes have been greatly criticized: Bragg (2014) points out that the Super Visa is out of reach of many low- and even middle-income families due to the income threshold, prohibitive insurance and other costs, noting that for some immigrant families, the Super Visa is only “the illusion of family reunification” (p. 11). Neborak (2013) argues that the design of the Super Visa is based on the same logic as the PGP immigration program (e.g., socio-economic status), and the added costs, including insurance premiums, make the Super Visa “a stratified solution that only serves to further reinforce financial and racial barriers” (p. 10). Ferrer (2015) notes that the Super Visa is still a temporary

visa, so parents and grandparents are ineligible for state-provided services and benefits that the PGP immigration program can provide. Some scholars report that many families prefer a six-month regular visa that is more economically viable (Bragg, 2014; Bragg & Wong 2016; Zhou 2013). Bragg (2014) highlights that the temporary status of parents or grandparents with a Super Visa prevents families from making meaningful long-term plans as an integrated family unit, so it is not a sustainable solution to family separation.

The Super Visa application process has also been criticized. Ferrer (2015) reports that many immigrant families found the application process complicated, time consuming and frustrating, especially for families who must travel to a Visa Application Centre (VAC), available only in a few large cities, to submit their application. Moreover, while the IRCC reported an overall high approval rate of the Super Visa, scholars have noted a lower approval rate among populations in the Global South (e.g., Africa, Asia, and the Middle East) than in the US and Europe (Bragg, 2014; Neborak, 2013). Additionally, Chen and Thorpe (2015) observe that the immigration backlog and long wait times were not actually caused by excessive PGP applications that had overwhelmed the system but were an “intentional administrative delay” and resulted from discriminatory practices by the CIC, such as lack of human resources assigned to process the PGP immigration applications. They note that this is an excuse used by the government to pause the program and impose more restrictive requirements.

Similarly, Bélanger and Candiz (2020) observe that although reducing wait times and achieving cost-efficiency are highly valued by state administrators, this may not necessarily benefit prospective applicants. When the new PGP immigration program re-opened in 2014, the government raised requirements: sponsors must meet the income requirement for three years rather than the previous requirement of one year; and the undertaking period of sponsors was extended from 10 years to 20 years (IRCC, 2013). A quota for the accepted applications was also imposed; thus for the first time in the history of Canada's immigration regime, family reunification became a lottery in terms of its random selection to fill the quota. Even among those meeting all the requirements, only the luckiest can achieve the sponsorship opportunity. Bélanger and Candiz (2020) argue that the juxtaposition of immigration sponsorship with the Super Visa as the alternative depoliticizes the right to family reunification by officially institutionalizing temporariness in the family reunification program.

Through immigration policy, the government has increasingly selected younger applicants with Canadian education and work experience, as well as well-educated foreign economic elites with strong official language proficiency. In the state's hand, the immigration program and granting of citizenship become a “legitimate sorting device” and “dividing line” to prioritize some foreigners and exclude others (Turnbull & Hasselberg, 2017), thus maximizing economic and cultural benefits to Canada while also governing the population. The immigration policy changes targeting older

parents and grandparents reflect the increasingly market-oriented shift in Canada's entire immigration regime since the 1980s. Underpinning this shift is the neoliberal immigration governmentality that views the economy in global competition, and encourages cherry-picking desirable model citizens who can contribute to the economy as the solution to socioeconomic problems and inefficient governance (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2008; Siemiatycki, 2015).

Since the 1990s, the government has prioritized the admission of immigrants who are likely to enhance the labour market after coming to Canada (Bragg & Wong, 2016; Neborak, 2013). Selection criteria have become increasingly based on education, skills, and language proficiency and a sharp change to deprioritize family reunification occurred in 1994: 60% of new arrivals to Canada were admitted under the economic class, while only 39% were admitted under the family class (Bélanger & Candiz, 2020). This trend has continued over the past two decades with the admission under family class being now around 20 to 30%, and among those admitted under the family class, about 20 to 25% are sponsored parents and grandparents (Bélanger & Candiz, 2020; IRCC, 2020).

Under a regime of neoliberal immigration governance, older parents and grandparents are regarded as having the lowest labour market participation and the highest need for public health services, which is used to justify restraints on their immigration. The Fraser Institute, a conservative think tank, blamed family class immigration for creating "chain migration" which brings into Canada undesired elderly parent and grandparent immigrants who are "unskilled, often nearly illiterate, and not likely to make a positive economic contribution to Canada" (Collacott, 2014, p. 7). It also claimed that the parents and grandparents coming from the four principal source countries (India, China, Philippines, and Sri Lanka) immigrated to access Canada's better senior benefits, health and social services, and other resources, thus becoming heavy burdens on Canadian society (Collacott, 2014).

Most existing literature offers theoretical critiques of the general PGP policy changes. Our study aims to understand Chinese immigrant families' *experiences* and *perspectives* on obtaining a Super Visa. Our descriptive, interpretive cross-sectional study focused on the following research questions: What are Chinese immigrant families' experiences and perspectives on obtaining a Super Visa? How has Super Visa facilitated or hindered family reunification? Can the Super Visa replace the PGP immigration program in meeting the needs of immigrant families?

Study Method

Following an ethics approval from Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University), we utilized a purposive sampling technique, in which we leveraged our personal networks and posted messages via social media platforms to recruit Chinese immigrants who had successfully applied for a

Super Visa for their parent(s), as well as their parents who had come to Canada via a Super Visa. Within our timeline, 19 participants in the Greater Toronto Area were available for a semi-structured interview. Participants were from nine families: 12 were immigrants and seven were their older parents; nine participants were male and 10 were female. Two participants were single and all others were married. Among the 12 immigrants, eight had immigrated to Canada more than 10 years ago, three more than five years ago, and one less than five years ago. One immigrant family had three children, three families had two children, three families had one child, and two had no children. All children were aged 15 or younger.

All interviews were conducted in Mandarin, and lasted 60 to 90 minutes. Immigrants and their participating parents were each asked seven to 10 questions related to reasons for applying for a Super Visa, experiences with the application, opinions on the three specific requirements for a Super Visa (income requirement, purchasing insurance, taking medical examination), lived experiences of participating parents, and suggestions on how to improve the Super Visa program. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Data were coded and analyzed thematically to explore the advantages and constraints of the Super Visa Program and its effects on family reunification, as well as the broader implications of the policy changes.

Results & Discussion

Reasons for Applying for a Super Visa for Parent(s)

According to the federal government, the main attraction of a Super Visa is the two-year length of stay in Canada (IRCC, 2011a). However, most of our study participants stated that the main reason for choosing a Super Visa was the better chance of approval, plus the easier application process compared with a regular visa. Three participants (15.8%) stated that the two-year stay in Canada was the next main consideration.

Participants from one family (a husband and wife) told us they had unsuccessfully applied four times, once per year between 2008 and 2012, for regular visitor visas for the wife's parents. However, when they applied for the husband's parents, the applications were approved – even though both sets of parents had similar backgrounds and financial situations. This was frustrating for the family, and the wife was diagnosed with mild depression while she was pregnant because of the failure of her parents' applications. The couple needed her parents to come to Canada to provide care and support for her and their newborn, and her parents were also saddened because they could not help their daughter in a time of need. When the couple heard that the Super Visa application was easier, they applied for the wife's parents in 2013, and the application was approved. Another participant had a similar experience: she

had applied for a regular visa for her parents three times without success but their Super Visa application was approved during the first round. Based on this experience, they also applied for and obtained a Super Visa for the husband's parents even though they only planned to stay in Canada for two months.

More than half of the immigrant participants (seven out of 12) had applied for regular visas for their parents without success. The primary reason regular visa applications are declined is because adjudicators assess the financial situation of both sides, whereas the Super Visa mainly focuses solely on the income of the immigrants and their ability to support their parents during their stay, so even low-income parents can still be granted a Super Visa.

Perspectives on the Three Requirements of a Super Visa

Income requirement. Only one participant stated there should not be a minimum income requirement. She noted, "those with low income need more help from their parents; if their parents can come to help them to take care of kids, they will have more time to work." She regarded the income requirement as a form of discrimination:

It is inhumane and unacceptable that they cannot apply for a Super Visa for parents because their income is low. Labourers, for example, also work hard and the jobs they are doing are also needed by Canada. Without them, how can Canada be so clean and beautiful? If everyone does professional jobs, who will do the jobs with low salary? In fact, jobs with low salary are often more toiling, and [because of low salary] people have to work more hours. They must be sad and hurting that they are being treated differently. Their parents are also parents; they are also children of their parents.

Four participants strongly believed the income requirement is necessary, and felt the amount is reasonable and acceptable. One commented, "It is reasonable to have the income requirement because if you even cannot support yourself, how can you support parents? Family from outside will be a burden on the Canadian society." Several others agreed that a minimum income requirement is necessary for the interest of the Canadian public but pointed out the requirement should not be too high.

Medical insurance. All participants agreed it is necessary to purchase private medical insurance for their older parents, but all felt the required amount (\$100,000) is too much and the mandatory one-year term is too long. One explained:

The insured amount does not need to be \$100,000. It is necessary to buy insurance. In doing so, we buy peace of mind. But, once something happens, if they get sick, all of them go back to China. Everybody knows that it is much more expensive to see doctors in Canada.

Another participant commented, “for two parents, the insurance premium is \$4000 to \$5000. How many families can afford this? After paying the tax and mortgage, not much is left.” His wife suggested a policy change whereby premiums could be deducted monthly, or applicants could pay a deposit when signing the one-year contract with the insurance company and then pay premiums monthly.

Medical examination. Most participants agreed with the requirement for a medical examination. One said, “it is necessary. It only costs RMB ¥1300-1500 (around \$240-280). Taking the examination is to take responsibility for yourself. Before the travel, you need to know your own physical condition and to confirm that your health has no big issue.” However, two felt strongly that the medical examination is unnecessary. One said, “this is not necessary at all. We are required to purchase insurance already, and we need to pay for the medicine and take care of parents’ health.” He also noted he could not understand why a Super Visa requires a mandatory medical examination, but a regular visa does not. Another participant agreed that the different requirements do not make sense because if there is an infectious disease, it will not matter if the parent stays for six months with a regular visa or two years with a Super Visa.

Most participants stated their Super Visa application went smoothly, especially compared to a regular visa application, but noted that the process could be improved to better serve families. Several participants noted that the application process is complicated and troublesome, especially for their parents. One suggestion is that the medical examination should be more convenient and easier, perhaps by designating local hospitals in small cities and recognizing their reports. Another suggestion was that the income requirement for a Super Visa should be more flexible, and the mandatory term of private insurance should be shortened to make it more affordable. Another major challenge is the difficulties related to older parents obtaining documents or even copying, scanning, and printing documents without help from others. One participant noted, “since I am sponsoring my parents for a Super Visa, it is no problem whatever documents and information the government asks from me...but [the government] needs to simplify the procedure from the parents’ side.”

Super Visa versus Regular Visitor Visa versus Permanent Immigration

If given the choice, most immigrant participants (10 out of 12) stated they prefer the Super Visa for their parents to a regular visitor visa because approval is easier, there is no need to renew after six months, and because the two-year (maximum) stay offers more flexibility and freedom. Among those who preferred a regular visa, the main considerations were the prohibitive costs of

insurance for a Super Visa and their parents' intention to stay in Canada only for a short period.

All participants recognized the main differences between a Super Visa and permanent immigration: if parents become permanent residents, they can come to Canada at any time and there is no limitation on their stay, which means that they have more freedom to come and go. One participant stated:

They can buy their own house or cottage so they can come or go back whenever they want. With a Super Visa, they only can come when children invite them. The most important thing is the sense of belonging. No permanent status means no safeguard...you are only a visitor.

This participant's husband confirmed that a Super Visa is still a temporary resident visa and parents cannot stay as they desire, and that Super Visa holders have no entitlement to a pension or other health and social welfare services.

Despite complaints about the expensive insurance, difficulty with medical examinations, and income requirements, all participants noted that the Super Visa is more easily approved, thus bringing parents to Canada faster than a regular visa; it is especially helpful for families whose applications for a regular visa cannot be approved. Most felt that the Super Visa is a necessary and beneficial program. One said, "at least I have this option. I cannot sponsor my parents for immigration currently, but with the Super Visa, they still can come...they can stay for two years, it is also easy to be approved, I'd like to apply for Super Visa even if I have to buy insurance..." Another participant made similar remarks:

People need it and it has advantage. For example, it only requires immigrant children meet income requirement, not the parents, so like me, if there are issues on parent's side, regular visa application will be refused. This is why I want to endorse it most. If there is no Super Visa, my mother would not have come when I was sick last year, and no one would have taken care of me. I think it is very necessary to have the Super Visa policy

In summary, although participants felt that the Super Visa program cannot replace permanent immigration, they felt it is helpful in facilitating family reunification.

Older Parents' Contributions to Canada

Our findings are in stark contrast to the negative portrayal of older parents. We found that visiting parents provide tremendous emotional, social, and economic support to their immigrant children in need. Parents, especially mothers, appear to play a crucial and instrumental role in the settlement of immigrants with young children. Several parents came to Canada to help their

daughters during the postpartum period or to provide childcare so their daughters could return to work. One participant said the following about her mother's help during the postpartum period:

My mom took care of my second kid during the first year of her life. Because my mom was here, I returned to work. I quit my job when my mom went back. When my mom came again during the summer, I returned to work.

Some of the parent participants reported they were very busy while in Canada. One said she had come to Canada twice: the first time, she came to help take care of her grandchild who was then six months old so her daughter could return to work. She said she also cooked, cleaned, and did laundry. At the time, her daughter's friend was living with her and had also just given birth, so the interviewee had to take care of two babies and two new mothers. She laughed, saying "I cooked six to seven times a day... I was spinning all day in the kitchen." On her second visit, she focused on taking care of her two grandchildren so her daughter could go to work. She said she would take her grandson to a Chinese school in the morning, then go home for breakfast, and then take her granddaughter to a community centre every Monday to Thursday from 9 am until noon. After the community centre, she would make lunch for her granddaughter and then the granddaughter would nap while she cleaned. Later, she would prepare dinner for the whole family. She also had to pick up her grandson around 6 pm if her daughter and son-in-law were busy.

Some participants commented that the emotional connection with and support from parents is most important because it provides peace of mind and a sense of belonging. For example, one participant was very ill the year prior to our interview. He was single and urgently needed help from his parents. His mother came to Canada on a Super Visa to take care of him. He commented:

When you are alone and away from the family for so long, it is a very sweet thing to have your mom nearby. I am also very happy when she is around, and this is very helpful for my recovery. It is even more effective than medicine. I cannot put into words what a big help she was to me during this time.

He also emphasized that a parent's contribution cannot be calculated only based on money; the main value is family affection, connection, and emotional and social contribution. Another participant said:

I got a degree in Canada. I work and pay tax. I contribute to Canada, right? We have a family; we have parents; we have our emotional and personal needs, which are very important as well. Our parents take care of us and help us live happy, healthy, and more productive lives, and this contribution cannot be any less than the dollars generated through paid work.

All participants felt the value of parents should not be calculated only through their direct (paid work) contribution in the labour market. Older parents contribute to the labour market because without childcare and other domestic

support from parents, their adult children could not have returned to work or work full time or long hours.

Decisions About Immigration: Not All Want to Stay

When asked about whether they would want their parents to live in Canada permanently, some participants said this is something they had seriously considered. One had already submitted the sponsorship application:

The main reason is that my brother and I both live in Canada. We hope that parents can spend more time with us while they are getting older, which is also the reason why I have not applied for Canadian citizenship yet. I worry that if something happens to my parents, I have to apply for a visa to go back and cannot arrive in time to help them. So, it will be more convenient if they are able to stay in Canada.

Another participant said if he can meet the requirements, he will sponsor his mother:

If she has permanent status, she can come and go anytime; there is no time limitation for her stay in Canada and once she becomes a Canadian citizen, it is more convenient to travel to other countries with a Canadian passport.

In contrast, the participant whose mother came to take care of him when he was ill said he knew if he needed help his mother would come, but otherwise she would prefer to stay in China. Another felt it is difficult for older parents to immigrate to Canada and commented that the income requirement is too high for her to sponsor her parents. Others stated that while they would like to sponsor their parents, the decision would depend on whether their parents want to come, the income requirement, the application processing time, their parents' age and health condition, the family's needs, and other factors.

Five of the 12 immigrant participants clearly stated they would not sponsor their parents, and two of the seven parent participants stated they would be unwilling to immigrate to Canada. One participant met the income requirement but said she would not sponsor her mother because her mother does not want to come permanently; her mother does not stay long each time and the Super Visa allows her to visit freely. Moreover, if the mother had health concerns, she would prefer to seek medical treatment in China because the Canadian system is so slow and she worries the treatment may be delayed.

Several parent participants said their life in China is easier, more convenient, and colourful. One said, "I do not want to immigrate to Canada. I live on a convenient street in China, and I have pension and medical insurance supported by the government. Most importantly, there are lots of activities for us in China." Another immigrant participant commented that his brother lives in the same city as his parents and his parents have a good life in China, but his wife is an only child, so they worry that her parents will have no one to

care for them in China as they age. However, he also noted that, “the ‘only child’ issue is a concern but if parents do not like to stay here, forcing them to come is not good for them.”²

Our findings contribute to an evidence-based understanding of the Super Visa program and the experiences of immigrant families with it. First, all participants in our study believe the Super Visa is a good policy; it is particularly welcomed by families whose applications for a regular visa are unsuccessful, or if the parents’ financial situation is not strong or they cannot provide some required documents for a regular visitor visa. Second, we found that the biggest attraction of a Super Visa is its easier and higher approval rate compared to a regular visa, rather than the longer stay of two years. Third, most participants regarded the three specific requirements of the Super Visa as necessary. Whereas most felt the insurance premiums are too high, all felt private medical insurance is necessary for peace of mind, with some stating they would buy it even if there were no such requirement. Most participants felt the income requirement and medical examination are necessary burdens.

Our findings confirmed those of other scholars in that the Super Visa cannot replace the PGP immigration program because it is still a type of visitor visa. Although our participants had purchased private medical insurance for their parents, they still worried about unaffordable expenses if something unexpected happened to their parents (because only those with permanent resident status are covered by the public healthcare system). Second, without permanent resident status, parents cannot freely come, stay, and leave Canada. It is still a big cost, even a burden, for many immigrant families to apply for a Super Visa. Our findings reveal that the moratorium on the PGP immigration program and the implementation of the Super Visa as its alternative mean that the federal government is reluctant to grant older parents or grandparents permanent resident status that would render them eligible for public healthcare and other public services and welfare: they are framed as undesirable and underserving, and an unwanted burden. This demonstrates how social injustice can be integrated with and legalized by immigration policy and programs.

² “Only Child” issue: In 1979, China implemented the “one-child policy” which stipulated that one couple in urban areas could only have one child, and if they had the second child (or more children), they would be punished by a fine or other administrative measures. This policy was terminated by the Chinese government at the end of October 2015, but the ramifications of the one child policy are far-reaching. For example, when the parents age, they have no other child to depend on except the only child, and if the wife and husband are both an only child in their families, they have to support and take care of four older parents.

Social Justice Implications of Ignoring Parents and Grandparents' Contributions

Scholars observe that the absence of collective or state provision for care results in the commonly existing care deficit among wealthy Global North countries and engenders the rise of a global care market (Man & Cohen, 2015; Zhou, 2013). In Canada, the state views the market as the solution to the care deficit and utilizes a caregiver immigration program to attract foreign care providers in response to the unmet care need. However, socioeconomically disadvantaged groups such as immigrants, especially newcomers from the Global South, often cannot afford to hire a foreign worker (nanny or caregiver); as a result, unpaid childcare by grandparents is integrated into the global care chain in a hidden way in the name of family obligations (Zhou, 2013). In this way, the unpaid care practice and contribution of (grand)parents not only is treated as a personal need or dependency (rather than reproductive work which supports and reproduces the workforce and maintains social and family structures) and is excluded from the market value calculation, but also their social contribution to the sustainability of society is devalued and rendered invisible in public policy discourse.

Under the neoliberal government model, on the one hand, unpaid childcare and domestic labour by parents and grandparents are counted as zero contribution to the economy, so they are framed only as an economic cost or human liability (the opposite of human capital) and a drain to Canada's welfare system; on the other hand, their needs for care and support are transferred to their immigrant children through requirements of the Super Visa and PGP immigration programs. By using a simple cost-benefit calculation, the state not only ignores the invaluable intergenerational support among immigrant family members, but also utilizes immigration programs as a governance tool to legitimate its cutback of social resources and download the state's social caregiving responsibility to individual families, particularly immigrant women, and their older female parents, thus reflecting multiple inequalities and exploitations based on gender, age, and geography of care (Aggarwal & Das Gupta, 2013; Zhou, 2013).

Through the income requirement, private insurance purchasing, and forced promise of financial support to parents and grandparents, the state imposes on and shifts its collective care and support responsibility to immigrants and their families, thus realizing its social-political goals: controlling population flow, keeping a relatively young population, meeting labour market needs, reducing welfare deficit, and even turning the structural deficit of a neoliberal society, particularly its insufficient social support system, into individual responsibilities. We argue the market cannot provide social justice for all; social injustice is built into global market economies. Our study reveals that social injustice can not only manifest in conventional notions and forms of directly allocating and distributing resources and welfare within a society, it can also be integrated both "with" and "in" the neoliberal immigration policy

design, formation and implementation based on a racial hierarchy of worthiness. Our study demonstrates that social injustice can be enforced and realized by subjugation and is detrimental to vulnerable populations who are framed as inferior and unwanted.

Additionally, our study is reflective of Foucault's framing of governmentality as an art of government, whereby under a neoliberal governmentality model, immigration programs are utilized as an effective governance technique to direct self-government among the governed through setting up requirements that direct them to pursue self-reliance and conduct responsibly. Although the three main specific requirements for a Super Visa engendered high additional costs, even burdens on immigrant families, all our participants welcomed the Super Visa program and greatly appreciated the new opportunity to bring their parents to Canada. One participant felt the Super Visa is very humane, and the income requirement is necessary:

It is your problem that you have low income. You should try your best to adapt to society, rather than to ask the society to adapt to you. When invite parents to Canada, children should have consideration for their parents. If your income is not good enough to afford your own life, then how can you support their lives when they come? It is because no government would like the foreigners to be a burden on it. Every immigrant child is adult, you should take responsibility. Only if you have the ability to sponsor your parents to come to visit you, you should do it. If you cannot meet the minimum income requirement, it only demonstrates that you do not have the ability.

Moffette and Vadasaria (2016) remind us to pay attention to how biopolitical governmentality mobilizes racialization through internalization of racial logics and rationalities, self-surveillance and self-regulation. Through privatization and internalization of responsibility, the state not only transfers its social responsibility to immigrants and families but also legitimates its framing of those who cannot meet the income requirement as incapable and undeserving, thus justifying deprivation of their entitled rights (e.g., reunification with families) and citizenship rights. We argue that the neoliberal strategy of freedom of choice, self-reliance and self-responsibilization and its internalization among immigrants enables immigrants to use market logic to measure and judge themselves and other social actors, thus justifying state's divesting authority through immigration policy to destroy immigrants' social and moral agency. The worst part of this is that immigrants only attend to the immediate benefit but forget to ponder the problem which is caused exactly by the same action or policy of the state. This indicates the injustice of modern governance becomes more hidden and circuitous under the neoliberal values.

Mavelli (2017) observed the neoliberal government has shifted from "the sphere of politics, where the individual is ruled as a 'subject of rights' and stepped into the economic sphere, where he [sic] is governed as a 'subject of interests'" (p. 497). However, a focus on considerations of interest and economic cost-benefit calculations will inevitably result in ignoring rights,

inequalities, unfair immigration policy and practices and social injustice. One of our participants commented:

The status under Super Visa is still a visitor; what will happen after two years? You must leave. Each of us needs the sense of belonging... Parents coming to Canada without formal immigrant status will always feel like outsiders. We also will feel like outsiders because our parents have no status. That says, we are different from local people.

Rights and the granting of rights by law are social constructions which shape the lives of people and establish boundaries of belonging in a society. One main feature of modernity is construction of difference through political projects of race, which categorizes population as civilized and uncivilized, deserving and undeserving of rights, thus creating regimes of inclusions and exclusions (Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016, p. 5). Framing parents and grandparents of immigrants only as a burden and imposing disparate treatments on them reflects that immigrants and their families especially those from the Global South are still structured as undesirable others and aliens. This fosters a climate of distrust, discrimination and exclusion toward immigrants and encourages on-going practices of inequality and injustice through immigration programs and policies.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this is the first study to specifically explore the experiences of Chinese immigrant families with the Super Visa program. We found that the Super Visa program is helpful, especially to reunite families whose applications for a regular visitor visa cannot be approved. However, the Super Visa cannot replace the PGP immigration program for families who want to permanently reunite with their parents in Canada, and it cannot foster a sense of belonging for immigrants in Canada. Our study participants' main consideration for any form of sponsoring parents or grandparents to Canada was intergenerational care and support rather than access to Canadian social benefits. Parents have provided tremendous emotional, social, and economic support to their immigrant children in need; especially mothers and grandmothers have played a crucial and instrumental role in the settlement of immigrants with young children. These findings debunk the misconception that older parents or grandparents from the Global South are non-contributors and welfare seekers.

Under the neoliberal governmentality that is grounded in market norms and mechanisms, older parents' and grandparents' contributions are rendered invisible in the PGP policy design and changes including the Super Visa initiative, and they are framed as only a burden, even a threat, to Canadian society. This indicates a structural inequality and injustice of neoliberal

governance, and that Canada's neoliberal immigration regime still has race, gender, and class dimensions that intertwine with other stigmatizing dynamics such as ageism, ableism, worthiness, and otherness within the state's power relations. By utilizing immigration programs as a governance tool, the state not only has effectively controlled the mobility of older adults to Canada but also has legitimized the transition from its collective care responsibility into the personal responsibility of immigrant families. Immigrant families from the Global South who constitute the main body of the PGP immigration and Super Visa applications are affected most by the policy changes, but they have welcomed the Super Visa for family reunification despite its prohibitive insurance and other extra costs and difficulties. This demonstrates that social injustice is even more implicit and subtle, and even more abstruse under neoliberal values and mechanisms, and has become a part and parcel of the practice of neoliberal governmentality. This calls for more works from social activists to illuminate, address, and challenge these forms of inequality, differentiation, and exclusion, and find effective ways to value and protect the human and civil rights of immigrants.

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