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What constitutes a good place to age? A qualitative exploration of the concept of home in varied aging contexts

Authors	Wang, Qi
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WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD PLACE TO AGE?
A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE CONCEPT OF HOME IN VARIED AGING
CONTEXTS

by

QI WANG

Under the Direction of Heying Jenny Zhan PhD

ABSTRACT

This dissertation research explores Chinese older adults' perceptions of home in varied aging contexts and assesses the process of obtaining a feeling of home after relocation in an old age. Two sets of qualitative data were drawn for the study: one was collected in Atlanta, Georgia to understand Chinese older immigrants' home-making experiences in the U.S. (n=21); the other one was drawn in Xi'an, Shan Xi Province to delineate manifestations and pathways that lead to older people's feelings of home in six different long-term care (LTC) facilities in China (n=38). The study intends to highlight the multi-faceted meanings of home, the interactive nature

between human agency and aging environments, as well as the interconnected manner between multiple dimensions of home. Analyses of both samples revealed three premises of home: 1) Home, in its essence, entailed older people's subjective feelings in relation to their dwelling place, including feelings of comfort and safety, independence and a sense of being accepted, valued and supported. 2) These home feelings were shaped by objective components and attributes in older people's living environment which were embedded in the wider social, cultural, and political systems, and simultaneously affected by individuals' actions and emotions; 3) Home is a fluid and dynamic concept that requires continuous personal and environmental adjustment. Taken together, no matter aging in the U.S. or in LTC facilities in China, older people expect their environments to bring about positive residential experiences by compensating for their declines, maximizing their opportunities for independence and mastery, keeping them active and engaged with others, and eventually making them feel good about the place and themselves. This dissertation research offers a full discussion of policy implications for social services and social workers, LTC providers and planners, state and federal government agencies, and aging policy makers at national levels.

INDEX WORDS: Home-making, Residential experiences, Long-term care, Older adults

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CONTEXTS

by

QI WANG

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2017

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QI WANG

Committee Chair: Heying Jenny Zhan

Committee: Candace Kemp

Elisabeth Burgess

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
LIST OF TABLES	XII
LIST OF FIGURES	XIII
1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 My Childhood and Dissertation Research	1
1.2 My Family—My Grandmother, Mother, and Myself.....	3
1.3 Statement of Bias.....	6
1.4 The Statement of Purpose.....	8
<i>1.4.1 Goal and Objectives of the Research.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>1.4.2 Need for the Research.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>1.4.3 Summary of Research.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>1.4.4 Significance of the Research</i>	<i>16</i>
1.5 Organization of the Dissertation.....	18
2 CHAPTER TWO: THE MAKING OF A HOME IN A FOREIGN LAND--	
UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF HOME-MAKING AMONG IMMIGRANT	
CHINESE ELDERS.....	19
2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 The Concept of Home in the U.S.....	21
2.3 The Concept of Home in the Chinese Context.....	22

2.4	Concept of Home for Immigrants in a Life Course Perspective.....	24
2.5	Research Design.....	25
2.5.1	<i>Research Setting and Sites</i>	25
2.5.2	<i>Data collection</i>	26
2.5.3	<i>Data Analysis</i>	27
2.6	Study Findings.....	29
2.6.1	<i>Traditional Understanding of Home: Interdependence and Linked Lives</i> . 30	
2.6.2	<i>Agency: Seeking for Independence and Control</i>	32
2.6.3	<i>Integration: Seeking for Social Belonging and Supports</i>	38
2.7	Discussion.....	42
2.7.1	<i>From Interdependence to Independence: Adaptation and Transformation in the life course</i>	43
2.7.2	<i>Home is a Process of Making—the Importance of Agency in the Life Course</i>	45
2.7.3	<i>The Importance of Social Environment in the Life Course of Finding a Home</i>	46
2.8	Policy Implication and Conclusion	47
2.9	Study Limitations	48
2.10	REFERENCES	50
3	FINDING A SENSE OF HOME IN LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS IN CHINA: QUALITATIVE RESEACH FINDINGS AND RELATIVE STRATEGIES	55

3.1	Introduction	55
3.2	The Research Design.....	58
3.2.1	<i>Study Setting.....</i>	58
3.2.2	<i>Sample Selection</i>	59
3.2.3	<i>Data Collection Procedure.....</i>	60
3.2.4	<i>Data Analysis.....</i>	61
3.3	Findings.....	62
3.3.1	<i>Physical Home: Comfort, Safe and enhanced mobility</i>	62
3.3.2	<i>Social Home: Meaningful relationships and Shared Activities</i>	67
3.3.3	<i>Personal Home: harmony without uniformity.....</i>	76
3.4	Discussion and Conclusion	81
3.4.1	<i>Sense of Mastery and Home</i>	82
3.4.2	<i>New Model of LTC Services under Environmental Gerontology Perspective in China</i>	84
3.5	REFERENCES.....	88
4	CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SENSE OF HOME IN LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS IN CHINA	94
4.1	Introduction.....	94
4.2	Elder Care and Societal Changes in China.....	95
4.2.1	<i>Development of Long-term care Services in China.....</i>	96

4.2.2	<i>Research Focus of LTC Facilities in China</i>	98
4.3	Theoretical Perspectives about Home in the West	100
4.4	Research Focus of Home in LTC Environment in the West	102
4.4.1	<i>Personal Aspect of Home in LTC: Autonomy, Privacy, Self.</i>	103
4.4.2	<i>Social Aspects of Home: Friendship, Shared Activities</i>	104
4.5	Research Methods	106
4.5.1	<i>Introduction to Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)</i>	106
4.5.2	<i>Research Setting and Sample</i>	108
4.5.3	<i>Data Collection</i>	109
4.5.4	<i>QCA Data Analysis</i>	110
4.6	Findings	114
4.6.1	<i>Pathway I</i>	115
4.6.2	<i>Pathway II</i>	118
4.6.3	<i>Pathway III</i>	120
4.6.4	<i>Pathway IV</i>	123
4.7	Discussion and Implications	126
4.7.1	<i>Multiple Pathways Leading to the Feeling of Home</i>	126
4.7.2	<i>Impact of a Single Condition on Elders' Feeling of Home</i>	128
4.7.3	<i>Rethinking the Conceptualization of Home</i>	132
4.8	Limitations and Conclusions	135

4.9	REFERENCES	137
5	CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	145
5.1	What Does Home Mean to Older People?	145
5.1.1	<i>Comfort and Safety</i>	<i>145</i>
5.1.2	<i>Being Accepted and Supported through Meaningful Relationships</i>	<i>148</i>
5.1.3	<i>A Sense of Independence and Mastery</i>	<i>152</i>
5.2	The Process of Making a Home	156
5.2.1	<i>Home-making in the U.S.</i>	<i>156</i>
5.2.2	<i>Home-making in LTC Settings in China</i>	<i>158</i>
5.3	Environmental Supports and Policy Implications	163
5.3.1	<i>Environmental Supports and Home in the U.S.</i>	<i>163</i>
5.3.2	<i>Environmental Supports and Home in LTC settings in China</i>	<i>166</i>
5.4	Conclusion	172
5.5	REFERENCES	174

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Elderly participants' demographic information (N=21)	28
Table 2. Demographic characteristics of elderly participants (N=30)	59
Table 3. Interview Guide	110
Table 4. Truth Table	113
Table 5. Configuration of conditions	114

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Home making process among Chinese elderly immigrants	30
Figure 2. When all institutional conditions are fulfilled (Pathway I)	116
Figure 3. When personal hobby is missing (Pathway II).....	118
Figure 4. When management, formal activities and friendship are missing (Pathway III)	120
Figure 5. When care and management are missing (Pathway IV).....	123

1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 My Childhood and Dissertation Research

Before I went to study abroad in Canada for my bachelor's degree, I was born and raised in a military subarea sanatorium¹ for 17 years with my mom and grandma. The sanatorium was the place where I spent all my childhood and youth and where my memories fulfilled. I knew every elderly person in the community, and they all knew me as well. I called them grandma and grandpa along with their family names, and they called me by my nickname. We were like a big and integrated family that we always showed our sincerity in heart and mutual supports to each other. Even now, I can still recall that my mom was awfully busy when I was little. Sometimes, she did not even have time to prepare meals on time. In situations like this, I usually picked a grandma or grandpa's place, knocked on their doors, and had dinner with them without having any feelings of imposition, only joy. To show my appreciation and manner, I used to give grandmas and grandpas a hand when they needed to carry grocery bags from the hillside to their homes. They were no different from my own grandma or grandpa. The traditional Chinese culture ideal of "respecting the old and cherishing the young" was put into action and upheld substantially by every member in the community. In those gone-by years, grandmas and grandpas witnessed my growth from a crawling baby to a naughty little girl, a rebellious teenager, a college student, a wife and a mom. I have also witnessed how they aged from being a fully capable person who could look after grandchildren, do garden and house work, and arrange all kinds of family get-together events during festivals to become someone who suffer chronic diseases, experience loss of mobility, and in demand of care from children.

¹ A residential community is designed for retired cadres, their spouses and aging parents from the military.

When grandmas and grandpas at their 60s, most families had three generations co-residing, like my family did. However, as grandchildren hit the school-age, most second and third generations moved out from the sanatorium to the city. Then, the lively community gradually became vacant and quiet. Grandmas and grandpas were left alone. Some of them were lucky enough to have filial children to visit them on a weekly base or provide instant support when they need help while others only met with children during festival times. As they grew older, lives became harder. I used to hear gossip about some grandmas' or grandpas' health problems, family and life struggles, conflicts with live-in caregivers, and plans about where to stay. Because I stayed for a long time in the sanatorium, I was not surprised that most grandmas and grandpas chose to age in the community rather than move to their children's homes. The community was located in the suburb of a city with beautiful and relaxing environments. Grandmas and grandpas had total ownership of their houses, and each house came with a garden, which was not common in China, past or present. Most elderly residents would grow vegetables to be self-sufficient or plant flowers to decorate their homes. In harvest seasons, grandmas and grandpas often exchange fruits of labor, and that was a proud thing for them. The limited subarea sanatorium was different from other ordinary residential communities for it provided high quality aging services to retired military cadres, including transportation, meal services, medical and emergency assistance, and varied recreational services. With such aging-friendly residential environment, older persons could carry out their most essential activities and remain an independent lifestyle without relying on their busy children. The age-friendly environment in the sanatorium, such as home ownership, the size of residence place, safe and convenient physical features, and availability of daily living assistance, health services, and recreational activities probably explained why some grandmas and grandpas would not want to relocate.

More importantly, grandmas and grandpas identified the sanatorium as important not just because the place had a great relevance to their life and functioning, but the place blended their life histories, memories, personalities, and shared experiences with other residents. Grandpas in the sanatorium were all retired cadres from different military districts. I can still recall their heart-breaking stories of being involved in wars and Cultural Revolution. Although grandmas and grandpas seldom talk about these distressing stories, they bore the hallmarks of the historical era with shared understanding of life, which in a sense united them together as a big family. Those collective experiences and memories in dark days in the Chinese history made grandmas and grandpas cherish their lives in the age of peace even more.

When I was young, the word ‘place’ or ‘home’ did not mean anything particular to me until I went to study abroad in Canada, realizing how much the sanatorium meant to me. As a young student living overseas, I have confronted many unexpected hardships, economically, socially, and emotionally. When I had emotional breakdowns, I always held a strong wish that I had never left home, and I wanted to go back. During my times overseas, I met some immigrant families, especially during get-together events or church services in neighborhoods. A lot of them were young couples with a kid or two and aging parents. Parents were helping young couples to raise grandchildren. Most of them did not speak English or knew how to drive. They enjoyed talking to other Chinese people, asking questions and sharing life experiences of living in a foreign land. By interacting with them, I started to wonder if my parents could also migrate and settle down in Canada, and wondered if they could make a new home in an unfamiliar place?

1.2 My Family—My Grandmother, Mother, and Myself

During my years in college, I had a strong emotional reliance on my mother. At that time, smart phones or video chat were scarce. I had to purchase expensive international phone cards to

chat with her. I worked part time in several different places, making extra money for meals and for phone cards. Even in situations like this, I kept calling my mom every two days. I remember, among those countless phone calls, my mother and I had several deep conversations about where they wanted to stay in old age and ways of aging. My mom talked a lot about her issues with my grandma. My grandma lives in Zhuhai and my parents live in Guangzhou. These two cities are 3 to 4 hour drive apart. My mom has two younger brothers, but they are either geographically distant from my grandma or being too busy. My mom takes the full responsibilities of caring for my grandma. When my grandma was young, she was a wise, independent, efficient, and able-minded woman. However, all of these good qualities have become a potential source of conflicts when it comes to family support in old age. My mom wanted my grandma to move from Zhuhai to Guangzhou, either live in a separate apartment in the same community or co-reside with her. My grandma insisted that she would not want to relocate to any place unless she no longer could climb stairs, do grocery shopping, or take care of herself.

There are problems with both plans. The place where my grandma lives is on the backside of a hill. The apartment is damp and dark all year long, and the distance from home to the market is too far for walking or even for public transportation. The physical environment is certainly not suitable for my grandma to live alone but she enjoys close connections with her neighbors and convenient medical services near the community. Besides the poor physical environment of my grandma's place, another major issue is the long distance driving from Guangzhou to Zhuhai, which makes it difficult for my mom to respond to my grandma's urgent and immediate needs for help. On the other hand, if my grandma moves to Guangzhou, my mom would take a good care of her, but my grandma's wider social support network would be cut off completely. At the same time, my grandma thought that hospitals are too far away from where

my parents live, making her feel unsettled. More importantly, my grandma and mom have their very distinct and unique personalities and ways of life. Living together is not a good idea.

The question of which place is better for my grandma to age has been caught between a rock and a hard place. My grandma is now approaching her 90s, and my mom is getting older and not as physically strong as she used to be. Family members all knew that my grandma prefers to aging in place and being self-reliant. However, the striking fact is that as my grandma is getting older, she can only perform the most essential activities of daily living. The meals she prepares are no longer tasty, and house chores become a heavy burden on her. Sometimes, my mom tells me that she is worn out by traveling between the two cities, but she has no choices. Whenever we touch on topics like this, my mom seems helpless. She told me that she would not want to see her daughter, her only child, follow the same foot-steps of a hard route. She wanted to move to a long-term care (LTC) facility with my dad when they in need of more intensive care. I remember replying my mom in a firm and direct manner, “If that is where you truly want to stay, I respect your choice, but we need to locate a nice facility where I don’t need to worry about your safety and care, and you and dad can also feel good about living there.”

My childhood experiences with neighborhood grandmas and grandpas in the military subarea sanatorium, multiple interactions with older immigrants in Canada, and involvement in family discussions about aging together inspired me to wonder what kind of environments constitute a good place for older people. If relocation to a more supportive environment at an old age is an inevitable choice for some seniors, then are the older adults able to re-gain a feeling of being at home as they used to hold to their original place? How do they perceive the new living environment in relation to their everyday life, and are there multiple pathways to the re-creation of home? Inspired by my personal and familial stories, I raise these central research questions in

this dissertation study, in hope of finding answers for me, my family, and millions of families in China and in other Chinese communities around the world.

1.3 Statement of Bias

This dissertation is comprised by two sets of data, with one collected in the U.S. and the other one collected in China. In the course of dealing with data collection and analysis in the U.S., there are occasions that I may be seen to praise aging and welfare policies in the U.S. that maximize older persons' opportunities to aging in place while feel disappointed about the social support system in China. Neither complementing nor criticism was part of my intention in the first research. Thus, I feel that it is necessary to clearly present my standpoint. As a researcher, my solo intent was to objectively report what elderly participants have shared with me about their path toward finding a sense of home, rather than pressing judgment on their reflections. Most of the elders in the first study have gone through historic upheavals in the Chinese history, and some of them indeed held complicated feelings toward their country of origin. I did feel sympathy for what they have experienced prior to migrating to the U.S. and came to understand why they cherished their life and showed great appreciation for the welfare support system in American society. My personal experiences of residing in both countries for over a decade may bias my interpretation in ways that I may concur with the Chinese seniors whom I interviewed that generous welfare policies and practical aging assistance in the U.S. may indeed be important to Chinese elderly immigrants for their settling down experiences and well-being.

Moreover, my academic training in the U.S. may also result in potential bias in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data in the Chinese social context. Specifically, my training in sociology and gerontology in the U.S. constantly reminds me the importance of independence, self-awareness, freedom and privacy in regard to individuals' lives. Thus, all of

these issues were included in designing the study and conducting interviews. However, once I was in the field, I began to realize that my measures were not culturally sensitive and appropriate. Several elderly participants looked puzzled and confused when they face questions like, “do you think your privacy has been respected and preserved well in the facility?” and “do you have freedom to do things as you please?” The concept of privacy that is held so important is actually rather foreign in China. It is nearly untranslatable into the Chinese language. In the process of the research, I had learned to discover my own westernized concepts, and re-learn the Chinese context and culture as shown and presented to me every day during the research.

The goal of my qualitative research was to add to the existing knowledge and attempt to capture rich descriptions of respondents’ various experiences in their search for a home. I have to acknowledge, that a researcher’s personal background indeed had an impact on what dimensions of information that is to be collect. Thus, my data collection and interpretation of the second set of data in China is likely to reveal occasional bias in certain aspects. For instance, the personal dimension of conceptualizing the notion of home might be overly emphasized, which was not fully in accordance with the social norm of collectivism in Chinese culture. However, as I pushed elderly participants to consider those issues that they may have never thought about, I came to realize that independence, freedom and self-awareness also mattered to Chinese seniors as most American seniors do, but just taken in a culturally appropriate way. I truly appreciated elderly participants’ cooperation even in situations that they might be struggling with some personal issues while being honest about their experiences and feelings. In that spirit, I present my observations, analyses, and commentaries in the following chapters.

1.4 The Statement of Purpose

1.4.1 Goal and Objectives of the Research

The major purpose of this dissertation research is to gain an overall understanding about Chinese older persons' perceptions of home in varied aging contexts and assess pathways that lead to older persons' developments of the sense of home. The research intends to highlight the multi-faceted manifestation of home, the interactive nature between human agency and aging environments, as well as the interconnected manner between multiple dimensions of home. Specifically, there are four objectives: 1) to examine the process of re-constructing a sense of home in a transnational aging context among Chinese elderly immigrants; 2) to examine factors that contribute to older persons' construction of a sense of home in LTC settings in China; 3) to delineate the levels of importance among the factors and the interaction among these factors in relation to Chinese older persons' sense of home in elder care institutions; 4) to identify pathways that generate older persons' sense of home in LTC service settings. The ultimate goal of the study is to gain a thorough understanding about the prospects for advancing home environments in relation to Chinese seniors' aging experiences and outcomes in different societal contexts based on empirical and theoretical findings.

1.4.2 Need for the Research

As people reach their 60s and 70s, features in their residential environment become particularly prominent to their aging experiences and outcomes. With increasing age-related limitations in functional capacities and mobility, older people spend a lot of time in and around their dwelling places, neighborhoods, and the community (Golant, 2015). Hence, home becomes a central place where older people conduct most of their daily activities and carry out meaningful social interactions with family, neighbors, and friends. It represents a feeling of rootedness and

satisfaction, and emotional attachment becomes increasingly important with age (Prieto-Flores et al., 2011).

Existing research finds a significant association between home environments and older people's health and well-being (Brownie, Horstmanshof, & Garbutt, 2014; Eyles & Williams, 2008; Wiles et al., 2009). This research, predominantly focused on developed countries in the West, conceptualizes home as multi-faceted, whether in a residential community or LTC settings. However, environmental gerontology research rarely examines older people's conceptualization of home in Chinese society or in Chinese communities in American society. This dissertation research will add to the existing literature in three aspects.

First, in the age of globalization, transnational migration is becoming more common and affordable. Large numbers of immigrants are pouring into American soil. Among them, Chinese exceeded Mexicans and became the largest number of new arrivals in 2013 (USA News Today, July 7, 2015). Many of these new immigrants are older adults joining their adult children in America. Aging in a transnational environment is not as simple as transferring from one geographical location to another. Settling down in a brand new society is commonly associated with numerous challenges, especially for older people moving from less developed countries to developed countries, such as language and transportation barriers (Trang, 2008), lack of cultural knowledge to access social and medical resources and services (Horn & Schweppe, 2016), limited support network (Kim, Park, & Heo, 2010), isolation and loneliness due to residential constraints (Tres & Mazumdar, 2002), and shifting power, values, and relationships in family life (Glick, 2010). In light of the challenges that older immigrants face, it is critical to have a thorough understanding of how factors from personal, familial, and social environmental aspects

conjointly affect Chinese older immigrants' experiences of re-creating a sense of home in American society.

Second, relocation in old age requires adjustment. Such adjustment applies not only to transnational migration but also to the move from home to LTC institutions. In recent decades, LTC institutions have proliferated dramatically in China as a response to the increasing demand of formal elder care. Similar to other aging societies, China also bears challenges along with population aging. In 2012, the number of older people aged 60 years and above was 185 million, and this number is projected to rise to 300 million by the year of 2025 and 400 million by 2035 (Wu & Peng, 2012). More importantly, the speed of aging in China far exceeds that of any other countries. According to United Nations projections from 2013, the elderly population (65+) in China is estimated to double in 20 years (from 7% to 14%), compared to 115 years in France, 85 years in Sweden, 69 years in the United States of America, and 59 years in Germany (United Nations 2013; Zeng, 2009). The population aging in developed countries has taken place progressively, leaving enough time for governments to respond to the advancement of aging policies and services (Powell & Chen, 2012). On the other hand, population aging in China has appeared within the time span of a single generation, which pressures the country to modify its elder care and welfare system in a short period of time to meet the increasing demands of its aging population (Zhang et al., 2012). Simultaneously, China has also witnessed a rapid growth of its oldest-old population (aged 80 and above). It is projected that the oldest old will grow from 2 to 3 million in 2013 to 90 million in 2050 (United Nations, 2013). The unprecedented increase of the oldest-old population challenges both formal and informal elder care system in China given that they are the age group that needs the most intensive care (Zeng, 2009).

In addition to the increasing need of formal elder care services, there is also a proliferation of LTC institutions in China. The rise of institutional LTC is partially attributed to the weakened state of familial care due to the unintended consequences of the One-child per family policy implemented in the late 1970s (Wu & Du, 2012). Since then, the fertility rate has sharply declined from 5.6-6.3 in the 1950s and 1960s to 2.2 in the 1970s and 1980s and around 1.5 per woman in recent years (Flaherty et al., 2007; Peng, 2011). The extended family has been replaced by the “4-2-1” nuclear family structure (four grandparents, two adults, one child) (Wu & Du, 2012). Many young couples face conflicting responsibilities of work and care for aging parents and young child, making the traditional family-based elder care difficult to sustain (Fan, 2007).

At the same time, the One-child policy has also altered the traditionally gender-based allocation of responsibility for parental care. Parents of the only child are willing to invest in the child’s education and hold similar expectations regardless of gender (Xu et al., 2007). As women are gaining more access to higher education, they are more likely to obtain better job opportunities and become more career-oriented than ever before (Guan et al., 2007). Financial independence leads to an increased ability for women to resist what is traditionally and culturally expected of them: to remain in the home and care for the young and old. Living separately from aging parents among young couples has become a primary mode of living arrangement, which has led to an increased number of parents living as empty-nesters (Zhang, 2007) as well as pushing older people to relocate to LTC institutions.

Confronted with the decreased availability of family-based care, real-life problems emerge: who will take care of aging parents, and where should elderly parents reside in order to maintain a healthy aging? Although traditional family care is still encouraged nationwide in

China, modern families need more societal support for the care for elderly parents. Similar to Western European and North American countries, the core responsibility of caring for older people will gradually shift from families to societies as modernization and urbanization continue, until it reaches a balance (Wu & Du, 2012). The dramatically increased number of institutional elder care homes can be interpreted as a response to population aging and the weakened function and capacity of familial care.

To encourage advancement of LTC services in China, the central government has offered a series of benefits to the private sector of LTC businesses, including “tax exemption, subsidies of new and existing beds, land appropriation, lower interest rates, and direct financial support for the initial purchase or remodeling of a facility, and continued subsidies for each occupied bed in existing institutions.” (Zhan, 2013, p. 55-56; Feng et al., 2011). As a result of relaxing policies and strategic shift, the number of fee-based or non-government owned elder care homes has grown dramatically, especially in urban regions (Feng et al., 2012). For instance, in Tianjin, 96% of welfare institutions built before 1990 were government-owned, but after the 1990s, 60% of facilities were government-owned, and this number dropped to 23% by 2000 (Feng et al., 2011).

The policy change has not only been reflected in the numbers, but also in the increased variety of institutions, including fee-based hostels, nursing homes, or privately-owned assisted living facilities (Wong & Leung, 2012). The size and quality of those LTC institutions vary considerably depending on whether it is a “mom and pop” home (i.e., a small business without certified employees, administrated by few people, and having a small facility that may not meet specific standards) or a high-level standardized assisted living facility or nursing home (i.e., a formally organized business with a large facility that has been reviewed and inspected, with trained caregivers on the premises) (Feng et al., 2012).

Certainly, there is no one-size-fits-all place that can guarantee older persons to age successfully. However, features in residential care settings indeed make a difference in residents' aging experiences and outcomes. An aging-friendly place will compensate for elders' declines and losses, allow them to continue an independent and comfortable lifestyle, feel safe and content about themselves, and be engaged with life (Golant, 2015). In China, the development of LTC services is still at its beginning stage. Few efforts have been made to understand what constitute a supportive home-like caring environment for Chinese seniors. This issue deserves special attention from academics, professionals, and practitioners as there are increased number of Chinese families in need of formal LTC services. Drawing theoretical conceptualization of home from the West, I address questions of whether older people can obtain a sense of home in LTC settings in China and asking what factors or features in residential care environments contribute to the creation of home.

Third, the international literature and various theoretical frameworks on the notion of home have made clear that home encompasses multiple dimensions and elements. However, few research studies have identified the level of importance of single factor or combination of factors on the outcome of home or investigated multiple pathways to the creation of home. A thorough understanding of the interrelationship between physical, social, and personal features that separately or conjointly constitute the creation of home will help to clarify features that are the most essential or fundamental to elders' sense of home in LTC settings.

Taken together, analysis of the notion of home in either transnational aging context or in LTC settings in China should provide insights into future research about what features in seniors' living environments contribute to their positive aging experiences. This research may in turn provide useful information for families, policy makers, social workers, and LTC agencies to

better understand Chinese elders' needs and expectations for an aging friendly living environment. I hope that my study findings will help to advance policies and practices

1.4.3 Summary of Research

This dissertation research was based on two sets of qualitative samples. The first set of sample was drawn for studying Chinese elderly immigrants' home-making experiences in the U.S., the second one for examining manifestations and pathways that lead to older persons' sense of home in LTC settings in China. Both samples were collected through in-depth individual interviews and field observations. In the context of U.S., a total number of 21 elderly Chinese immigrants were interviewed. The participants were all above 65 years old and had resided in the U.S. between 2 and over 50 years. They were actively involved in two research sites, either as members of the Asian American Seniors Association of Atlanta (AASAA) or with a Chinese Adult Day Care Center (CADC). Drawing perspectives from life course approach and key concepts from environmental gerontology, the interview was designed to capture changes in Chinese elderly immigrants' personal and family life, their encountering experiences with local community and the U.S. society, as well as their perceptions and reflections in regard to the concept of home.

The second data set was collected in six different LTC facilities in Xi'an, the ancient capital of China. Xi'an is a large sized northwest city in China, known for its excavation of the Terracotta Warriors dated 200BC. There were two reasons to select Xi'an as the research site. First, different from cities in the East Coast area of China, Xi'an is a "traditional" inland city in which the traditional Confucian culture has been largely preserved. In this aspect, Xi'an may be a city representing most cities in interior China. Second, Xi'an is an aging city. According to Xi'an Aging Report in 2014, elders aged 60 years and above take up about 12.5% of the total

population in Xi'an, and elders aged 65 years and over accounts for 8.5%. Both of these measures exceed the international criteria of an aging society (Li, 2011). In comparison to the same sized cities in China, the percentage of elderly population in Xi'an was listed as number five in China, far beyond the aging speed in most cities in China (Xi'an Aging Report, 2014).

Until 2014, Xi'an has a total of 95 LTC institutions, including 32 government-owned facilities and 63 non-government-owned facilities (Xi'an Aging Report, 2014). Among these facilities, more than half of them are small (less than 100 beds) to median sized (less than 200 beds). Given that non-government-owned facilities account for a primary developmental trend of LTC services in China, this research draw samples from six different sized non-government-owned facilities. Facility size is defined by small, medium, and large. Two of the selected facilities were large in size, offering services to more than 300 older adults. Three medium-sized facilities were selected, with more than 100 residents, but less than 300; and one small-sized facility offering services to less than 100 older adults. The size of facility matters because it might have potential impacts on the caregivers to client ratio, regulations, frequency of providing recreational activities, the levels of complexity of social relationships, and ultimately the sense of home elderly residents may feel.

Among the six selected facilities, a total number of 38 participants were recruited from residential care providers and caregivers' suggested lists. All of them were 55 years and older, who have lived in an LTC facility for more than two months, and were able to conduct meaningful conversations. The semi-structured individual interview covered multiple topics, including elderly participants' life experiences and personal backgrounds prior to institutionalization, reasons and criteria for selecting a LTC facility, relocation process, daily routines and adjustment, social relationships within the place, evaluation of the physical and

caring environments, expectations and attitudes of living in LTC, perception of home, and etc. The interviews were later transcribed and entered into ATLAS.ti for data analysis.

1.4.4 Significance of the Research

As the notion of home encompasses multi-layered meanings from both macro and micro levels, research findings are open and relevant to diverse audiences, including scholars and professionals, seniors and their families, social workers, and policy makers. Potential benefits can be viewed from substantive, methodological, and theoretical perspectives. Academically, the study will contribute to environmental gerontology by identifying and defining manifestations of home from Chinese seniors' perspectives in varied aging contexts. It also adds to the knowledge about the process and pathways of re-creating a sense of home in either a transnational aging environment or in LTC settings. This study is the first known attempt to use empirical data to address the issue of home in LTC environments in China, linking individuals' aging experiences with features in their residential and care environments. This research has the potential to offer a better understanding of how intertwined personal and environmental factors accelerate or hinder Chinese older adults' process and experiences in reconstructing a sense of home after relocation.

Methodologically, drawing widely-accepted meanings of home and adopting relevant environmental theories in the West, this study will contribute to the development of culturally appropriate measures and the understanding of the concept of home in either a transnational aging context in the U.S. or in LTC settings in China. The qualitative analyses sensitize researchers to the unique social, political, and cultural meanings of home, bringing potential benefits to assess applicability of existing measures of home from the West. Simultaneously, part of the dissertation research adopted the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to delineate multiple pathways that provoke older persons' sense of home in relation to place. It sheds light

on how each dimension of home interact and interrelate with one another in generating the outcome and affecting elderly residents' home-making experiences in LTC institutions.

Theoretically, this study adopted three theoretic frameworks in guiding data analyses and discussions: a life course perspective (Elder, 1994; 1995), heuristic framework of home (Oswald & Wahl, 2005), and place integration theory (Cutchin, 2013). These theories served as a foundation for the study design. More importantly, they offer a theoretical basis for interpreting study findings and contributing to the field of aging.

Finally, the study results have the potential to provide valuable information for policy makers, social workers in the U.S., and LTC services providers in China. A major focus of this study is to understand the ways that the residential and care environments influence older persons' aging experiences and process. Within different living contexts, older people have their distinct expectations and needs that are congruent with features in their living environments. For elderly Chinese immigrants, they might be in need of assistance with transportation and language services. On the other hand, to older persons in LTC settings in China, what they are looking for could be things relevant to their daily functions or positive feelings about life. The recognition of older persons' needs in relation to place has direct impact on the advancement of policies and practices. To reach this goal, this study presents evidence-based information that inform policy makers, social workers, LTC providers, and even older persons' family members about elders' subjective conceptualization and reflection on meanings of home and experiences of re-gain a sense of home in the new environment. Accordingly, this study has discussed issues that link individuals with place; it also makes practical suggestions and potential solutions regarding varied ways to enhance older people's chances of re-gaining a feeling of home after location at an old age.

1.5 Organization of the Dissertation

Different from the most conventional format of a dissertation, the layout of this dissertation work is primarily based on a synthesis of three separate research articles under a broad research theme. The organization of this dissertation is seen in four categories: introduction, three research articles, summary and discussion, and conclusion. The first chapter presents the goals and needs for the research. The second chapter provides data analyses and findings based on the first set data collected in the U.S. It explicates the process of home-making among immigrant Chinese seniors. Chapter 3 and 4 present analyses and findings on the second set data collected in China. They aimed at illustrating factors that contribute to the understanding of the notion of home and the pathways that Chinese elders took to reconstruct home in LTC environments. Chapter 5 offers a summary of the three articles, implications of findings, a conclusion and directions for future research.

2 CHAPTER TWO: THE MAKING OF A HOME IN A FOREIGN LAND-- UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF HOME-MAKING AMONG IMMIGRANT CHINESE ELDERS

Abstract:

This study examined elderly Chinese immigrants' relocation experiences and their process of settling in American society. The author applied a life course perspective in analyses of how personal, familial, and environmental factors collectively shaped older immigrants' home-making experiences in a foreign land. By drawing data from 21 in-depth qualitative interviews with older Chinese adults living in Atlanta, Georgia, analysis revealed that older Chinese adults often experience a cultural shift after immigration—from an emphasis on intergenerational interdependence to the American value of independence. Favorable social policies and available ethnic-specific social services played a key role in this trans-cultural move to independence. Ethnic-specific social service organizations created a buffer zone that provided transnational social care for these seniors. Findings shed light on the interplay between personal actions, cultural values, and national policies in the lives of older Chinese immigrants in the U.S.

The place we call “home” has long been a theme of romanticism and social conflict—from Shakespeare plays to Jewish Diaspora during WWII. All humans, whether Roman, Jewish, or Chinese people have long sought or fought for the making of a home in a homeland. When people move from one country to another, the effects of making a home from their original homeland to a foreign land becomes daunting. For immigrants in old age, this process of home-making in a foreign land could be even more challenging because of declining functional capacity, reduced mobility, and the loss of familiar social relationships (Lamb, 2016; Oswald et al., 2007). The research presented in this article adds to the literature by offering an in-depth exploration of the process of making or finding a home in the U.S. for immigrant Chinese elders by using their voices. Study results will provide insights for policy makers and social workers in offering immigrants' need-matching policies and social services.

2.1 Introduction

Globalization and the relaxing of immigration policy have created a rapid increase in the number of people moving into the U.S., especially Chinese immigrants (Treas, 2014). In 1980, the population of Chinese immigrants in the United States was 384,000. This number increased to 1,195,000 in 2000, continuing to rise to 2,018,000 in 2013, and 2,065,000 in 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Surveys, 2016).

The rising number of immigrants and the constant population flow into the U.S. has led to a proliferation of migration research, examining the selectivity of immigrants, settlement patterns, intervening factors on assimilation, decision-making process, acculturation, post-migration impact on health and family relationships, and so forth (Glick, 2010; Yan, 2014). Unfortunately, most of these studies target the young and working-age immigrants and their offspring, with little attention paid to elderly immigrants and their aging experiences in a foreign country (Treas, 2014). The tendency to use quantitative data and the focus on the “cause and effect” or “push and pull” factors of migration also leads to insufficient knowledge on how elderly immigrants subjectively evaluate and experience the massive change in their living environments in later stage of life (Chiang & Leung, 2011; Horn & Schweppe, 2016; Yan, 2014). Meanwhile, regardless of origin, creating a homelike place is a fundamental task throughout individuals’ life course (Oswald & Wahl, 2013). For immigrants in old age, this life long process of home-making is interrupted, even uprooted. Yet little is known about Chinese elderly immigrants’ struggles or joy in American society in the process of settlement.

This study focuses on the process of making a home and factors leading to the construction of home among older Chinese immigrants in the U.S. We intend to understand older Chinese immigrants’ subjective settlement experiences by examining how their everyday

interaction with family members, local communities, and American society in general influences their sense of home in a new living environment.

2.2 The Concept of Home in the U.S.

As a central idea in environmental gerontology, the notion of home entails complex and multi-faceted meanings, which is clearly distinct from home as a space. Space brings about a single meaning that is a physical location or a structure whereas home encompasses personal, social, physical, psychological or even politically related aspects (Mallett, 2004). Rbyczynski (1986) offers a vivid metaphor for home noting it, “home is like trying to describe an onion. It appears simple on the outside, but it is deceptive, for it has many layers” (p. 230).

In English-speaking countries, the fundamental meaning of home can be traced back to the word origin. Etymologically, the early conceptualization of home is originated from the Anglo-American term *ham*, representing a physical structure or dwelling place, such as village, estate or town (Hollander, 1991; Mallett, 2004). However, a house, an apartment, or any dwelling place has essential differences from a place we call home. Home evokes feelings and emotions toward a place, such as safety, comfort, being in charge and freedom of self-expression (Rowles & Bernard, 2013). When encountering hardships or threats in the outside world, many people return to their homes to relieve stress and enjoy a feeling of safety (Scannell & Gifford, 2014). A home also allows one to be in control by deciding who to invite in and to exclude and carrying out a personal schedule and activities without interference from others (Molony, 2010). Drawing perspectives from environmental psychology, home is also an extension of one’s self (e.g., Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013; Peace et al., 2006; Sixmith, 1986). It symbolizes a person’s self-identity; elucidating either physical or cultural meaning that is attached to the dwelling place

and it is a physical setting for people to act out or display their distinct personalities and feelings (Frank, 2002).

The social aspect of home concerns family relationships, kinships as well as group or communal relationships (Molony, 2010). The overlapping meaning between home and family is so strong that the two terms are nearly interchangeable (Bernardes, 1987). Confusion arises because home symbolizes familial relationships and an individual's long-lasting interaction with their immediate living environments (Mallett, 2004). The social dimension of home also includes diversified social connections outside the family. For instance, Rowles (1983) proposed three attributes of 'insiderness' to theorize person-environment relationships. The 'social insiderness' specifically refers to the "integration with the social fabric of community and possible age peer group culture." (Peace, Holland, & Kellaheer, 2006, p. 16; Rowles, 1983). A healthy and positive long-term friendship functions similarly to family relationships, providing care, love, and support. Essentially, the literature in the West suggests that home is a 'people-centered' place (Golant, 2015).

2.3 The Concept of Home in the Chinese Context

In the Chinese context, the notion of home is originally built upon the idea of "family" or "kinship" (Hu, 2005). The written form of 'home' (家) in the Chinese language precisely embodies the cultural significance of blood line and family connections. According to ancient literature in China, such as *shuomingjiesi*, the upper part of the character 家 represents a roof, a place of physical dwelling and the lower part of the character refers to the idea that every family member lives under the same roof (Chiang & Leung, 2011).

In early periods of the Chinese civilization, the scale of the home was rather small. Home referred to a physical structure of dwelling and people bonded to the place because of marriage

or intimate blood lines (Hu, 2005). Gradually, the definition of home expanded to include remote kinfolks who share the same male ancestor (Zhou, 2011). As the Chinese language has evolved along with history, the term offers broader meanings in modern days. According to the National Chinese Dictionary, home also refers to communities, working units, or regions, and it conveys meanings about people, such as individuals who share similar interests, actions, cultures or nationalism (Zhang & Chen, 2013; Zhou, 2011). With all these possible meanings of home in the Chinese language, the idea of ‘people’ is particularly emphasized. As a Chinese proverb says, “things of a kind come together; people of a mind fall into the same group. “家” or home, serves as a metaphor for family members at the familial levels, and for people of the same kind at the macro level in the Chinese cultural contexts (Zhang & Chen, 2013). This extensive use of home exemplifies a collective culture and familism in Chinese societies.

In summary, home entails intrinsic and multi-dimensioned features, such as in the case of physical and symbolic meanings, individual and other social relations, emotions and actions, and the cultural and temporal aspects in defining home (Wiles, 2008). These interrelated characteristics of a home indicate that finding a sense of home after relocation in old age is a dynamic and productive process that requires continuous interaction between people, the nearby community and the larger sociopolitical environments (Liu, 2014; Yan, 2014). Older immigrants’ conceptualization of home is rooted in their original culture (Lewin, 2001), but likely to be shaped by the culture of the receiving country. In this study, we draw special attention to Chinese older immigrants’ home-making process, realizing home is a ‘evolving’ status that is shaped by individual feelings and actions, as well as cultural ideologies and social contexts of both sending and receiving countries.

2.4 Concept of Home for Immigrants in a Life Course Perspective

When people migrate from one geographical location, especially as far as across the Pacific, to settle down in a foreign land, the notion of home from departing and receiving country collides. In this research, we adopted insights from the life course perspective to understand Chinese elders' migration and settlement experiences in the U.S.

Over the past four decades, the life course perspective has become a core research paradigm in guiding social research, and it is widely used in migration studies (Bai & Choe, 2014; Geist & McManus, 2008; Wingens et al., 2011). In the earlier era of immigration literature, perhaps, the most classic study was *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, a life history study of immigrant adaptation by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918). This study addressed how Polish immigrants' prior life experiences shape their later adjustments in a host country (i.e., United States), especially concerning adjustments that individuals made within their family and community. This study laid the early foundation for migration research that takes the life course perspective (Treas, 2014).

The life course approach is known as a multilevel framework that consists of several key principles (Giele & Elder, 1998). Among them, we emphasized three key tenets inspired by Glen Elder's life course perspective (Elder, 1994). First, human lives are linked interdependently; transitions in one person's life often trigger transitions for other people (Elder, 1994, 1995; Giele & Elder, 1998). Second, the course of lives reflects how individuals actively use the power of agency to construct their own life course. Third, social environments and historical contexts shape individuals' life experiences over their lifetime. These tenets together provide a comprehensive framework for studying macro social phenomenon (e.g., socio-historical context,

social institutions), micro aspects of human life (e.g., individual developmental pathways), and the interaction between the macro and micro (e.g., developmental trajectories) (Elder, 1994).

Essentially, the life course perspective contains two primary domains, namely individuals and structures. The individual aspect of the life course includes concerns as the accumulation of early life experiences and resources on later life outcomes and individuals' life choices. The structural domain places its emphasis at the institutional level concerning historical contexts and cultural environments (Dannefer & Settersten, 2011). The life course perspective sensitizes researchers to approach migration and settlement as a combined outcome of immigrants' behaviors interacting with the societal structures and institutions.

2.5 Research Design

To capture the complexity and richness of older immigrants' conceptualization of home and home-making processes we conducted in-depth qualitative interviews. Using this approach, researchers attempted to understand elderly immigrants' actual settlement experiences in the U.S., such as their accomplishment and difficulties in life, supports and constraints from their social network, family relationships, and settlement trajectories, etc. These qualitative data addressed two central questions: 1) How do elderly Chinese immigrants construct a sense of home in the U.S.? and 2) What factors lead to elderly Chinese immigrants' construction of home?

2.5.1 Research Setting and Sites

We carried out the study in metro-Atlanta, located in the state of Georgia. In Atlanta, there are approximately 70 thousand Asian American senior residents who account for one-fourth of the total Asian population (AARP, 2013). This number is projected to increase more than 2.5 times faster than that of the growing rate of "baby boomers" of all other races in the

U.S. by 2018 (AARP, 2013). Although the elderly Asian American and Chinese population is growing rapidly, the public assistance and the rate of receiving Social Security benefits remains flat among Asian American seniors, including Chinese American seniors (AARP, 2013).

We purposively selected two research sites: 1) the Asian American Seniors Association of Atlanta (AASAA); and 2) a Chinese Adult Day Care Center (CADC). The AASAA was originally founded by Taiwanese Chinese seniors in 1971 and later became a formally registered non-profit organization. AASAA offers bi-monthly events for Asian Americans who are 50 years and older at the Chinese Cultural Activity Center. The events usually last for most of a day, having a wide range of cultural specific activities that meet Asian American seniors' unique interests, such as calligraphy, group dancing, Tai chi, singing, lectures on Chinese medicine, etc. Instead of English, Mandarin is the primary language used in these events.

The other research site—CADA was founded in 2014, and soon attracted hundreds of Chinese American seniors. To be admitted, applicants must be 65 years and older, eligible for Medicaid, and diagnosed with chronic diseases (i.e., diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, mild dementia with ADL or IADL disabilities). Today, the center offers daily care and culture-related activities for over 150 senior Chinese Americans.

2.5.2 Data collection

The first two authors conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each participant. Both authors were trained in sociology and gerontology. Prior to data collection, researchers carried out brief screening interviews to exclude elders with cognitive disabilities and those in the U.S. for short-term visits (defined as less than two years). To be eligible for the study, participants had to be 50 years or older, CCAC's minimum age requirement. We also selected participants who were cognitively intact, and showed willingness to share stories,

opinions, and experiences. After approval from the Institutional Review Board, a total of 21 in-depth interviews were conducted. Researchers approached potential participants by introducing the study, laying out potential benefits and risks of the research, and when appropriate, scheduled the day and time for interviews. All elderly participants were given informed consent forms in Mandarin and English and were explained explicitly of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

The location for the interview varied depending on participants' preferences. Most interviews took place in the CCAC and activity rooms in the Adult Day Care Center. During the interview process, interviewers started with general questions regarding participants' personal background prior to migration and gradually moved on to their family relationships, migration experiences, interactions with local communities, aging services, and feeling of home in the host country. Throughout the interview process, elderly participants were given sufficient time and freedom to verbalize opinions and thoughts, reflect life experiences, and share stories.

Interviews were conducted in Mandarin. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed into Chinese. To avoid any loss of meaning in the coding and analyzing process, transcriptions were translated into English only for publication purposes. Interview length ranged between 45 minutes to 2 hours depending on participants' personality and desire for communication. For purposes of anonymity, all participants were given pseudonyms.

2.5.3 Data Analysis

In this study, we followed the basic, but modified coding and analysis procedures of grounded theory by Cobin and Strauss (1998, 2015). The first two authors started the coding process individually but worked together in the later phase of analysis to compare, contrast, discuss, and finalize results. The data analysis started with line-by-line open coding; breaking

segments of the data into corresponding categories, such as helping children with childcare, filial expectations, being supported by the family, looking for social opportunities, gaining access to aging welfare services, and etc. Once this coding scheme was established, axial coding was performed to delineate sets of relationships between categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, we found that Chinese elderly immigrants' home-making process was associated with personal agency, which was comprised by elders' actions and modified filial expectations. Local ethnic-specific services, availability of transportation, and welfare policy in the host country jointly affected elderly immigrants' construction of home. During the coding process, authors carried out several group meetings to perform within-narrative and between-narrative data comparisons for the purpose of validating codes and evaluating conceptual saturation in categories as well as their connections. Elderly participants' demographic information is shown in Appendix I.

Table 1. Elderly participants' demographic information (N=21)

Variable	N=21
<i>Age</i>	
50-69 years	4
70-79 years	9
80 years and above	8
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	14
Male	7
<i>Year of Migration</i>	
Before 1980	6
1980-1989	7
1990-1996	6
After 2000	2
<i>Number of Children</i>	1~4
<i>Have SSI</i>	
Yes	12
No	9
<i>Perceive U.S. as Home</i>	
Yes	18
Ambivalent – no	3

2.6 Study Findings

The majority of the participants (18 out of 21) perceived the U.S. as their home. The three participants who did not consider the U.S. as home still showed desire for a feeling of home, but they felt constrained by language and other practical challenges of aging in the U.S. In the sample, only three of the participants had come to the county in an earlier life stage to seek higher education and better life opportunities; most of them emigrated in old age for the purpose of family reunion. Depending on a number of factors, respondents had varied home-seeking experiences. Except for a few people, the majority of immigrants experienced hardships and challenges in acquiring a sense of home in America.

The process of re-create a home among older Chinese immigrants involved three primary phases: a) entering the country relying on intergenerational interdependence and linked lives with children; b) Use of personal agency to gain independence and control; c) integrating with social environments in the U.S. Figure 1 (Appendix II) provides a visual illustration of the process.

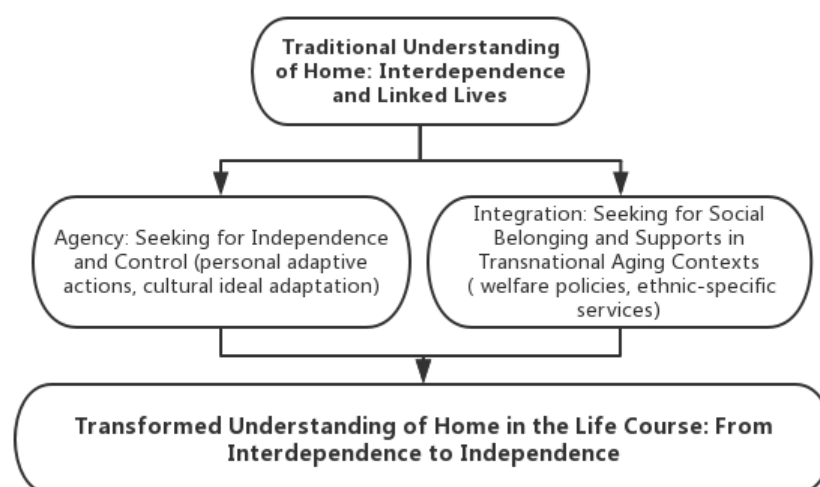


Figure 1. Home making process among Chinese elderly immigrants

2.6.1 *Traditional Understanding of Home: Interdependence and Linked Lives*

Reasons for transnational migration among Chinese older adults varied from person to person. Over half of the sample ($n=14$) did not come for the betterment of their own lives, but for their children. This interdependent nature of family relationships validated the traditional Chinese understanding of home, that home is a place of dwelling where a family resides (Liu, 2014). The majority of participants mentioned the role that children played in their migration and home-seeking process in the U.S. For example, Mrs. Bien, a chief engineer from mainland China, emigrated in her mid-40s for her son. In her words, “I am here for my son. I am not looking for a brilliant future for myself. I already had a brilliant future in China.” Mrs. Bien experienced numerous hardships, gave up all the benefits she accumulated in China, but she showed no regret. She was proud that her sons could stay in America and raise their own families. She considered the U.S. as her home because of her children. She was certain that whenever she needed help, they would help, which gave her confidence about aging in the U.S.

Seventy-year old Mrs. Tong told a similar story. She emigrated with her husband and daughter in the early 1990's. Before emigrating, she was a teacher in one of the top three elementary schools in China at the time. Her husband also was an educator. They quit their jobs to emigrate. Mrs. Tong pointed out:

I only have one daughter. If she finds a job in a different city in China, I would be [sad]...many of my friends and colleagues told me to emigrate for my daughter. After we came, no matter how humble life is...my daughter will have a successful career here. Now, she is a CEO. We feel our sacrifices are paid off.

When the interviewer tried to confirm with Mrs. Tong if the main reason for emigration was for her daughter, she looked puzzled and asked, "Aren't all parents like this? Everything we do is for the good of our children." To Mrs. Tong, her understanding of home was related to her daughter and her nuclear family. She said home is "where three people (mother, father, and child) can be together. Emigration is just moving to another place to live. It is still the three people, being together."

Several participants immigrated to help raise grandchildren or to help their children with household responsibilities. For instance, after retirement, 76-year old Mr. Ren emigrated with his wife to take care of their granddaughter. He explained, "We only have one daughter and only one granddaughter. My granddaughter is our precious baby...If I were to go back [to China]. We have no kids back home [in China]." Mr. Ren noted that even though they could barely communicate with their granddaughter due to language deficiency, they made every effort to raise her and fulfill their family roles as grandparents.

Even for elders who emigrated early for career-related reasons; family members and children were at the center of their sense of home. Mrs. Mo, a 66-year-old female, who worked for an American company for 27 years, stated:

I will absolutely not go to the mainland. I just visited not long ago. I no longer have any relatives in Taiwan...My two precious children are both [in Atlanta], as well as my sister and her children. And my friends are here too.

The experiences of immigration and settlement in the U.S. from Chinese seniors' perspectives indeed reflect the Chinese cultural value of intergenerational interdependence and linked lives from life course perspectives. Both aging parents and adult children need each other to fulfill emotional or instrumental needs. To elderly Chinese immigrants, home sustains family connections, in which parent-child relationships are valued above all types of relationships. Their home-seeking experiences also originated from close ties with children. Some participants would rather face loss of social prestige or occupational status for the good of their children. As long as their children can live well in the host country, they are content with their migration choice to the U.S. A supportive intergenerational relationship certainly prepares and promotes a strong sense of home among elderly immigrants by transforming an unfamiliar physical place to a place filled with meaning called home. In the course of these immigrants' lives, the interdependence between generations sometimes served as a motivation for migration and other times, as a purpose for finding a sense of home with family members in a foreign land.

2.6.2 Agency: Seeking for Independence and Control

A critical aspect of the life course approach, in relation to migration, is to understand how human agency affects the process and outcomes of the move. This principle stresses people's adaptive behavior to the environment to meet their needs or goals (Giele & Elder, 1998). When it comes to transnational migration, human agency may refer to motives and process of emigration, pre-emigration preparation, and individuals' active adaptation to new living environments (Edmonston, 2013). One aspect of agency is its impact on participants' home-seeking experiences is through individual adaptive actions. Findings in this study indicated that moving

away from a familiar environment and recreating a home in a foreign land places high demands on an elderly immigrants' capacity to act and cope, either through actions or cultural ideal adaptation.

2.6.2.1 Personal adaptive actions: moving out from children's place

Elders who emigrated for family reunification commonly co-resided with their children in the first few years. Once they obtained American citizenship, most moved out of their children's houses and either lived alone or with the spouse in a public housing. Several elders were adamant about having an independent living arrangement. They all made justifications for why they chose not to co-reside with children—perhaps they had dissimilar lifestyles and routines, or they would not want to be a burden, or they preferred to have some company outside the family to avoid feelings of loneliness and isolation, or perhaps they simply needed their own space. For instance, a 90-year-old, Mrs. Qin shared her joy about being able to move into a senior-living community rather than staying at her daughter's house.

When I finally have the benefits [eligibility to receive services provided by the senior living community], I am much freer. When I was in my daughter's house, she could only take me out on Saturdays or Sundays if I needed to buy something. ...it's just the grocery shopping that troubled me. I couldn't follow her. She went in, grabbed the stuff, and went out. I like to walk around, browse in the store. I felt that I didn't have the freedom to do that [with my daughter]. I didn't have the freedom to choose. Finally when I moved into the senior housing, I was very happy because they have provided transportation...that's much more convenient.

Having American citizenship was the primary requirement for being admitted to these senior living communities. Mrs. Qin worked hard on her language skills and finally passed the citizenship test at age 78. With citizenship, Mrs. Qin and her husband were able to receive welfare benefits and live separately from their daughter. The positive experience of living in a senior living facility validated her decision to live alone and saved her from feel being 'trapped'

in her daughter's place. Such freedom significantly strengthened Mrs. Qin's sense of mastery, which was a key element in her understanding of home.

Mr. Peng and his wife also had a similar settlement trajectory. He had a close relationship with his daughters, and they co-resided for seven years. Mr. Peng and his wife decided to move into a senior living community when their granddaughter reached kindergarten age. Mr. Peng gave the following response:

The child could go to kindergarten, and my [daughters] finally had their own time. They didn't need our help anymore... We wanted to move out because the kids had grown up. It was not convenient for us to live together, not free enough. We thought it might be better for us to find our own place to live.

Participants' settlement trajectory indicated a central theme in pursuing a sense of home—personal freedom. With a separate place to live, older people have total control over their life and freedom to act, not bothered by children or being a burden to others. To older Chinese immigrants, maintaining family connections with children was vital but as they became familiar with living environments, having one's own mastery space and independence seemed more important in relation to everyday life at home.

2.6.2.2 Personal adaptive actions: Maintain or develop personal hobbies

With references to personal resources and living environments, discovering and maintaining personal hobbies were found to be effective in helping elders to feel settled, as in the case of Mrs. Yang.

I like to do needlework. I like doing things in the kitchen, cooking. If everyone eats happily, I feel accomplished. I like to read, do needlework, and listen to music. I play music in all of my rooms. When I am doing house chores, I have music. That's a joy. I like writing, surfing the internet. I feel that I don't have enough time to do these things everyday... I feel that as we say self-reliant, it doesn't mean that you have to work hard. You must find joy in old age. You must have your own interests and hobbies to fulfill yourself.

Having personal hobbies not only enriched elders' everyday life but also allowed them to link their current life experiences with personal histories, fostering a sense of continuity. Almost every participant mentioned that they enjoyed participating in culturally meaningful activities, such as traditional Chinese dancing, singing, or recitation. Mr. Peng, for instance, said,

Calligraphy and poems, I enjoy these things. I am not good at writing calligraphy, but I like to learn it. I am very interested in this. I was practicing calligraphy yesterday at home...now; I take calligraphy and poem lessons online to enrich myself.

Elderly immigrants were not passive subjects of their environments; rather they showed their abilities and competence in adjusting lifestyles, hobbies, and carrying out meaningful roles in social groups.

2.6.2.3 Personal adaptive actions: learning English

Low English language proficiency was a common barrier that may inhibit elderly immigrants' home-making experiences. Several participants declared that not being able to speak fluent English attributed to their social isolation, resulting in difficulties in managing activity of daily life and significant stress on their access to health care services. Realizing the importance of English skills and their association with everyday life, a few participants took English classes, actively took chances to practice English, or even found alternative ways to cope with language barriers. Mr. Ren, for example, when he decided to age in the U.S., he felt the most important and urgent task was to learn English. At that time, he did not have an appropriate environment to learn English because his daughter lived in the suburbs. For this reason, they moved to a downtown area where Mr. Ren could rely on public transportation to take English classes. Although Mr. Ren and his wife had acquired basic English skills, doctor's visits were still challenging; especially when they were asked to fill out forms and explain health issues. To ease the process, Mr. Ren figured out an alternative way to express himself. He said,

Finally, I came up with an idea. I prepared my medication history ahead of time...I wrote my health issues and medications on a piece of paper. When I have doctor's visit, I just hand this list to the nurse in the front desk, and she would be happy about it.

Taken together, the analyses revealed that elderly participants could consciously seek alternative ways to re-build a bond with where they live, with resources and opportunities that they had access to. Meanwhile, they could also empower themselves to solve more complicated problems and seek different options to deal with daily life challenges.

2.6.2.4 Cultural ideal adaptation

In addition to initiating adaptive actions, elderly participants also showed modification of filial expectations and their understanding of how to age well in a transnational context. Rather than blaming their adult children for being too busy to fulfill filial roles, the majority of participants reformulated their intergenerational relationships from relying on children to becoming self-reliant. The change of cultural values can be interpreted as a type of mind strategy (Golant, 2011) which focuses on emotions and expectations. This is illustrated by the following participants' reflection on how they regarded their relationships with their children:

Mrs. Nie (67-years old): We don't want to burden our children. Our understanding of filial piety is different now. We rely on ourselves, and we make plans to help our next generation without expecting them to take care of us.

Mr. Ren (76-years old): You are in the U.S., do not completely rely on your children. Whenever you are able to take care of yourself, don't ask your child to do it for you. This way, you can enjoy your freedom, and your children will feel the same.

Migrating at an old age challenged older adults on multiple levels: from structural constraints, language barriers, limited social network, and values and expectations in family life. If Chinese elderly immigrants insist on holding up the traditional forms of family support, they could easily be discontent, as the power dynamics may shift significantly from the elderly parents to the adult children, especially considering the elders' constrained economic and social

capital in the host country. Thus, voluntarily or involuntarily, elderly immigrants would reevaluate their interactions, expectations, and demands from their children in order to fit into the new environments.

Moreover, during the home-making process, most participants employed both adaptive actions and mind coping strategies concurrently. This mixed-coping strategy was evident in Mrs. Liu's home-making experiences. Prior to migrating, Mrs. Liu was an authoritative figure in her family as in most traditional Chinese families. However, she gradually realized that life was different in American society, where she had to adjust the relationship with her daughter and redirect her own life purposes as well. Instead of asking her children to obey her orders, she expressed:

My life environment in the U.S. is different from Taiwan where my daughter lived. What I say to her are only suggestions...I have this in my mind, not because my children do not accept what I ask them to do. Rather, I realize that this is how the parent-child relationship should work in this society...It is also important that you find your inner peace. Besides available social services, older people must find ways to plan their lives.

While Mrs. Liu was adjusting her expectations and interactions with daughter, she also found alternative sources to enhance her life enjoyment, such as being a volunteer in the Chinese community, teaching kids Mandarin, practicing writing, and hiking. Transnational migration at an older age and re-creating a home in the host country requires the human capacity to cope with the action or mind or both. These responsive actions or mind strategies, derived from an individuals' ongoing involvement with place, may become habitual everyday life practices that enable elderly immigrants to be more integrated with their living environment. Ultimately, the more adaptive strategies "people have at their disposal, the more potential they have to respond to a situation and its emerging challenges" (Cutchin, 2013, p. 117).

2.6.3 *Integration: Seeking for Social Belonging and Supports*

Many participants expressed their satisfaction with the social environment in Atlanta, especially elders admitted to the Chinese Adult Day Care Center. Their understanding of home and life evaluation was tied to their opportunities of socializing with people of the same kind. Mrs. Qin, for example, was isolated in her senior living community for four years. Her daughter did not have time to visit, and Mrs. Qin also had difficulty communicating with granddaughters or other family members because of her limited English fluency. Whenever there were family get-togethers, Mrs. Qin stayed home. Due to the prior strained family life, Mrs. Qin expressed great satisfaction in making friends in the Chinese Adult Day Care Center.

When I was at home alone, I was depressed. Because I was the only Chinese person living in that community, the only communication that I had with others was just a simple greeting...I feel good now that I can talk to ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ here in the center [in Chinese]. That’s very nice. I am very grateful.

Mrs. Qin directly attributed her sense of home in the U.S. to improved opportunities for social participation and interaction. Being together with an ethnic-oriented group in the center not only eased her feeling of social isolation but increased her exposure to the outside society. Elders received social exchanges with each other and gained access to available welfare programs with assistance from staff working in the ethnic-specific adult day care center. Members and staff were tied together as ‘fictive’ kin. As reflected by an 80-year-old man Mr. Chen said, “I came to the Chinese Senior Center which is like joining a big cozy family. It warms my heart here. They [staff] are like our children.” He continued to provide rationales behind why he wanted to join the ethnic-specific day care center.

It is good that Chinese people can be together here. The Day Care is run with a good heart. If we had a senior apartment in Atlanta, that would be even better. We [Chinese elderly immigrants] can live together, have fun together.

Similarly, for elders who immigrated earlier for better career opportunities, their desire to stay with other Chinese people remains strong. For instance, Mrs. Mo made clear why she moved from New Orleans to Atlanta:

In New Orleans, I felt terrified. I was lucky I didn't get depressed. My neighborhood used to have a lot of people I felt safe around, but others began moving in. It was not safe to go out. I was so happy when I came to Atlanta, thank God...it is better than my hometown, but people [here] speak...Mandarin. I am Cantonese; I can [only] speak Cantonese. It is very convenient.

Taken together, the stories shared by elders reflected their preferences for companionship, particularly companionship with their "own kind." Although elderly participants seldom singled out their Chinese identities, their desire to socialize with other Chinese seniors exhibited the awareness of "us" versus "them," as in the cases of Mr. Chen and Mrs. Mo. Most participants made considerable efforts to obtain U.S. citizenship. Yet, citizenship itself did not hinder elders' adherence to traditional Chinese culture, preferences for being together, and self-identification as 'being Chinese.' Their meanings of home were not necessarily about geographical attachment to where they came from or where they stayed; instead, it was a self-conscious process of finding and merging one's own ethnic group and a feeling of familiarity and belonging. This immigrant friendly social environment promoted their sense of home finding in their life course.

Meanwhile, we found that those who migrated at older ages showed more interest in the social-political environment of the receiving country, particularly aging-related welfare benefits and community services. As in the case of Mrs. Qin, she felt grateful for the social benefits provided by the U.S. government, given that she received government support for her participation in the day care center and in-home domestic services. Similarly, Mrs. Guo also immigrated to the U.S. for grand-parenting and moved to a senior housing facility after obtaining

U.S. citizenship. She was not comfortable living in the U.S., in the beginning, because of the language barrier and unfamiliar cultural environments. However, as time passed by, she gradually started to accept and appreciate her life in a transnational context, especially regarding the aging services in the U.S. She pointed out that, “when I can’t take care of myself, I will apply welfare programs... As a government, I think the American government is very considerate.” The idea of individualism in Western culture and the available aging policies shaped Mrs. Guo’s understanding and plans for how support in old age should look like.

The significance of the external, socio-political environment regarding the construction of homes among elderly migrants is explicitly reflected in an 80-year-old immigrant’s settlement experiences. Mr. Song was originally born in the mainland, but immigrated to Taiwan during China’s Civil War after WWII. His relationships with his children were cut off due to historical and geographical reasons. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1955 and worked for many years in a steel factory. He was divorced from his wife, and his two children remained in Taiwan. They seldom contact each other. When asked about his understanding of home, he said, “I don’t...[miss] the ‘old’ home, I think the U.S. is my home. Why? All my benefits are here in America...but I still like the mainland.”

Furthermore, the influence of welfare policies on the participants’ development of a sense of home was also evident in their evaluation of community services. Most participants mentioned that they were in need of transportation and help with their doctor’s visits. For example, Mr. Ren shared his positive experiences with the center,

We try our best not to bother our children. Before [participating in the day care center], when we had doctor’s visits, we had to ask our children to accompany us. Now, the center provides [transportation] services. If you need to go to a hospital, they will assign a driver for you. And if you don’t speak English, they can find a young man who can go with you and translate.

The adult day care center offers a great diversity of services to assist Chinese elderly immigrants with real-life problems, such as transportation, doctor's visits, a desire for traditional Chinese food, access to welfare programs and filling out applications, etc. The staff and managers working in the center were all Chinese. They were able to recognize older Chinese immigrants' difficulties, and thus providing services to match their needs.

Among all the participants, Mrs. Yang expressed the greatest appreciation for support from the center. Without public assistance, her life would be diminished by constantly taking care of her husband with dementia. She stated,

I was at the edge of a breakdown. I was almost there.... I told him (her husband), I want to keep you at home as long as possible, but you need to cooperate. If you don't cooperate, I can't handle it. He wouldn't listen. My talking didn't work...so we came here. There are all kinds of activities for older people. We have endless topics to discuss, because they are new friends. We share our life stories, without reservation. I don't have to keep my eyes constantly on a person with dementia. I regained my spirit here; I would have never imagined that I could. Originally, I didn't like to go at a scheduled time. I thought I would come here only temporarily to accompany him [her husband]. But now, I look forward to every visit—I cannot wait to come here. Because when I am here, I am free.

Mrs. Yang was overwhelmed physically and emotionally by providing care for her husband. She suffered from several chronic diseases but had to bear it. Her daughter was too busy to offer any hands-on support, and she became impatient after hearing Mrs. Yang's complaints. Their mother-daughter relationship was strained by taking care of a person with dementia from day to day. However, with the available senior programs, Mrs. Yang could finally reestablish the emotional connections with her daughter while releasing her from the burden of providing extensive economic and instrumental support.

An elderly immigrants' development of sense of home was closely tied to their experiences with residing in a socio-political environment, in both the sending and receiving countries. Most of the participants in this study have gone through major historical events in

China, such as the state-induced famines (1958-1960), the 'send-down' policy for 12 years, and the ten-year Cultural Revolution (1967-77) (Zhan, 2002). Mr. Peng, for example, recalled his experiences with the Cultural Revolution, where he described how life was difficult, and how much of an endeavor he made to send his daughter to the U.S. for a better education. During that time, most people in China worked in government-owned work-units. When they emigrated to the U.S., their benefits were cut completely, and their houses were reclaimed by the government. Although participants avoided saying anything negative about their home country, they did emphasize how much they appreciated and cherished the lives they have in the United States, as shown in Mrs. Qin and Mrs. Yang's cases. In a sense, home is found after comparing one's life in the past and with the present. This comparison is shaped and embedded by the sociopolitical environments of their countries of past and present.

Overall, elderly participants' statements revealed that their construction of home goes far beyond individuals and families. The feeling of at-homeness appears when one's fundamental needs such as protection and subsistence are met. To the elderly Chinese immigrants in this study, the meaning of home shows little relevance to their roots in China. Instead, home is more closely tied to their connections with family members, the realization of personal freedom, a sense of belonging, and support from the larger sociopolitical environment.

2.7 Discussion

In this investigation, researchers focused on the central question of how older Chinese immigrants reconstruct a sense of home in a new living environment in America. Findings unfold the complexity and fluidity of the concept of home as a result of transnational migration in old age among Chinese seniors. This study shows that the pathway of making a home for this population is a process of obtaining personal independence and social supports from peers,

which is shaped by the interactive forces of human agency and the surrounding sociopolitical environments.

2.7.1 From Interdependence to Independence: Adaptation and Transformation in the life course

The analysis from the interviews with elderly immigrants reaffirmed the importance of children and family relationships as in many other migration studies (Massey, Fischer, & Capoferro, 2006; Treas & Mazumdar, 2004). Different from working-age immigrants, older immigrants' early settlement experiences depended more on the supports from children or kinship in a foreign land (Treas, 2014). The close parent-children relationships indicate that transnational migration, especially migration in old age, is a familial and collective action that brings consequences on immigrants' choices of destination, life chances, resources and adaptation strategies (Glick, 2010). The elders in this study showed a substantial reliance on their children in their early stage of settlement, and the nature of intergenerational relationship had long-term impacts on elders' later choices of living arrangement and adaptive strategies. Notably, all of the elderly participants have resided in the U.S. for a relatively long time, and most of them have obtained American citizenship. A long residence in the receiving country allows the elders to explore and acculturate to the new social and cultural setting in which they live (Pang, Jordan-Marsh, Silverstein, & Cody, 2003).

Elderly participants' responses showed a cultural transformation in their conceptualization of home. Different from adherence to the traditional interdependent family relationships, the Chinese elders in this study adopt the American value of independence and self-reliance. Close family relationships are not the core and sole element in defining a home. In interviews, participants often started the conversation by describing their family background and

their interaction with children. However, as the conversation developed, they quickly moved on to reflections of their own life experiences and feelings of having their own space to settle down.

Most participants preferred not to live with grown children in the same household, and many of them were residing in senior living communities. In separate housing, older immigrants can maintain their lifestyle without feeling bothered. This finding indicates that the physical aspect of a house or an apartment per se is not critical to elders' construction of home; it is the independence and freedom granted to elderly immigrants by having a private living space that matters. Additionally, the majority of participants showed minimum filial expectations from children and more emphasis on self-sufficiency and personal freedom. This finding echoes with the literature in Western societies where home is perceived as a mirror of personal values, sense of control, physical security, and self-identity (Lewin, 2001).

However, acculturation to American cultural norms of independence does not hinder Chinese older immigrants' desire for social belonging with the same ethnic group. In line with other transnational migration research, our data demonstrated that friendships and ethnic-oriented resources effectively empowered elders to deal with language and cultural barriers; enlarged their social networks; and increased access to a larger society (Chau & Lai, 2011; Jang et al., 2015). The Chinese culture is known as relationship oriented that one's value is realized only through their interaction and co-existence with others (Lu, 2009). Thus, the traditional Chinese understanding of home often circulate with the idea of personhood, ranging from family members to neighbors to people of the same kind at a national level (Zhang & Chen, 2013). Simultaneously, with exposure to individualized culture in Western societies, older immigrants also adopt parts of the Western culture in which they value the separation between oneself and others as well as active attitudes of pursuing a comfortable life. Our study has shown that elderly

Chinese immigrants' home-making process and experiences emerged under the joint effects of both collective and individualized cultures. Participants emphasized their intimate ties with their children and pleasure to socialize within the same ethnic community while placing independence as a key element in their construction of home.

2.7.2 Home is a Process of Making—the Importance of Agency in the Life Course

We noted that home is not a static status, but a process. In the first few years after migration, there were not many personal meanings and values attached to the place of dwelling except for its spatial significance. The home-making process requires a subjective investment in which people devote their emotions, conduct everyday life practices, assert a personal identity to the place, and carry out the “articulation between social relations, experiences, and understandings” (Yan, 2014, p. 40). For elderly Chinese immigrants, home-making is a process where they progressively recognize their aging needs, gain access to available resources, and continuously adjust themselves in actions or in attitudes to fit into the environment. Gradually, older immigrants were able to establish “affective, cognitive, behavioral and social bonds” to the place they live, thereby forming a home (Oswald & Wahl, 2013, p. 56).

The construction of home is fluid in a sense that older people may develop different personal needs as they age or encounter unexpected institutional changes. Any alteration in the individuals or in the environment may affect elders' home-seeking practices and outcomes. As Hayes (2007) described, “home might always contain elements of our having been, but its main significance lies in our becoming.” (p. 14). In the home-making process, older immigrants are active social actors. They may continue their previous lifestyles or develop new skills and strategies or re-orient their understanding of home and expectations in response to the changing transnational living circumstances. A sense of home is never a neutral state. As shown in this

study, the elderly participants adapt a number of strategies to help them to live and age well in the receiving country, such as developing new hobbies, participating in meaningful social activities or adopting mind strategies. Hence, rather than approaching home as a concrete or a cross-sectional status between human and environment, we suggest viewing it as an ongoing process that involves constant interaction and adjustment between the individual and the sociopolitical environment.

2.7.3 The Importance of Social Environment in the Life Course of Finding a Home

Our study has revealed that aging-friendly environments with favorable social policies played a key role in affecting older Chinese immigrants to create a home. The traditional family-based Chinese model of aging appears to have transformed into a more Americanized and individualized form of aging, probably owing to the impact of the dominant culture and welfare systems in the U.S. Several participants indicated that they felt grateful for the welfare benefits in the U.S. The provision of financial and medical support from the public sector eased elders' reliance on children and enhanced their sense of mastery and security. The ethnic-specific aging services have allowed the elders to enlarge their social network and offered culturally and needs-matched instrumental and informative assistances, such as providing assistance for doctor's visits and transportation, as well as applying for social programs and benefits. It was through these aging support policies and available ethnic-specific services that Chinese elders were able to achieve independence and maintain a social bonding with other Chinese seniors. The quantity of available aging services and programs are not essential to older immigrants. Rather, having culturally sensitive services that recognize and match older immigrants' unique needs in a transitional context that had tremendous impacts on their aging and settlement experiences. Similar to other migration research, our study also highlights that migration and aging in a

transitional context in old age is not simply a geographical transformation from one place to another (Horn & Schweppe, 2016). The complexity of making a home in the receiving country lies on its entanglements between individuals, families, and their interactions with the socio-cultural, economic, and political environments in the host country.

2.8 Policy Implication and Conclusion

This exploratory study adds to the literature on aging, immigration, and racial ethnic studies by focusing on the home finding process. The findings suggest a twofold meaning of home. First, the elderly immigrants' conceptualization of home encompasses a journey of maintaining family connections, achieving personal independence, and gaining a sense of social belonging and security. This journey unveils a cultural shift from the emphasis on interdependence between generations toward the value of independence as emphasized in American culture.

In terms of aging needs and preferences, the older Chinese immigrants are no different from American seniors. Instead of asking for help from grown children, elderly participants are more willing to seek help from public services. They also value financial independence and their private lives. Yet, elderly immigrants encounter many practical challenges (i.e., language, transportation, limited social and cultural capital) to age and live well in the host country. They are vulnerable and marginalized when social policies in the receiving country are unaware of their unique difficulties and needs. Very likely, older immigrants are forced to manage challenges on their own or rely on help from their limited social networks. The ignorance of elderly immigrants' needs and obstacles at the policy level could even be considered as a covert form of discrimination.

Second, home is a process that involves an exchange between the individuals and their environments. The elders proactively develop strategies to cope with environmental challenges according to their needs and interests, such as finding low income senior housing to become independent from their children, building social relationships, establishing new life routines and hobbies, etc. However, the poor public transportation and lack of language skills greatly impede elderly immigrants' assimilation into the mainstream society, especially for those who live outside an ethnic specific area (Treas & Mazumdar, 2002). As Treas and Mazumdar (2002) reported, the lack of transportation and communication can result in older immigrants' loneliness, boredom, and social isolation. We call attention to strengthen aging policies and ethnic-specific services that can meet elderly immigrants' unique aging needs and assist them re-establish a sense of home. Those services may include, but are not limited to, offering transportation, providing translation services, arranging culturally meaningful activities, offering classes to improve older immigrants' necessary social and cultural skills.

2.9 Study Limitations

This study is based on a small sample of diverse seniors who were purposively selected from two Chinese communities in metropolitan Atlanta. The participants disproportionately have already gained access to welfare programs and received varying degrees of practical supports from the government and communities. New immigrants therefore are systematically excluded from the sampling technique. Although the study design can capture elderly immigrants' experiences with local community and general socio-political environments in the host country, future studies would benefit from recruiting larger representative and diversified samples. A special attention needs to be paid to more recent elderly immigrants, who are isolated in their communities, have limited access to information, welfare programs, or community resources.

Second, this study is cross-sectional research which is limited in capturing and explaining elderly immigrants' home-making experiences over time. Some of the participants mentioned that they were lonely, isolated, and struggled in community for years. During such a difficult life stage, it is unclear how these participants interacted and evaluated their surrounding environments and their quality of life. Recreating a home is known as a process of evolution that involves both individuals and structures. Thus, future investigation is in need of adopting a longitudinal research design to depict the evolving home-making experiences and outcomes among elderly immigrants.

Additionally, since the traditional Chinese culture stresses family relationships and intergenerational interdependence, future investigation should also include family members' perspectives, especially adult children. Researchers could gain a more thorough understanding of the association between family members and elderly immigrants' home-making experiences if analysis includes family structures, the exchange of supports between aging parents and children, and expectations from both generations.

Overall, our study adds to the existing knowledge about elderly immigrants' home-making process and experiences in a transitional context. Study results may inform state and federal government agencies to fund appropriate ethnic specific programs. Researchers in the field of aging and gerontology, race, ethnicity and immigration studies may draw insights from study findings for future research. Finally, social workers may benefit from the study findings by enhanced understanding that finding a sense of home for immigrant elders is also a path from interdependence to independence. Meanwhile, social services and social workers themselves may play a direct role in increasing aging seniors' well-being by facilitating a better home-making experience for them.

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3 FINDING A SENSE OF HOME IN LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS IN CHINA: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RELATIVE STRATEGIES

Abstract:

Facing the rapidly increasing aging population, institutional long-term care (LTC) has become one of the widely accepted options of elder care in the contemporary Chinese society. Research on institutional care in China has proliferated in recent decades. However, only a handful research has taken perspectives from environmental gerontology to explore the concept of “home” in relation to elders’ residential and aging experiences in LTC settings. Drawing perspectives from environmental gerontology, this study looks into the process and lived experiences of how Chinese older adults acquire a sense home in LTC environments. The data was based on 30 in-depth interviews with elderly residents living in 5 different LTC facilities in Xi’an, China. Findings elucidated that Chinese elderly residents develop a sense of home from three major domains: physical home of comfort and safety, social home of having trust relationships within institutions, and personal home of having harmony without uniformity. Home-making in LTC settings is a complex process for older people that involve both personal adaptation and institutional supports from varied aspects. Aging policy makers and LTC providers may draw insights from study findings to better facilitate a positive residential experience for older people in LTC environments.

3.1 Introduction

As China steps into an aging society, its welfare system, models of formal aging support and quality of aging services have caught great public attention in Chinese society. In 2015, 140 million people in China were aged 65 or older, accounting for 10.5% of the total population and representing an increase of approximately 52 million older adults since 2000 (National Bureau of Statistic of PRC). Facing such rapidly increasing number of older population and to respond to the demand of formal elder care, non-government owned long-term care (LTC) facilities have been vigorously developed in China, especially in cities (Guan et al., 2007). While the government and aging market place major concerns on older people’s demands and needs, ensuring positive residential experiences in LTC environments has also been advocated as key to the future development of LTC services in China.

Older persons' aging experiences and quality of life are closely linked to their dwelling environments. In comparison to young adults, older people spend much more time and carry out most of their daily activities at home (Iwarsson et al., 2007). The home or its close circumscribed surroundings strongly affect older people's ways of life, from how they perform essential activities in everyday life to where they experience social life and fulfill emotional and spiritual needs (Golant, 2015; Nakrem et al., 2011). In developed countries, research about the relationship between aging individuals and home environments has been conducted among many disciplines, such as gerontology, environmental psychology, and geography. In empirical research, some common topics include the meanings of home, characteristics of aging-friendly communities, aging in place, and residential care environment and aging (Andrews et al., 2007; Bonaiuto, Fornara, & Bonnes, 2006; Lewicka, 2011). Among these topics, concept of home received considerable attention. As demonstrated in prior research, home environments significantly influence the aging process and well-being (Wahl & Lang, 2003; Wahl, Iwarsson & Oswald, 2012). An aging-friendly home environment is more likely to promote healthy aging by offering opportunities and resources to meet up with older people's expectations and needs, maximize their sense of independence, and making them feel positive about life, themselves and the place (Golant, 2015).

Existing literature has clearly noted that 'home' entails multi-dimensional meanings, ranging from physical and architectural aspect of a dwelling place, social relationships embedded in living environments, personal values attached to the place to even culture and economy related meanings (Frank, 2002; Mallett, 2004; Molony, 2010; Moore, 2000). Scholars from a various fields have also developed theories to elucidate meanings of home and to delineate the association between home and older persons' aging experiences. For example, Lawton and

Nehemow (1973) developed the most widely acknowledged theory in environmental gerontology, known as the 'Press-Competence Model'. They argued that older person's adaptation experiences and outcomes are strongly influenced by their living environments, in which elders with lower personal competence are more vulnerable to environmental press. In early conception of the theory, only features in physical environments received sufficient attention (Wahl & Lang, 2003). More recent theories expanded the focus of physical environments to include consideration of social environments and link socio-physical features with aging persons. This strand of theories were seen in the work of Rowles (1983), Sixsmith (1986), and Rubinstein (1989), where they pointed out that the effects of home environments on individuals not merely derived from physical contexts, but comprises total integration of physical, social, and personal factors. Although scholars adopt different perspectives to look at the notion of home, they remind future research to be aware of the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the concept. Based on theories, a vast empirical research has also provided rich description about home, such as metaphors of refuge and haven, feelings of comfort, safe, independent and empowerment, as well as extension of relationships, and showcase of self (Cristoforetti, Gennai, & Rodeschini, 2011; Cooney, 2011; Leith, 2006; Oswald & Wahl, 2005; Peace, Holland, & Kellaheer, 2006).

In Western societies, empirical studies about the concept of 'home' in residential care environments have been fruitful, but few relevant research studies have been conducted in China. In a recent decade in China, there was an increasing number of research targeting LTC services, looking at issues of population aging and challenges to elder care (Glass et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2012), the development of LTC services in urban and rural regions (Feng et al., 2011; Zhang, 2007), characteristics of elderly residents (Gu, Dupre, & Liu, 2007; Song, Anderson, Gorazzini,

& Wu, 2014), and willingness and attitudes toward LTC (Chou, 2009; Fang et al., 2013; Guan, Zhan, & Liu, 2007). There is no research that examines how older people subjectively perceive the notion of home and to investigate what features in LTC environment make older people feel being at home. Current literature in China is inadequate in providing a solid and holistic understanding of older adults' actual residential experiences in LTC setting, particularly regarding their social and personal lives. Advancement of aging policies and LTC services requires rich and evidence-based information regarding how features in LTC environments contribute to elders' positive residential experiences. To add to the knowledge, this study examined factors that constitute older adults' feeling of home based on analysis of qualitative data that were collected from 30 in-depth interviews in 5 different LTC facilities in Xi'an, China.

3.2 The Research Design

3.2.1 Study Setting

This research applied a qualitative approach to gain a thick description that capture Chinese older adults' conceptualization of home and aging experiences in LTC service settings. To comprehensively examine the notion of home in relation to place, five different LTC institutions of difference sizes in Xi'an were selected as research sites. Among these institutions, two of them were large in size, defined as having more than 300 residents; two of them were middle sized facilities, defined as having more than 100 residents but less than 300; and one small facility, defined as having less than 100 residents. All institutions provide basic caring services from self-care to full care. Elders may select different types of room according to their affordability and needs, including suites, single bed rooms, double beds rooms, and triple bed rooms. The large and median sized facilities often provide classes, recreational activities and social services, while the small sized facility focuses on providing fundamental care services.

3.2.2 Sample Selection

Given that this particular research requires elderly participants to clearly express their opinions and communicate with the interviewer, older adults with dementia or in severe health conditions were purposively excluded from the sample. To be eligible for this study, elderly residents had to be 55 years-old and over and have resided in the facility for more than two months. Also, to increase the diversity of the sample, I made an effort to recruit elderly participants from different age, gender, career, caring levels, and experiences with different LTC facilities.

To avoid recruiting participants who do not meet sample selection criteria, part of the participants were recommended by the facility. For instance, one of the large sized facilities provided a list of residents who met our selection criteria and showed interests for the interview. Among the other four facilities, with the permission of staff, we recruited participants through purposive sampling. Prior to approaching potential participants, the interviewer inquired caregivers about residents' health conditions to make sure that the interview could be conducted safely and effectively. Participants' demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of elderly participants (N=30)

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age in years	Number of children	Length of residence	Caring level
1.Li	Male	81	5	1 ½ years	Completely self-care
2.Wang	Male	70	2	2 years	Partially self-care
3.Zhang	Female	91	2	6 years	Partially self-care
4.Liu	Female	80	4	7 months	Partially self-care
5.Chen	Female	90	1	5 years	Partially self-care
6.Yang	Female	78	3	3 years	Completely self-care
7.Zhao	Male	59	1	4 years	Partially self-care
8.Huang	Female	77	5	2 years	Completely self-care
9.Zhou	Female	80	4	4 years	Completely self-care
10.Wu	Female	74	0	9 years	Completely self-care
11.Xu	Female	78	3	2 years	Full care
12.Sun	Female	92	2	5 years	Partially self-care
13.Hu	Male	81	1	1 year	Partially self-care
14.Zhu	Female	68	1	8 years	Completely self-care

15.Gao	Female	80	2	3 years	Full care
16.Lin	Female	88	2	5 years	Completely self-care
17.He	Female	73	3	10 years	Completely self-care
18.Guo	Female	84	4	3 years	Completely self-care
19.Ma	Female	77	3	2 years	Full care
20.Luo	Male	70	3	2 years	Partially self-care
21.Liang	Female	78	2	3 years	Completely self-care
22.Song	Female	76	4	2 months	Completely self-care
23.Zheng	Female	78	2	3 months	Partially self-care
24.Xie	Male	62	0	6 months	Full care
25.Han	Male	85	5	6 months	Completely self-care
26.Tang	Female	71	1	6 months	Partially self-care
27.Feng	Female	83	4	1 years	Partially self-care
28.Yu	Male	57	0	6 months	Full care
29.Dong	Female	82	1	2 years	Full care
30.Xiao	Female	75	4	3 years	Full care

3.2.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth personal interviews. After gathered participants' socio-demographic information, they were asked to answer four major categories of questions, including life course events, LTC transaction and selection criteria, life in the facility, and home experiences. The four categories of questions were designed to elicit participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences in relation to aging in LTC environments. Although the structure of interviews was set, the participants were encouraged and given sufficient time and freedom to share their perspectives, stories or expand discussions according to their will.

All interview sessions were audio-recorded and filed notes were taken simultaneously. Most interviews lasted from 30 to 60 minutes, with the longest session about 2 hours. Prior to the interview, elderly participants were clearly informed about the research, data collection method, as well as the procedure of protecting individual information in the use of data. Confidentiality of interview was strictly applied, especially when participants showed anxious about disclose

information to staff and caregivers. To protect participants' privacy and smooth the conversation, all interviews took place in residents' bedroom or conference rooms with door closed.

3.2.4 Data Analysis

All recorded tapes were transcribed in Chinese, and the transcriptions along with field notes were logged into qualitative data management software (ATLAS.ti) for analysis. The data analysis followed by modified grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Once the data pool was set, the analytical process began with line-by-line open coding, breaking the data into small categories. For example, categories emerged from open coding include: children's supports, personal willingness of LTC placement, evaluation of caring services, safety concerns, participation in structured activities, maintenance of personal hobbies, relationships with neighbors, and etc. After the initial coding procedure, axial coding was applied to ascertain the interconnection between categories, exploring how categories were related, contextualized, and perhaps intervened with one another (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). With axial coding, the relationships between categories were emerged. For example, the nature of family life and elders' health conditions influenced their intention of aging in LTC settings, residents' preferences of participating in group activities was associated with their sense of belonging; and maintenance of personal hobbies granted elders with feeling of continuity and purpose in life. During this process, a relation diagram was created to visualize and denote the interactions between categories. Finally, categories in relation were combined to form a larger theoretical scheme, where core categories were generated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). All participants made comments on how life has changed in regard to alternation of living environments from home to aging in LTC service settings. The notion of home was circulated in participants' stories and experiences, which served as the core category in this research.

3.3 Findings

All elderly participants reflected on their understanding of home in LTC service settings and elements that affected their construction of home. Among 30 participants, 22 of them identified the facility as their homes while the rest of 8 participants also reported factors that hindered their feelings. Elders' home experiences in LTC environments derived from three main aspects, physical, social, and personal. Physical home contained elements of comfort, safety, and enhanced mobility. Social home attributed to creating meaningful relationships with residents and staff and through participating in shared activities. Personal home was constructed through establishing a stable life routine and carry out meaningful activities.

3.3.1 *Physical Home: Comfort, Safe and enhanced mobility*

The majority of the elderly respondents were motivated to move to an elder care home because they could no longer be taken care of at home or aging in their own communities. Some elders had children living nearby but children were too busy earning a living and managing many other life responsibilities. Some participants had children living in other cities or even over broad, meaning that immediate help from their closest kinship was almost absent. Choosing to live in an elder care home seemed to be a rational decision, especially for participants who have tried other forms of living and caring arrangement, such as hiring a live-in caregiver. However, having a private caregiver did not help older adults to stay at home and aging in place. For example, Mrs. Zhou expressed her experience this way,

My children worried about me [to stay at home by myself]. They hired live-in caregiver twice, but it didn't work. The food they [caregivers] cook are even worse than I do, and I have to help the [caregiver] to cook...they [caregivers] come from rural regions. I am not used to the way they handle housework, sanitation especially.

Experiencing different life habits or doing extra work because of co-residing with an outsider was two common heard complaints from participants. The worst case was elder abuse,

as expressed by Mrs. Feng, where her previous live-in caregiver beat her and not giving her food. The caregiver always had a mean attitude which made Mrs. Feng felt terrified and unsettled, even in her own place. After a period of time, Mrs. Feng could no longer bear the caregiver, and she begged her son to send her to an elder care home.

Mrs. Zhou and Mrs. Feng's narratives spoke to the two reoccurring themes of the physical aspect of home in LTC settings—comfort and safe. Due to deteriorating health and declined functional ability, doing housework, grocery shopping, cooking, and taking care of oneself alone become a challenging task for older people staying at home, especially for those who suffer serious chronic diseases or with disabilities. For example, 81 years old Mr. Li explained the reason why he moved into LTC,

Why [is it] convenient? I don't need to worry about meals and accommodation. I eat whatever they offer, right? And meals here are not bad. When you stay at home, can you have different food in every meal? Impossible. Here, we have different dishes every day. The food is good especially the breakfast and lunch. For dinner, porridge is fine. In general, the meals here are good nutritionally.

Most elderly participants expressed their willingness of doing housework, and some of them even refused care workers to help them doing the work they were capable of. However, trying to be independent in performing daily activities was completely different from forcing oneself to be independent for surviving. Doing chores, cooking or carrying out other caring tasks was optional for elders living in LTC facilities. Thus, when speaking of the benefits and expectations from LTC environments, the majority of participants emphasized the quality of care and sense of comfort. For instance, two elderly residents from a large size facility both expressed their willingness to stay in the facility and consider the facility as their homes, largely owing to the fact that life was made comfortable and easy for them. Mrs. Chen (90 years old) said,

I feel living here is the same as I did when I was at home, comfortable and convenient. I have a granddaughter. She takes me home in Lunar New Year, but for somehow, I don't

feel much pleasant [going back]. It's not as convenient as living here [in the facility]. [I don't need to worry about] laundry and cooking. They [care workers] send three meals a day here; I just need to grab a bowl and eat.

There is no difference between my home and here. I've been cared for here. If I stay at home, my son will worry, for I have bad eye sight. [Staying in the elder care home], at least, I have three meals. I have meals on time. No worry about grocery shopping and cooking. When [meal] time comes, I just go to eat and that feels right (Mrs. Zhou, 80 years old)

As stated by Mrs. Zhou, "I've been cared for here." In LTC environments, dwelling was only one part of the physical dimension of home. Older adults chose institutional care over other living and caring arrangements because they expected to have a dwelling place that came with services. Thus, the quality of caring services became an essential component that shape elderly residents' feeling of home in LTC settings.

In addition to caring services and comfort, safety has emerged as elderly residents' main concern in evaluating the physical aspect of home. Living in a safe environment reduces both aging parents and children's worry and anxiety. Mrs. Zhang, for example, told the interviewer that she moved into LTC because she was alone at home and terrified when the Wen Chuan earthquake took place in 2008. Fortunately, Mrs. Zhang did not get hurt in that shocking natural disaster but she felt scared and uncomfortable afterward. All her children were in different cities and no one could rush to Mrs. Zhan place to give her a hand when the crisis happened. For that reason, Mrs. Zhang decided to stay in an elder care home, a place where she can get immediate support.

In other cases, residents showed concern about risk of falling, unexpected health crisis, as well as daily safety hazards. For example, a participant described her concern about potential safety issues at home in this way,

Some older person stay at home alone, they turn on the fire to cook but forget to turn it off; sometime they turn the tap on but leave the tap running after use...but here [in the

facility], you always have someone to make the rounds of the wards. You don't need to worry about any of these [safety issues].

Elderly residents also make suggestions to administrators and directors to reduce their anxiety about potential safety risks, such as requesting install of floor lights, removal of the oxygen cylinders from the auto repair store nearby, and so forth.

Meanwhile, the space designed for exercise and social activities also contributed to elderly residents' satisfaction to the physical dimension of home, such as the size of the courtyard, navigation and conjunction between buildings and shallow slopes. Ideally, the physical features of LTC environment should incorporate both safety and supportive features that can maximize elderly residents' mobility and opportunities for social interactions. Mr. Xie, for example, stayed an elder care home for 8 years and recently moved to another facility. A health crisis left him paralyzed and made him relying on wheelchair for mobility. In interview, Mr. Xie described how hard and isolated his life was when he was in the previous elder care home. He was almost trapped on the eighth floor for years because none of the care workers were willing to help him to go down to the courtyard. In current elder care home, Mr. Xie was placed on the second floor where he could get down to the ground without asking assistant. The freedom of moving around the facility provided Mr. Xie the opportunities to develop new social relationships, which indeed enriched his life and helped him to regain vitality.

The need to have supportive features for mobility in elder care homes not only mattered to physically dependent resident, but also significant to those who were able to function independently. In North China, for instance, the installation of heating system in facilities was very likely to have impact on elderly residents' mobility and their desire to stay.

I lived in Fanputang for more than three years; however, I have chronic tracheitis. Since I am getting older, I suffered more in winter time and the heating condition was bad there. They cut the heat from 1am to 3am every night, and I couldn't stand for that cold. One

day, my son took me home. And along the way, we discovered this place [current elder care home] in Sanqiao. (Mr. Li, 81 years old)

If you want to go outside, you can exercise outside. In winter time, it is cold outside but walking in the corridor is not cold. We have an under-floor heating system here. It's installed in the corridor. When winter comes, we walk on the corridor from this building to the other building. It is all connected and that's good for old people. We don't go out and we don't feel cold.....The bathroom is convenient here. When I have aching in my legs, I lean on this [a long handle] and then make two turns to sit on the toilet. When I have gotten used to this, I even feel uncomfortable going back home. (Mrs. Liu, 80 years old)

Elderly participants' satisfaction with physical features in LTC facilities was not an exclusive determinant of their construction of home. However, the participants who developed a feeling of 'at-homeness' often showed a high satisfaction with the architectural and safety features of the facility.

Nevertheless, the five facilities were different in terms of their physical layout and caring services. The commonly heard negative opinions were the poor quality of care services and food. To Chinese older adults, the quality of food seemed to be significant to their residential experiences. As a traditional Chinese proverb describes, "eating is as important as sky." In this study, the participants who had a hard time to construct the feeling of home were more likely to be discontent about food. Mr. Luo, a 70 years old man who have lived in the facility for two years said, "Everything else is fine here, but life is not good. The food, all vegetables, no meat." Another resident in the same facility, Mrs. Liang also stated,

The food here, you can't eat it at all. I pour away all of them...what they cook is a mess. When you get old, food is what matters the most. I have a lot of complaints about the food. For old people, they always want to have some good food [that can improve their appetite]. They make a mess, like feeding pigs. We can't eat that, right?

Apparently, when the quality of services in elder care homes was unsatisfying, elderly residents could hardly develop a feeling of home and show willingness to aging in an LTC

environment. In short, meeting elders' fundamental expectations and needs for safety and caring was an essential factor from the physical and institutional perspective.

3.3.2 Social Home: Meaningful relationships and Shared Activities

Both theories and empirical research in environmental gerontology have exemplified the interactive nature between physical, social, and psychological environments such in ways that a supportive social environment would contribute to older adults' development of psychological capital, and vice versa (Bosworth & Schaie, 1997; Findlay & McLaughlin, 2005). The quality of social life in the care setting functions as a core element in shaping elderly residents' construction of a sense of home, especially social relationships within the institution (Street et al., 2007). In current study, elderly participants' narratives also demonstrated the importance of developing social connections within the place. Based on the analysis, three relational themes emerged: 1) creating meaning through developing friendships, 2) creating meaning through participation in group activities; 3) being known and knowing others (with care workers and directors).

3.3.2.1 Creating meaning through developing friendships within the place

In addition to seeking a safe and caring environment mentioned above, some elderly residents moved into elder care home because of the loneliness that they have previously experienced at home. This was especially evident among elders who lost their spouse and had busy children. A 76 years old participant Mrs. Song spoke about her experience in this way,

I used to co-reside with my son-in law. The apartment was too big, too empty and I was scared...when my daughter went to work in hospital and left me alone in the apartment, I was afraid to go out. I stay on the 11th floor. What I can do was open the window, sit there and get some sunshine...But here, I have friends to speak with. You don't have to make friends. You can talk to any people.

Mrs. Song was economically affluent. She moved into elder care home not because she needed immediate care. What Mrs. Song was looking for was an environment where she could interact and communicate with others. The lacking of social opportunities with others made Mrs. Song under great psychological pressure. She said, "I was often dreaming of having a partner to talk to me when at home." Soon after relocating an elder care home, Mrs. Song developed new friendships and re-established her own social network. Her desire for companionship has been fulfilled, which made her felt positive about the decision to live in an LTC facility.

Another participant, Mrs. Lin described her selection of institutional care over home based care at having no social life. About 10 years ago, Mrs. Lin lost her youngest son and few years later, she lost her second son. She said, "When my second son was still alive, he came to visit me every week. We do grocery together and cook together. After his death, I was alone and my life became meaningless." The loss of loved ones was a heart-broken experience to Mrs. Lin. She decided to move into an elder care home looking for some changes in her pessimistic life attitude. When asking about changes, Mrs. Lin gave the following response,

Life has changed a lot. I feel much better here. When I was at home, I play board games all day long with those old people. There was not much to talk about. But here, I have met so many different people. Some are older than me and some are younger. We have common topics. We often exchange stories and opinions. I have participated in a lot of activities. I am happy.

Mrs. Lin has kept a positive attitude toward integrating into a collective lifestyle in the facility. She guided residents to practice Tai Chi in the morning and comforted others who needed emotional supports. Mrs. Lin was recognized as a warm-hearted person. She said, "I always love to do things for people. Helping others makes me happy, very happy."

Moreover, most elderly residents still maintained a close ties with children, and perceived their intergenerational relationship as important in life. However, friendships within the facility

seemed more salient than contacts with family members and outside friends in affecting elders' feeling of home. Neighbors and friends within the facility often provide emotional support to each other, which in turn furnished a sense of belonging and purposes. This companionship was vital in helping Chinese older people to form a feeling of home. Mrs. Huang, for example, said "it's the same as at home. Older people in here [facility] always stay together. We talk to each other when we exercise, singing, or do handicraft...it feels like a family." There were ample similar comments from residents. Some residents make new friends and re-established new social networks while others may continue their previous social connections by selecting a facility where friends were. For example, when asked about how life has changed after LTC placement, Mrs. Guo, an 84-year-old retired teacher, said that there was not much change. In her words,

Some of the residents here are my previous classmates, and some are teachers that we worked together. We all used to have some associations. I am familiar with many of them. My previous neighbor is my classmate in high school but he went back to Lanzhou, and the neighbors I have now are retired teachers from the Eighty Nine High School and Forty Four School. We used to have contact. If you keep digging, you can always find someone you knew. Like the one lives in the West district, he was the dean of our education school. We often hang out together, have some chat, and go out for grocery. From the things we do, my life hasn't changed a lot.

The relationships between residents were found to be a central social factor that turning an unfamiliar LTC environment into a meaningful place. Thus, to assist older people to gain a feeling of home in LTC, facilities need to provide a supportive social environment where residents can easily develop social connection and obtain a sense of membership and belonging.

3.3.2.2 Creating meaning through participating in group activities

Participants regarded social participation in group activities as important and pervasive part of living in LTC settings in China. Group activities served as a means for elderly residents to acquire a sense of solidarity and a feeling of 'being part of this place.' In those well-run and

large sized facilities, there were always some forms of shared activities, either organized by the facility or led by residents. Besides festival and holiday events, daily-based activities included singing chorus, Tai Chi or other physical exercise groups, making handicrafts and knitting, practice calligraphy, dancing and cat walking, cards and Mahjong, as well as varied volunteering work. Mrs. Zhu, a 68 years old resident who has lived in facility for 8 years, described her experiences as such,

I have a rich inner life by participating in varied activities. If I can't participate in this activity, I can choose other activities, right? I no longer can sing because of surgical operation of throat, but I can dance...residents in this place have lots things to do, like making embroidery, practicing writing skills, all kinds of activities.

Participating in shared activities not only entertained elderly residents, but also provided them with opportunities to build up relationships with others and be part of the collective living environment. As stated by Mr. Hu,

I am doing fine here [in the facility]. One reason is that singing together cheers me up; the other reason is that I can socialize with many more people. I joined the group.... My thoughts on group activities are that if I have time, I will be there. Since it is a group thing, there must be some reasons to get together, right? I am pretty active in the group.

Mr. Hu explained that he could quickly adjust to live after LTC placement because he developed friendships and integrated into small groups by participating in shared activities. Being active and recognized by others made him feel proud and also gave him a sense of belonging. A similar statement was also reflected by Mr. Li, who was not comfortable living in the elder care home at first couple of months. The incidence that suddenly altered his attitude and feelings was a meeting arranged by the facility. One day, the person who was in charge of activities and events called Mr. Li's name in the broadcast asking him to participate a formal resident meeting. He was shocked but felt proud for being an important and recognized person. Mr. Li was also assigned as

the leader for the singing choir, and he was pleased to make contribution to the singing group and the facility in general.

Some residents were more active than others in participating in activities, leading groups, and uniting residents together. For example, Mrs. Zhang, described her experiences of taking an active role in guiding other residents to practice cat walking.

My children took to Sanya. Winter in Sanya is especially warm. I brought seven to eight sets of traditional clothing from Sanya. When I came back, I distributed these clothes to my friends, and we practiced cat walking...Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, we practice catwalk and others would follow us. Yesterday, we rehearsed a show, and that show became our retained show. Why [I am doing this ?], as long as elders are happy, I am glad to do.

Mrs. Zhang was content that she could benefit others and the facility. As a 91 years old resident, Mrs. Zhang intended to create an atmosphere that older people could be active and energetic regardless of age as long as they would like to join the group. The facility where Mrs. Zhang lived also showed appreciation for what she had contributed to the community and offered practical supports for all similar resident-driven activities. However, not all LTC facilities were aware of the importance of residents' desire for social recognition. In this study, only the two large sized facilities offered opportunities and formal supports for residents to use their expertise or life experiences to make contribution to others or the community. Echoing views about being active and useful, two participants commented that,

We came here with two goals. The first is to maintain a healthy body, and second is to have a comfortable and easy life. The way to be comfortable is to participate in all kinds of activities as long as you can move. If you really dislike being involved in structured activities, you can play cards or Mahjong or other things. Like me, for example, I organize activities for our residents...I was responsible for leading residents to dance and practice cat walking. [Because we have such fulfilling life in this facility], our facility was nominated as the advanced aging unit with excellent cultural atmosphere...we are a big family (Mrs. Zhu)

After I move to this place, I lead other residents to do exercise every morning. I usually come to this plaza at 7:20 to guide them. Many residents showed interests to participate.

Usually, we had dozens of people. This morning we have about fourteen and fifteen elders...After we done our exercise, I always ask them to laugh out loud and they would follow me. This is good for all of us (Mrs. Lin).

In the Chinese socio-cultural context, being recognized and valued through actively participating in group activities or taken an active role in initiating shared activities were particularly vital to residents' feeling of an insider in the place. Chinese elderly residents often have a shared understanding of appropriate social codes in LTC environment. Words such as "collective," "harmonious," and "tolerance" frequently appear in respondents' descriptions. Although conflicts were inevitable in some situations, the majority of the elders expressed their efforts and willingness to maintain pleasant relationships with other residents and staff.

China is known as having a strong emphasis on its social orientation. Concern about people's needs and emotions as well as pay attention to how one's decision or action may carry impacts on others are part of the unspoken but commonly accepted social norms in Chinese society (Jin & Xin, 2003). Other people's appraisal or put-down, assessment and society's social standards greatly shape a person's social behaviors and psychological status. In practice, traditional Chinese people would avoid to attract extra attention by act differently; they strive for keeping in line with others and social standards. Psychologically, they have a strong desire to leave a pleasant personal impression (Yang, 2008). This social norm guides how elderly residents approach and interact with others as well as their manner toward the collective life in LTC settings. For example, an 80 years old Mrs. Zhou said,

If I can go out [to exercise with others], I would go. I don't want others to gossip about me. I participate in whatever activities that I am capable of. I remember on the second day that I moved in, they asked me to do exercise, I joined them quickly. Because we have a collective life here, we need to be like this. Go with the flow, I try not to let others have bad views about me.

On one hand, older adults participate in group activities and support each other for the sake of recognition, acceptance and praise. On the other hand, they would avoid embarrassing or having conflict with others (Yang, 2008). Respondents used the phrase “peace is most previous” to describe their understanding of collective life in LTC institutions. Mrs. Liu, for instance, noted that a harmonious social atmosphere must be understood and reinforced by the residents. Mrs. Liu said, “if you don’t being polite and modest, and you do whatever you want, other people cannot stand for that, right? We need to be polite and respectful, and that’s how we get along.”

The social norm of ‘harmony’ was a double-edged sword. Elders were eager for a harmonious social atmosphere but in the meantime they gave up some of their personal freedom and preferences. In this study, respondents were fully aware of the limitations of living in LTC, but they showed maximum understanding and support for rules and norms. For example, 78 years old Mrs. Yang said,

Everyone here is a cell of the whole. There will be no trouble if you do the right thing, and we may become more united. If you refuse to do the right thing, only yelling for your own good, everyone on your floor or even in the whole building will not have peace. And there will be conflicts.

Due to political and historical reasons, Chinese older adults take social order and harmony seriously. In comparison to the impact of harsh physical environment, disharmony, conflict, and instability in social world may produce even more anxiety and panic for Chinese people (Zhang, 1989). This is particularly true the case for older adults who have gone through the era of Mao and Deng, where the idea that personal interests should be subordinated to the interests of the collective was heavily emphasized and also put into practice nationwide. Growing up in that unique historical time, older adults were being educated and socialized to consider the ‘collective good’ over personal interests. Thus, in respondents’ narratives, they

frequently mentioned the importance of having a shared mindset of the collective good, even if the price was to give up some personal freedom. A harmonious and active social environment would minimize residents' anxiousness but bringing peace and comfort, which were central in developing a sense of home.

3.3.2.3 Creating meaning through building trust relationship with directors, staff and caregivers

Meaningful relationships within the place take many forms. Besides having friends and acquaintance, many residents also shared their feelings and interaction experiences with staff and directors. In analyzing transcriptions and field notes of respondents' nonverbal expressions, being cared by and building up a personal relationship with the staff and directors gave residents the feeling of warm and pride. For example, Mrs. Yang described her first week in the facility,

I have problems with my eyes. [The care workers] didn't use honorific name to address me. They called me 'mom.' Younger [care workers] called me 'grandma.' They asked me, "How much do you need to eat today?" I said, "What do we have for today?" "We have dumplings. I will bring your extras and one more bun" [laugh sound]...At the beginning, we had a 'doctor' Zhang, very nice person, an experienced care worker. She is now a minister. When I came, she said 'mom, let me wash your feet'. I said no. I was not used to [have someone wash my feet]. I said, "No no no, hand me a towel and that's good enough.' Because I couldn't see where the towel was, I said, "you can help me to get the towel and I will wash my feet myself.' I was impressed and moved (Mrs. Yang, 78, 3 years)

Home must be a meaningful place where tenants are aware of their significance and existence (Molony, 2010). When caregivers provided individualized support to the elders, such as being familiar with residents' needs, habits or preferences for food, they were actually differentiating the residents, making each resident's existence unique and significant. Another resident, the 59 years old Mr. Zhao who was institutionalized because of lumbar paralysis said,

If you ask care workers in this facility, they all know me. I have a list of care workers' names. I saved the list and I printed it out. I created the list according to my memories [showing a proud facial expression]. Care workers on this floor are very familiar with me.

They took care of me in different times. So, no matter whom I seek help from, they all know my situation.

Mr. Zhao indicated that his familiarity with care workers makes him comfortable in asking for help and also simplifies the procedure of communicating his needs and preferences. Knowing and being known by the staff gives Mrs. Zhao a feeling of accomplishment. He successfully transformed a formal care recipient-caregiver relationship into a bond of family-like. They interacted in the same way of how family members cared about each other, knowing the person's needs and feelings. Similar statements were also seen in the following two quotes, showing respondents' perception and interaction with directors.

The director has a lot of responsibilities, works hard and is busy. I feel pity for him. Sometimes, when I wake up and sit there, I see him [working]. I told him to sit on a chair and take a rest. He is worn out. I know he cares about us [senior residents]. If he doesn't, I wouldn't care about him as well. The director must be good so that our residents would respect and listen to him (Mrs. Song, 76 years old)

You come and take a look, there is great diversity in the three meals. Great management! [The facility] arranges events and activities for senior residents very often. You see gifts, toothpaste, toothbrush, perfumed soap, towels. They give us these things that make you feel warm. Old people [here] are home, according to our common sense, have a happy life. Directors and ministers, visit us several times a day to check the quality of services and check on your mood. They come [to our apartments] because they care about old people...Our safety, meals and accommodation and housework are all being taken care of. I feel satisfied to live here (Mrs. Gao, 80 years old)

Without children's presence, the reciprocal caring between residents and staff provokes a feeling of being members in a family and generates "bonds of intimacy" (Gattuso, 1996). Residents could rely on directors and staff when they need not only instrumental or physical care but also emotional support. More importantly, when directors or staff shared their feelings and concerns with residents, this mutual investment in time and emotions could foster elders' feeling that they have developed some kind of "uniqueness" and more affective relationship. It was a sign of being special and important, adding weight to be an "insider" in the community and

simultaneously enhanced residents' attachment to th such as requesting install of floor lights, removal of the oxygen cylinders from the auto repair store nearby, and so for the facility and induced a sense of home.

3.3.3 Personal Home: harmony without uniformity

Despite physical and social aspects of an environment mentioned above, making an unfamiliar place into a home requires cognitive, emotional and personal adaptations. The personal domain of home is difficult to uncover for it contains a wide range of meanings and manifestations. This complexity can be seen in a heuristic model of meaning of home put forward by Oswald and Wahl (2005). In the framework, the personal domain of home considers a series of sub-categories (i.e., behavioral, cognitive and emotional) with elements such as proactive adaptation to environments, adaptive activities, personal perceived autonomy, identity, pleasure, stimulation, recognition, etc. (Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2009; Oswald & Wahl, 2005). In this study, two themes were emerged to elucidate Chinese older adults' understanding of home in LTC service settings: 1) develop a stable life routine; 2) conduct meaningful activities.

3.3.3.1 Develop a Stable Life Routine

Institutional elder care is known as having rules and regulations that intentionally or unintentionally asking residents to follow regulatory procedures. In Western culture where personal freedom and preferences are heavily emphasized, adherence to certain rules and routines in LTC settings diminish older adults' sense of autonomy and personal identity (O'shea & Walsh, 2013). As Frank (2002) noted, many assisted living facilities made endeavor to create a 'home-like' environment, but the question is—can a homelike environment be a true home? There are always some gaps between reality and ideal, such as the structured routine.

However, in contrast to what studies have been found in Western societies, having a routine in the Chinese LTC context was found to have positive effects on elders' development of feeling of home. In this study, elderly participants noted that they were willing to adjust life routines according to facilities' regulations, and they felt comfortable to know what to expect. There might be two reasons to explain why reconstruction of life routines was important to Chinese elders. One was to help residents to adapt collective lifestyle in LTC, and the other was to allow residents resume their life normalcy as soon as possible. For example, Mrs. Guo indicated that developing a stable life routine makes it easier for her to adapt lives in LTC. She said,

I am now getting used to having a scheduled lifestyle. I do things according to the clock. I like the way now, and it should be like this. It is more regular for me. And it [scheduled lifestyle] is easy me to adjust.

The expression of 'it feels right to have routines' appeared frequently in respondents' narratives. Mrs. Liu, for instance, also gave the following response,

Living here is good. We have three meals a day, at the precise hours: breakfast at 8am, lunch at 12, and then 6pm. Good, living here is good. Children have no worries about anything. Residents here eat and rest around the schedule, which is right. Elders do not need much.

A more explicit example is provided by Mr. Zhao, who was vocal about how lives have been changed after moving into an elder care home. He noted,

I can't have a regulated life at home. I can stay up late at night if I want to, and still get up super early the next day. But after settling down here [in the facility], I don't think I have enough time for a day. I have to do group exercise, go downstairs, and do some simple exercises by myself. If I have time, I work out twice in a day, once in the morning, once in the evening.

Mr. Zhao was content about his life in the facility. A stable life routine enabled him to plan his days, such as participating in meaningful social and personal activities. When asked about drawback of rules and regulations, much in line with other respondents, Mr. Zhao

indicated that individuals should be subordinated to the greater whole. In his words, “because I have always had group living, from I was in school till I entered the working unit. I always had collective life...I prefer to live like this.” Remarkably, the term ‘routine’ in this study did not refer to imposed routines or strictly scheduled daily plans that are invented by the facility. Rather, it referred to residents’ efforts and freedom in organizing everyday life according to personal preferences and habits within the structure of LTC environment.

3.3.3.2 Meaningful Activities

Having meaningful activities was found to be vital to elderly residents’ development of sense of home and upholding of a positive self-concept. A meaningful and enriched life can be realized through carrying out personal hobbies and conducting self-reliance actions, which can be either individual or collective acts, as long as residents identify the activity as important to their day-to-day existence. An old saying in China precisely describes the way that older adults’ pursue of meaningful life in LTC—harmony without uniformity.

Hobbies and self-reliance activities were two emerged themes that participants identified as important to re-create a bond with new living environments. To continue previous life hobby was found to an effective way to overcome drawbacks of transferring from a familiar home environment to LTC settings. Many participants noted that carrying out hobbies granted them a feeling that life has not been changed profoundly due to alternation in environments. For example, when asked about residents’ daily plans, Mrs. Wu responded that,

I have an electronic organ, I was raised by the church communities... Back then, when I had healthy legs, I did lots of outdoor activities, jumped around, and I danced, too. I performed on the events in my factory, but my legs are no longer good. Now, I still sing and play my organ...Thank God for giving me a good voice, I lead the singing choir....Singing together. Other elders all love me.

Singing and reading were two common activities that residents enjoyed. They strove to preserve a sense of continuity by carrying out their preferred activities. This viewpoint was also supported by Mr. Hu, where he stated,

I think old people should have things that they like to do. I don't participate in group activities. My thinking is, I need to know the news on TV and learn things from reading newspapers. Why? Because you are living in this country, you got to know what happens outside and obtain updated national policies announced by the Party and government... I used to watch TV, the CCTV news as a habit. Now, I still watch TV and read newspapers here. I subscribed three newspapers. Reading daily newspaper and watching news on TV takes almost all of my time. I don't have time to think about others.

Even for elders who did not have particular hobby prior to moving into LTC facility, they could develop new hobbies as they might be inspired by others or the interactive culture in LTC environments. The oldest participant in this study, 92 years old Mrs. Sun shared her experiences of learning new skills. As the result of declined health condition and constrained mobility, Mrs. Sun could only participate in few activities that do not require a large amount of exercise, such as making handicraft.

I learned it here. I don't know how to do it before. You see, how to make handmade flowers, and embroidery. I learned them all....I was not good at it when I was young, but now I make lots of embroidery....I sold one of them two days ago for 500 yuan (laugh). The buyer didn't even bargain with me. He was happy, very happy.... He hugged me and we took pictures together. I was happy, too. The handmade flowers, all of them are sold...And participating group activities makes me happy.

Similarly, Mr. Zhao, because of paralysis, he also had limited opportunities to participate in outdoor and group activities. However, he developed multiple hobbies to fulfill his life and to maintain connection with family members and outside society. Mr. Zhao learned to use a social App, WeChat, where he could send messages and pictures to his daughter and communicate with friends. He also downloaded a singing app listening to music and sing along. Meanwhile, Mr. Zhao also practiced calligraphy on a daily base, and he often felt proud when he saw progressions. In his words,

I feel that I don't have enough time to use every day after I came here. I have to do exercise regularly. I go down stair to do exercise by myself. Sometimes, I do exercise once in the morning and once at night...During the two times, I come back to my apartment to practice writing. I don't have enough time...I've been here four years, and my life is getting more enjoyable and meaningful...like an old saying, when God closes a door, he might open an window. From another perspective, when I was at work, I didn't have time, resources, or interests. Now, I am getting old and my mobility has been constrained, but I can practice calligraphy and singing. Now, I do all of the things that I didn't do before, which is good.

Although residents' ability to carry out personal hobbies might be hindered by their declined physical or cognitive abilities, they tended to adjust and develop hobbies according to their competence.

Meanwhile, several participants noted that they did not have particular preferences in regard to things they like to do during leisure time. Any activity or hobby that could bring about pleasure or making life meaningful was important to residents' sense of continuity and mastery in life. Self-reliance activities take many forms but doing housework is one of the prominent activities among Chinese elderly residents. Several participants considered that doing housework was important to their existence. Although much of the housework could be done by staff and caregivers, it was evident that participants preferred to do chores by themselves. For instance, Mrs. Zhou said,

I like to clean my room all by myself, no burdening others. I live here, and I feel good when I make the place clean. Whenever others come to my room, they will notice how clean it is.

To many residents, doing housework was a habit that they have cultivated throughout lifespan. Then, the housework became a means that residents make the place as their own space and as their home. For example, Mr. Hu expressed his feelings about cleaning the bedroom.

I do house chores. WhyI know they [caregivers] are busy, and doing housework is similar to doing exercise. Exercising is good for my body. After I clean my room, I feel accomplished and comfortable.

Similarly, 80 year old participant, Mr. Han, also explained why he insisted to do laundry in this way.

The fee that I pay to live here included laundry services. They wash your bed sheets and clothes. I don't ask them do this for me. I can wash my clothes, and I feel happy to do it. Doing housework by yourself seems silly especially when the facility provides such service. Actually, it's not like this. It's almost the same as doing exercise which makes me feel useful and contented.

Meaningful activities were not simply served as time fillers. Elderly participants' comments elucidated that home is a place where one has to "do" or "create" through integrating one's life habits with the nature of the place. Being active and focused on "making one's life" overcame the disruption of person-environment relationship due to LTC placement. With the freedom to conduct meaningful activities, either maintain or retain an interest or carry out any forms of self-care activities, participants could acquire a sense of mastery in their day-to-day life and the feeling of uniqueness in a collective living situation, and thus lead to an enhanced feeling of being part of the place and a sense of ownership as a home.

3.4 Discussion and Conclusion

This study adopted the modified grounded theory approach to examine elderly residents' perception and construction of home in LTC environments in China. Findings revealed that Chinese elders' understanding of home was not only about having family members nearby or referring to a concrete dwelling place. Rather, the construction of home was based on elders' subjective evaluation of features in LTC environment that match with their needs, expectations, and competence. It was also an ongoing process of merging individuals with their living environments that requires elderly residents to adjust their actions or expectations to re-build a P-E bond.

3.4.1 Sense of Mastery and Home

Findings from the this study highlight the significance of older residents' sense of mastery, from making suggestions to eliminate safety risk, to developing trust social relationships, and extended to manage life routine and plan activities. In LTC settings, feelings of competence and mastery were particularly essential to elderly residents' home-making experiences and outcome. As demonstrated by life span theorists, when older people live in a place where they are capable of doing things, making decisions, or modifying the environment to match their needs, interests, and competency level, they are more likely to obtain feelings of mastery (Gecas, 1989; Schulz & Heckhausen, 1998) and have positive residential experiences (Golant, 2015). In this study, some elderly participants were sensitive to safety issues as they expected to live in a safe environment. To remove their anxiety over safety risks, they made collective recommendations to advance physical features and caring services. LTC facilities were also fully aware that the frequent safety checks, their speed in answering to residents' call for help, constantly watching for their safety through monitoring system in public areas, availability of call buttons, handrail and prosthetic aid in a bathroom and along the corridor create an overall feeling of safety and security of living for residents in institutional care environment.

Socially, having trust and meaningful social relationships within a place also mattered to elders' feeling of mastery (Golant, 2015). To older Chinese people who were born and raised in a collective culture, living in an environment where they can build social connections was particularly prominent. Different from individualism in the West, the traditional Chinese culture emphasizes the state of mutual integration from people to people and people to the environment. One's perception of self is fundamentally relational, determined by the person's perceived status in his or her social network (Yang, 2008). The lack of opportunities to socialize due to health,

environmental or other personal barriers is likely to impede older people's positive self-concept, and it would ultimately affect their well-being. The reciprocal social and emotional support between residents, their shared activities, feelings and experiences are the foundation for the development of social cohesion and "at homeness" (Kontos, 1998).

Moreover, elderly residents' sense of being in control was also embodied in the way that they choose activities, develop a suitable life routine, and remain independent. Several participants mentioned that they would prefer to do house chores by themselves even though care staff members could take the responsibility. Even when confronting with contentious declining of physical and cognitive health, residents still showed desire to preserve their images of being an independent person and tried to perform self-reliance activities as much as possible to optimize their sense of control and feeling of competent.

Meanwhile, elderly residents' sense of mastery also expressed through re-establishing a stable life routine and maintaining personal hobbies. As suggested by the continuity theory, when facing new life circumstances, older adults often make adjustment based on thoughts, preferences of activities, life patterns, and personal goals that they have developed throughout their lifespan (Atchley, 1999). In Western societies, the structured nature of LTC environments is known as having institutionalized routines, norms and scheduled activities, which often conceived as a critical obstacle to older adults' autonomy, purposes in life, and sense of mastery (O'Shea & Wahl, 2013). However, different from American counterparts, Chinese elderly residents showed a high tolerance to arrange their lives according to time constraints and roster structures in facilities. Rather than complaining about alternating one's previous lifestyle around the institution's routines, many residents accepted or even appreciated to have a stable life routine that allowed them to plan their life in a foreseeable manner. For example, residents could

plan their days to perform chores, group activities, hobbies or to carry out other self-selected tasks. The routine was even perceived as a framework of shared norms and expectations which was also a potential source of residents' predictability and control (Golant, 2003; Shippee, 2012).

Besides, elderly residents' sense of mastery also reflected on making autonomous decision to select a specific LTC facility, the types of room, levels of care, activities that they could participate in, and so forth. Older persons' sense of mastery in personal life mirrored their ability to control their living environments. As described by the environmental press model, elders with higher personal competence are more able to resist environment constraints and more likely to control over their environments rather than being controlled. Personal competence includes a wide range of abilities, such as health, fulfillment of social roles, and cultural capital (Lawton & Neheow, 1973). LTC environments should provide physical features and services that compensate, support, and even reinforce residents' personal competence from varied aspects and to reduce environmental press. Home-making is rather a long process that requires a constant negotiation and integration between person and place (Cutchin, 2013). During this process, LTC facilities should provide opportunities and resources to empower elders' social, emotional, motor, and symbolic competence. Thus, findings in this study suggest that LTC facilities should focus more on elderly residents' individual needs and offer better services matching their personal competence and interests.

3.4.2 New Model of LTC Services under Environmental Gerontology Perspective in China

As described by the competence-press model, a balance between personal competence and environmental press could maximize older adults' comfort and reduce demand for adjustment (Lawton, 1990, 2000). Although older adults posit a wide range of personal competence and resources to cope with challenges and changes, the focus should still be placed

on how to advance aging policies and features in LTC environments to match with elders' coping capacity.

To reduce environmental stress, the most remarkable feature of LTC environments is its quality of installations and services in conjunction with residents' evaluation and expectations toward the environment. In this study, elderly participants frequently mentioned the size of recreation area and its accessibility, the quality of meals and caring services, and safety features as areas for future improvements. Chinese older adults' primary concern still focused on their fundamental biological and safety needs, and the material aspect of LTC environments seemed to have the most profound and direct impact on elders' residential experiences. A facility with well-constructed recreation regions, tasty food, abundant caring services, well-designed and maintained amenities could facilitate elders' adaptation to fit into the environment, and foster a sense of belonging and home.

Furthermore, as discussed in previous section, elderly residents' role of being an active actor rather than a passive recipient in LTC service settings showed positive effects on their home-making experiences. In recent decades, many assisted living facilities in U.S. and European countries have transformed the traditional service-based model of care to person-centered and consumer directed (Hooyman, Mahoney, & Sciegaj, 2016; Mahoney, 2011). This new model of LTC services requires staff and caregivers to plan and provide services according to residents' individual needs and to ensure residents' dignity and personal value are respected due to diminished physical or cognitive abilities (Crandall et al., 2007). Person-centered services grant older adults more power and freedom in making decisions, and often accompanied by offering an environment that is convenient and comfortable to stay as a home, such as supplying kitchen and kitchen utensils for residents to cook together in some occasions (Koren, 2010). The

person-centered LTC model calls for a high quality of personalized caring services which is under constant monitoring and modification according to residents' health conditions and preferences (Talerico, O'Brein, & Swafford, 20003). In addition to security and comfort engendered in service settings, person-centered model of care encourages staff and caregivers to get to know residents' biographies, interests, expectations, and competence for the sake of developing pleasant resident-staff relationships (Chu et al., 2009; Swafford, 2003).

With person-centered and consumer-directed LTC model of care, LTC facilities possess advantages of being a platform that allow older adults to receive services matching their personal value and needs. Old age is known as having a great heterogeneity. Throughout one's lifespan, each person experience diversified family and career life; develop different social relationships and personal hobbies, together with dissimilar personal characteristics. This long accumulated aging process indicates that people in old age often have their unique needs, lifestyles and preferences. Accordingly, to effectively reconstruct a P-E connection, LTC managers, staff members or even frontline caregivers should have an understanding about residents' needs and capabilities, and perhaps goals and values, and thus providing corresponding services or modifying services to minimize elders' efforts of adjustment and maximize their comfort.

Also, findings in this study indicated that either activities organized by facilities or initiated by residents were positive to older adults' home-making experiences. Participating in structured activities such as attending meals and taking exercise or recreational classes could nurture a sense of obligation toward the place and others, especially in the Chinese context where collectivism is greatly valued (Cutchin, 2003). Those structured activities should match elderly residents' abilities and preferences. Otherwise, encouraging or even forcing residents to participate in activities that they show no interests could only hamper their evaluation toward the

place and diminish personal values and sense of home. On the other hand, letting residents to decide the types of activities and expand forms of activities is likely to provoke elders' enthusiasm and enhance their sense of mastery in place. In addition, group activities initiated and led by residents also shared same features as structured activities. The overt purpose of having those place-centered activities was to entertain residents. However, elderly residents could potentially gain a sense of achievement and purposes in life through engaging with others.

Social participation in old age has been a critical research area since the beginning of population aging. In Western societies, no matter it is the 'successful aging' (Rowe & Kane, 1987) that brought forward by early American scholar or the idea of 'productive aging' by Bulter and Gleason (1982), or the concept of 'positive aging' by WHO, social participation is perceived as one of the key attributes in affecting individuals' aging process and experiences. In Chinese society, there are similar sayings that emphasis older adults' fulfillment of active social roles. For example, the Chinese government promoted ideas that society should grant older adults opportunities to make contributes to family, others, community, and society. Similarly, there are other matching sayings, while people in old age need supports and medical care, they also have wisdom to pass on, things to learn, tasks to accomplish, and have fun to enjoy (Mui, 2012). These ideologies of what old age should be look like remind LTC planners and providers to increase opportunities for older people to fulfill social roles in groups, gain a sense of achievement through meaningful activities, and acquire comfort and pleasure of aging in place.

Modifying the traditional mode of LTC services into the person-centered and consumer-directed LTC mode is certainly a challenging task in the Chinese context that may last for years. LTC facilities, especially non-government owned facilities often encounter shared difficulties in their operation, such as high expenditures, strict regulations on land use, poor amenities, low

occupancy rate, and unsatisfying quality of care (Mu, 2012). Developing comfortable and aging friendly LTC environments requires innovation of policies at national level, such as amend policies of land tenancy, offer practical assistance to LTC facilities for advancing amenities and environments, lessen utility fees, supply training opportunities for caregivers and raise their salary and benefits, and develop and unite NGO or other social services to make joint contributions for improvement of LTC services (Ye, 2010). To provide the person-centered LTC services that match residents' needs, interests, and competence should be a future direction for LTC and aging policy construction and advancement of services.

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4 CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SENSE OF HOME IN LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS IN CHINA

Abstract:

Theories in Environmental Gerontology and empirical research have both identified home as a complex and multi-dimensional concept. However, the complexity and interrelation between multiple domains of home remains unclear and inconclusive. This study uses qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) — a technique based on set theory to investigate combinations of conditions that contribute older adults' sense of home in long-term care (LTC) settings in China. The data was based on 38 in-depth interviews with older adults residing in six different sized LTC facilities in Xi'an, China. Findings suggest that there are multiple sets of explanatory conditions leading to elderly residents' sense of home. Among attributes in personal, social, and institutional domains, each individual attribute could bring about different levels of significance to the outcome of home when they were configured with other conditions. The analysis highlights the importance of considering the interdependencies and interactive nature among varied attributes. Our findings contribute to a more dynamic and holistic understanding of the notion of home by demonstrating how attributes interact and configurationally generate the outcome of home and presenting various patterns of configurations of attributes or pathways leading to a sense of home.

4.1 Introduction

Population aging is hitting China much harder and faster than any other advanced society. While it took France 115 years to double its elderly population from 7% to 14%, it took only 23 years for China to do so (He, Goodkind, & Kowal, 2016, p.12). By 2017, average life expectancy at birth in China reached 76, and over 16% of the Chinese population is already at or beyond age 60, the official retirement age (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Due to drastic reduction of family size and rapid pace of urbanization and modernization, many elderly Chinese (roughly 10%), by choice or not, are moving into elder care facilities to seek services (Liu, 2009). Influenced by the traditional Confucian cultural belief in filial piety and the legal requirement that adult children care for elderly parents, Chinese elders may experience a dramatic life-changing experience, emotionally and culturally, by moving into a residential care facility (RCF) or known as long-term care (LTC) facilities. For those who have moved to a LTC facility, do

they find a sense of “home” living there? Having a sense of home is important to older people, for it synchronizes the “totality of ways of living” with their physical dwelling place. There they carry out every day essential activities and enjoy social engagement with others, with feelings of being supported and valued, emotionally fulfilled and eventually linked to positive sentiments about life and themselves (Golant, 2015, pp. 8-9).

This study utilizes a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) approach to investigate mechanisms for the construction of home, based on interview data collected with 38 elderly residents from six different residential care homes in China. Findings of this study contribute to the body of literature on aging and long-term care by focusing on older adults’ development of a sense of home in residential care settings in China. Theoretically, by presenting multiple pathways that lead to a sense of home, this study sheds light on the interrelations between domains of home, offering a dynamic and interactional paradigm in rethinking the conceptualization of home. For the purpose of clarification, pathways in the present study specifically refer to a combination of conditions or configuration of factors that can generate the outcome of a sense of home. Moreover, findings of this study may benefit policy makers and managers of residential care facilities in China or other countries, by offering alternative ways to assist elderly residents to obtain a feeling of home, accompanied by an enriched understanding of the importance of individual attributes to the outcome of home in residential care environments.

4.2 Elder Care and Societal Changes in China

For centuries, China has relied on families and adult children to provide care for their elderly family members to meet their various needs (Cheng & Chan, 2006). However, this traditional pattern of elder care is at great risk due to massive societal changes, such as internal migration, modernization, and particularly the implementation of the one-child policy (Zhang et

al., 2012). In the late 1970s, the Chinese government, with the intention of controlling the rapid growth of a large population, implemented a nationwide family planning policy, allowing young couples to bear only one child except for ethnic minority families and families in less populated areas (Xu et al., 2007). Consequently, large families have been gradually replaced by the “4-2-1” nuclear family structure (four grandparents, two adults, one child), especially in urban areas (Wu & Du, 2012). In metropolitan areas, some young couples even have adopted the DINC (Double Income No Children) style of living (Xu et al., 2007).

Smaller family size has reduced the possibility of providing adequate family-based elder care (Cheung & Kwan, 2009; Zhan, 2004). Many young couples from one-child families face conflicting responsibilities of working and caring for their young child (ren) and aging parents (Fan, 2007). Faced with these circumstances, the Chinese government has devoted major efforts to develop community and residential care services to compensate for deficiencies in familial care since the 1990s.

4.2.1 Development of Long-term care Services in China

Elder care homes/RCFs, by definition, refer to residential long-term care facilities “for older adults with or without any disabilities affecting one or more counts of their activities of daily living (ADL) or instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) in institutions managing major spheres of life for its residents, whether or not these institutions are equipped with medical staff or facilities” (Zhan, Luo & Chen, 2012, p. 222). As an institution, using Goffman’s (1961) concept of nursing home as a “total institution,” Chinese elder care homes share the characteristics of having the “main spheres of life, such as sleep, work, play, and handling of human needs,” managed by “a bureaucratic organization” (p. 222).

Being a rather recent emergence, residential care in China has not been professionalized or specialized by the level of care, such as hospice, assisted living, or nursing home (Wong & Leung, 2012). Rather, it is normally classified by the nature of the dwelling place (i.e., apartment, village-type, etc.) and facilities' ownership status (government or nongovernmental) (Feng et al., 2012). The common types of LTC facilities include government-funded and operated institutions; residential care facilities financed by private entrepreneurs and enterprises; senior retirement centers developed by real estate businesses; and elder care facilities operated by nongovernmental organizations (Dai, 2013; Feng et al., 2012). Besides government-owned institutions, all other types of facilities fall into the category of *mingbanfeiqiye* (society-run units), known as private facilities (Wong & Leung, 2012, p. 574).

In China, before the 1980s, there were no formal elder care facilities designed to meet the needs of the aged (Zhang, 2007). The responsibility of caring for the old rested primarily on families with some supplemental support from the work unit (Wong & Leung, 2012). The single type of facility available to elders was the government-run welfare institution that accepted only elders who met the criteria of the "Three Nos": no children, no relatives, and no income (Chen, 1996, p. 190). However, after the economic reforms of the 1990s, the Chinese government implemented the policy of "socialization of social welfare," referring to the decentralization and privatization of welfare systems (Wong & Leung, 2012, p. 573). This policy shifted major welfare responsibilities from the government to businesses, individuals and their families, as well as to charities (Wong & Leung, 2012).

To promote the private sector of residential care services, the central government extended a series of benefits to nonprofit elder care homes, including "tax exemption, subsidies of new and existing beds, land appropriation, lower interest rates, direct financial supports for the

initial purchase or remodeling of a facility, and continued subsidies for each occupied bed in existing institutions” (Zhan, 2013, pp. 55-56; Feng et al., 2011). As a result of these policies, the number of semi-private and private elder care homes has grown dramatically, especially in urban regions (Feng et al., 2012).

However, the development of residential care services in China is still in a beginning stage. The size and quality of elder care homes vary significantly, depending on whether it is a “mom and pop” home (i.e., a small business without certified employees, administered by few people, and not meeting specific standards of care) or a high-level standardized assisted living or a nursing home (i.e., a formally organized business with a large facility that has been reviewed and inspected, with trained caregivers on the premises) (Feng et al., 2012). Only in recent years have elder care homes in developed regions begun to recognize residents’ social and psychological needs, gradually expanding services from the basic physical care to social and spiritual services (Cheng, Rosenberg, Wang, Yang, & Li, 2011).

4.2.2 Research Focus of LTC Facilities in China

There is a prolific literature relevant to residential care in China focusing on population aging and development of elder care services (e.g., Glass et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2012), the operations and challenges of elder care services (Mu, 2012; Zhang & Min, 2015), the characteristics of elderly residents (e.g., Gu, Dupre, & Liu, 2007; Song, Anderson, Gorazzini, & Wu, 2014), and family relationships and openness towards institutionalization (e.g., Chou, 2010; Fang et al., 2013; Guan, Zhan, & Liu, 2007). Among these studies, the quality of caring services is a core research focus.

Even though there is increasing demand for residential elder care, many elder care homes experience a low occupancy rate. This is particularly the case among some government-owned

and most nongovernmental facilities. Studies show that many of these facilities have unpleasant physical environments, with crowded living space, poor sanitation, inadequate medical services, limited recreational activities, and caregivers without proper training (Dan et al., 2013). The majority of caregivers in urban regions are migrants from rural areas aged from 40 to 60 years old, with little or no formal education or appropriate training (Song, Anderson, Corazzini, & Wu, 2014). Caregivers are capable of performing most basic caring tasks, but their services are often inadequate to meet residents' diversified social, emotional, or other personal needs (Mu, 2012). These features would have a direct impact on older people's evaluation of life in elder care homes.

In research about selection criteria for elder care homes, empirical findings show that besides individual and familial factors, the availability of diverse and high-quality services is critical to elders' selection of specific elder care homes (Jiao, 2010; Zhao & Wang, 2007). Older adults and their family members are more willing to choose facilities with a better environment and diversified services but at an affordable price (Zhao & Wang, 2007).

Moreover, filial piety is a cultural expectation and an important goal of socialization in China, in which adult children are under moral and peer pressure when they cannot meet their aging parents' needs for care (Lai, 2010). To compensate for the decreased availability of familial care, adult children adopt various strategies, such as hiring private caregivers or locating a qualified elder care facility (Chen & Ye, 2013). In the Chinese context, selecting an elder care home is often a decision made by the elder and family members. This collective decision may be based on the quality of caring services, knowledge of residential care, the distance between the facility and the nearest hospital, proximity to home, convenience for family visits, and issues of safety, etc. (Huang et al., 2014). Family not only plays a vital role in the decision-making

process but continues to affect elders' later life adjustment in institutions. Even though adult children reduce the extent of direct personal care provided to their parents after relocation to an elder care home, they continue to provide practical and emotional supports (Zhan et al., 2011). Children usually fulfill their filial responsibility by paying the fees, frequently visiting, and making sure their parents are being properly cared for. Adult children's involvement in parental care did not end when elders move into a residential care setting (Zhan et al., 2008). Filial children often try to find various ways to please their parents regardless of the living arrangement.

Although research in China has generated fruitful information about institutional conditions and family involvement, little empirical research has been done that adopts gerontological perspectives to investigate the intertwined institutional, social, and personal meanings in residential care environments. With an intention to understand how Chinese elders construct a sense of home in elder care institutions, the following sections synthesize relevant theoretical perspectives and empirical work in Western societies.

4.3 Theoretical Perspectives about Home in the West

The emergence of environmental gerontology and psychology in the late 1960s and 1970s generated a series of conceptualizations of Person-Environment (P-E) models, such as "age-loss continuum" (Pastalan, 1970), "place identity theory" (Proshansky et al., 1983), "environmental congruence theory" (Kahana, 1982), and "place attachment theory" (Schumaker & Taylor, 1983). Among these early conceptualizations, the most widely accepted approach is the ecological theory of aging by Lawton and Nahemow (1973). The main assumption of this theory is that aging and environmental adaptation may be approached as a dynamic process of finding equilibrium between environmental press and personal competence (Rowles & Bernard,

2013). The concept of person/environment fit has laid a solid foundation for environmental research (Peace et al., 2006). However, in this perspective, the understanding of environment was relatively one-dimensional. A living environment cannot be simply defined as having macro or micro levels of physical features; it also contains social and psychological elements which may have conjoint impacts on everyday life. The impact of these different aspects of personal environment is not properly explored in Lawton and Nhemow's theory.

To capture the comprehensiveness of home environments, Graham Rowles (1978) developed theoretical perspectives that particularly highlight the interconnection between individuals' experiences with their living environments. The multiple dimensions of home are reflected in Rowles's work (1983; 1991) of the three-dimensional model of insiderness, which covers physical, social, and autobiographical aspects of home. Similar to Rowles's work, theories in environmental psychology also note the multi-faceted nature of home by integrating individuals' subjective experiences, values, and emotions with place identity in relation to a living environment (e.g., Howell, 1983; Proshansky, 1978; Neisser, 1988; Oswald et al., 2007; Rowles & Bernard, 2013). For example, in Rubinstein and Parmelee's (1992) "integrative model of place attachment in late life," the central assumption is that place attachment and attainment of home experiences derives from the integration of collective meanings rooted in the culture and social groups, and from personal subjective experiences with place (Peace, Holland, & Kellaher, 2006).

In addition to traditional environmental perspectives, there are other theories that target the multi-layered meanings of home. Gurney and Means (1993), for example, identified three hierarchies of meanings of home, ranging from personal to intermediate and cultural levels. Oswald and Wahl (2005) incorporated elements from a number of environmental theories to

comprehensively differentiate different dimensions of home, including physical, social, personal, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects in their heuristic framework. Altogether, existing environmental perspectives in relation to home have reached a consensus that meanings and diversified manifestations are complex. However, as noted by Wahl and Lang, “The basic insights of the empirical literature support that both the social and physical environment form the ‘context’ of aging, but the relations and interfaces between these are mostly ignored as a conceptual challenge” (2004, p. 4). Theoretically, there is a need to understand how different dimensions of home are intertwined with one another. This is particularly important to older people, given that a home environment may only contain certain aspects that satisfy older people’s aging needs. It is important to uncover which domain of meanings is most significant to older adults’ development of feelings of home and to investigate how domains of meanings are inherently related. The goal of this study is to make such a contribution.

4.4 Research Focus of Home in LTC Environment in the West

The concept of home in LTC settings has been widely explored empirically in Western societies. In recent years, some LTC facilities in developed countries have abandoned the traditional medical model of care by adopting the person-centered care approach (Golant, 2011). This massive “culture change” in aging services is to maximize cultural values of “choice, dignity, respect, self-determination and purposeful living for older adults” (Li & Porock, 2014, p. 1396). Some manifestations include the modification of physical environments in elder care homes to enhance elders’ comfort, security and sense of mastery, as well as to reduce the feeling of being “institutionalized,” and preserving residents’ privacy and autonomy (Golant, 2011; Sloane et al., 2014). Consistent with the premises of person-centered care, there is a significant body of empirical research focusing on personal and social aspects of home in LTC

environments (Fay & Owen, 2011; Haak et al., 2007; Kontos, 1998; Molony, 2010; Wiersma & Dupuis, 2010).

4.4.1 Personal Aspect of Home in LTC: Autonomy, Privacy, Self.

Research has portrayed home as a place where one can feel personal power and a place where people can do things as they please (Molony, 2010, p. 301). In LTC settings, for instance, elderly residents' sense of being in charge may reflect on how they control their own spaces, such as deciding whom to invite into one's private space and whom to exclude (Falk et al., 2011). In reality, maintaining full personal autonomy or sense of control is difficult to attain in LTC settings because most elder care homes share prominent features of a total institution. For instance, Frank (2002) noted that many residents in LTC refused to consider the facility as home because their freedom for personal matters was limited, and they were forced to co-reside with people whom they did not choose. In LTC environments, the majority of elderly residents can make decisions, yet they do not have full personal freedom to execute their decisions. Though elders are encouraged to act on their own behalf, their choices are often dictated by others (Frank, 2002, pp. 169-171; Ryvicker, 2009). When elders in institutions constantly struggle for freedom in personal matters (e.g., household chores, shopping) and to be in charge of daily life, developing a sense of home is challenged (Haak et al., 2007).

The issue of privacy in LTC settings is also important in the study of home in LTC environments. In Dyck and colleagues' (2005) study, they reported that privacy could be constantly threatened in LTC facilities because residents might be seen naked on their scheduled "shower days" or with catheter care, losing control over their bodily wastes and handling. Older residents' limited freedom to arrange the environment to meet their physical needs could potentially lead to a breakdown of both physical and social self (Dyck et al., 2005). In this

situation, the resident's inability to sustain personal privacy in their "semi-private" space made it especially difficult for residents to perceive the facility as a real home rather than a caring space.

Ultimately, maintaining a sense of control, autonomy, and privacy is linked to the ability to preserve a "self" in an institutional environment. Although LTC environments are recognized as placing constraints on residents' personal meanings of home, older adults are not simply passive recipients to environmental challenges (Cutchin, 2013). They can actively make a "fit" between themselves and the environment by making major or minor modifications to the environment to preserve their ownership and self-identity in the place, such as decorating apartment front doors with signs, cards, and stickers to signify distinct personalities and uniqueness (Leith, 2006). Or, they may bring personal items to the facility as a way of linking themselves to the past (Perkins et al., 2012).

In Western culture, the concept of home often symbolizes the self, which embodies intense affections, close ties with people or objectives, significant life memories, and unique personalities (Rubenstein & De Medeiors, 2005; Perkins et al., 2012). A vivid illustration of home and the self is presented in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's (1981) writing, where they stated that

a home is much more than a shelter; it is a world in which a person can create a material environment that embodies what he or she considers significant. In this sense the home becomes the most powerful sign of the self of the inhabitant who dwells within (p. 123).

4.4.2 Social Aspects of Home: Friendship, Shared Activities

Much existing research on the concept of home illuminates the importance of social relationships in LTC facilities (e.g., Prieto-Flores et al., 2011; Shippee, 2012; Street et al., 2007). With a personal network, elderly residents can provide mutual support, looking after each other's social and emotional needs. Their shared understanding of the culture of the LTC and communal

experiences of environmental barriers may further increase the intimacy and reciprocity within groups (Kontos, 1998), which increases the chance for older residents to perceive elder care institutions as real “family-like” home environments (Wreder, 2008).

In developed countries, most LTC facilities offer regular activities and events to enrich residents’ lives. According to a report based on the 2010 National Survey of Residential Care Facilities (NSRCF), in addition to providing basic caring services (i.e., health monitoring, personal laundry services, incontinence care, etc), nearly all residential care facilities offer social and recreational activities within the facility (99%) (Park Lee et al., 2011). Studies have shown that elderly residents’ involvement in meaningful activities in groups is a core factor for overcoming environmental barriers and constructing a sense of home in place (Cutchin, Owen & Chang, 2003; Street et al., 2007). The benefits of elders’ day-to-day interaction and involvement in shared activities are evident, that is, to help residents generate a collective group identity and a sense of belonging, and thus form a “family” and “community” (Heenan, 2010; Shippee, 2012).

Together, while empirical studies in the West have provided a general understanding of the meanings of home, no known study to date has explored empirically how individual elements from institutional, social, and personal aspects are interrelated, mutually influencing older adults’ attainment of a sense of home. While research on institutional conditions in relation to home has received much attention in Western countries, there is a dearth of literature exploring the social and personal meanings of home in the Chinese residential care context. There is a need to uncover the dynamic and interrelated nature of the major domains in the concept of home in Chinese senior residents’ search for a sense of home in residential care settings. Particularly, the concept of home embodies meanings and significance in individuals while it largely reflects social, cultural, and political features from wider societal contexts (O’Shea & Walsh, 2013).

For this purpose, this study aims to answer a central question: how institutional, social, and personal factors interact and together generate elders' sense of home in residential care settings in China.

4.5 Research Methods

4.5.1 Introduction to Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)

This research adopted the QCA method to uncover the mechanisms for older adults' construction of home in residential care environments in China. QCA is an analytic strategy developed by Charles Ragin in 1987 to systematically analyze potential causal pathways in small to medium sized qualitative datasets (Ragin, 2000). In recent decade, QCA has been introduced in a wide range of fields, such as comparative research on politics (Tang & Tang, 2013), dissemination and communication (Mao, 2016; Zhou & Wang, 2016), and social movements (Dixon et al., 2004; Hagan & Hansford-Bowles, 2005). The increasing use of QCA in social science relies on its potential advantages in exploring the causality of social facts.

QCA originated from the analysis of set theory and Boolean algebra (Huang & Gui, 2009). It assumes that social causality is nonlinear and complex, and causal conditions are interdependent and substitutable with each other (Huang & Gui, 2009). Similar to set theory, cases in QCA are transformed into configurations, referring to combinations of conditions that produce certain outcomes (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009, p. xix). QCA enables scholars to examine causal relations among sets of conditions through analyzing the internal interrelations between sets. For example, if condition A is found to be a sufficient causal factor for an outcome Y, then it suggests that when condition A is present, outcome Y will emerge (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009, p. xix). It also indicates that the set of condition A is contained by Y. On the other hand, if condition A is the necessary cause of outcome Y, it means that condition A is always present

when outcome Y emerges (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009. p. xix). It also indicates that the set of condition A contains Y.

In addition to set theory, QCA also utilizes the principles of Boolean algebra for notation and operation. As various cases provide different combinations of conditions, and each combination could potentially be a sufficient cause of an outcome, QCA helps to establish an explanatory framework of multiple pathways towards the same outcome (Zhou & Wang, 2016, p. 29). The combination of conditions could be expressed through Boolean Algebra, using “*” to indicate *logical and*, and “+” to indicate *logical or*. In accordance with traditional QCA notation, capital letters denote the presence of a given attribute and lowercase letters indicate its absence (Dixon et al., 2004).

Boolean algebra, derived from John Stuart Mill’s methods of agreement and difference, further enables logical elimination of redundant factors to generate the simplest configuration of necessary conditions for a certain outcome (Mill, 1974, in Osa & Corduneanu-Huci, 2008). For example, in Case One, assuming the outcome of Y could be achieved with the joint presence of conditions A and B, expressed as $A*B=Y$. While in Case Two, assuming the outcome of Y could be achieved with the presence of condition A and the absence of condition B, expressed as $A*b=Y$. The reduction can be realized through combining the two pathways, expressed as $Y=A*B+A*b$, or $Y=A*(B+b)$. In most cases, this pathway could be further simplified into $Y=A$, which indicates that condition A is the sufficient and necessary cause of outcome Y, while B has no impact on it. Following this analytic logic, QCA introduces set theory and Boolean algebra into causality analysis in which an outcome is approached as combined impacts of sets of conditions. QCA seeks to depict a more comprehensive and configurational causal relation.

Two forms of QCA are comparatively prevalent, the Crisp-Set QCA(CSQCA) and Fuzzy-Set QCA (FSQCA) (Dixon et al., 2004). In CSQCA, all variables are coded into binary forms of “0” and “1.” The coding of “1” stands for “true” or “presence” of a condition or an outcome, while “0” represents “false” or “absence.” However, in cases when variables cannot be assigned binary values, FSQCA can be used to analyze those interval variables. The key variation between the two forms of QCA lies mainly in the nature and definition of variables.

There are two reasons to select QCA, particularly the CSQCA for this research. As shown in the literature, the concept of home is a complex and multi-dimensional social construct that is influenced by elements from physical, social, personal, or even psychological domains. It is important to disentangle the ways in which these different categories could separately or jointly affect the development of feelings of home in a place. QCA enables us to examine combinations and interrelations among categories, such as how individual, social, and institutional factors configurationally impact older adults’ construction of home. Additionally, in this research, all of the selected variables could be assigned binary values. Elderly respondents were given clear options regarding their evaluation and experiences with material, social, and personal aspects of home in residential care settings.

4.5.2 Research Setting and Sample

This study is a part of a larger study concerning qualities of care in elder care homes in China. It draws on qualitative data from 38 elderly residents from six different facilities in Xi’an, China. Two of the facilities were large in size, offering services to more than 300 older adults. Three medium-sized facilities, with 100 to 300 elderly residents,; and one small-sized facility offering services to fewer than 100 older adults. Regardless of size, all facilities provided daily care to their residents, from meal services, housekeeping, to incontinence care. However,

these facilities varied noticeably in their recreational programs and social atmosphere. The two large facilities provided more diverse and frequent group activities than the other four smaller facilities.

Considering that this research requires meaningful conversations between interviewers and residents, I excluded people with cognitive impairment and those with severe health conditions. The participants were also required to be 55 years and older, living in a facility for no less than two months. To ensure that all participants met the criteria of sample selection, we randomly selected 38 participants from residential care providers and caregivers' suggested lists. Half of the participants ($n=19$) were interviewed from the two large facilities, and the rest were interviewed from the four median to small elder care homes.

The mean age for the current resident sample was 77.6, and 42% of the participants were aged 80 years and above. The majority of the sample was female (74%). The length of residency varied from two months to almost nine years with a mean length of 7 months. Most residents had multiple children, with a mean value of 2.6. Approximately one-third of the participants ($n=14$) were able to take care of themselves with minimum support (i.e., meal delivery services, laundry services, basic health monitoring services, social and recreational activities); thirty-four percent of them ($n=13$) purchased partial-care services (i.e., extra services for IADLs) and the remaining twenty-four percent of participants ($n=9$) heavily relied on institutional care (i.e., services support all aspects of life).

4.5.3 Data Collection

Data used in this study were collected through semi-structured interviews with residents, informal conversations with providers and caregivers, and filed observations of the physical and social environment of elder care facilities in China. Prior to conducting interviews, participants

were informed about the benefits and potential risks of the study, as well as policies and procedures to protect respondents' privacy. Oral consent was obtained before the interviews started. After being approved by the Institutional Review Board, a total of 38 in-depth interviews were conducted. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed into written Chinese. The translations of quotes into English were made later for the purpose of publication.

All interviews started with general questions on the subject of participants' personal background, reasons for institutionalization, and family relationships (see Table 3 for a summary of topics included in the interviews). During the interview, participants were encouraged and given sufficient time to share their experiences and opinions to the greatest extent. The interview lasted from 30 to 60 minutes, depending on participants' personal characteristics and willingness to share stories with interviewers. The place of interview was chosen by the participants according to their preferences; most took place in respondents' bedrooms.

Table 3. Interview Guide

Topics	Content
Personal Background	Life history, education, career, marriage, family relationships
LTC facility characteristics	Reasons and criteria of selecting a LTC facility, transition process, evaluation of caring, staffing, management, and policies
Life in LTC	Daily routines, personal adaption and adjustment, social relationships, favored activities
Feeling of home	Discussion on the meaning(s) of home, attitude about LTC, reflections on differences between home-based care and institutional care, future plans for aging in place

4.5.4 QCA Data Analysis

4.5.4.1 Preliminary Data Analysis

The transcribed data were initially entered into Atlas-ti for data sorting and coding. To prepare the data for QCA analysis, researchers first coded the data according to thematic analysis. The coding process started with line by line coding, discovering and transcribing

interviewed content into diverse descriptive themes. During this process, codes were constantly reviewed, modified and sometimes re-coded. New codes were also added to the coding “bank.” Once the coding “bank” was constructed, researchers extracted abstract analytical themes based on the relationships between descriptive themes, such as evaluation of the material environment of the facility, personal experiences with residential care, meaningful activities, etc. Both descriptive themes and analytic themes were needed for the following QCA analysis.

4.5.4.2 Selection of Variables

The criteria for selecting variables were based on theoretical approaches in environmental gerontology as well as the frequency of descriptive themes. Physical, social, and personal aspects of home were three widely acknowledged categories of home in theory and empirical research.

These three aspects of home were also found to be major analytic themes in preliminary analyses of this study, which were consistent with the heuristic model of meanings of home by Oswald and Wahl (2005). Each analytic theme comprised several descriptive themes. For example, the physical environment included descriptive themes of caring services, safety, management, food, sanitation, etc. Under each analytic theme, we selected two to three descriptive themes that had a high frequency. Including the outcome variable, a total number of nine variables was selected.

The concept of home was derived from the preliminary qualitative data analysis that was based on elderly participants’ response to whether they considered the facility as a new or second home or showed personal preferences and willingness to age in the facility.

The factor *care* referred to participants’ subjective evaluation of caring services. This evaluation might be related to elders’ personal assessment of the quality of actual caring services or caregivers’ attitudes toward residents.

From the institutional aspect, *management* was another theme that frequently emerged in participants' responses. It referred to elderly residents' evaluation of the operation, policies, or procedures in the facility. This factor differed from *care* in that it had less association with characteristics of caregivers or caring services, but was more concerned with the operational system in general and management strategies developed and implemented by facility owners.

The presence of *formal activities* referred to whether the elder care facility offered or arranged regular meaningful activities or events for their residents. This factor concerned the social aspect of environment in long-term care.

Friendship was a factor selected under the analytical theme of social relationships in elder care homes. It addressed whether elderly participants were able to develop or maintain a personal social network in everyday life. Meaningful ties with others are likely to bring about positive effects on residents' sense of belong and construction of home.

The factor *filial* referred to participants' evaluation of children's filial piety, either in the form of economic, instrumental, or emotional support. Filial piety was taken into consideration in this study because intergenerational relationships are particularly valued in Chinese society. Many aging parents in China relied on their grown children for various kinds of supports.

There were three factors selected from the personal aspect of home, namely *hobby*, *optimism*, and *freedom*. *Hobby* concerned whether elderly participants were able to develop or maintain personal hobbies in residential care settings. *Optimism* referred to participants' attitude toward institutionalization and aging, such as hope, resilience, or personal inner strength.

Freedom referred to elders' evaluation of personal autonomy and freedom to go in and out of the facility.

4.5.4.3 Truth Table

Once variables were selected and clearly defined, we assigned binary values to each variable and constructed a truth table (Table 4). The number “1” meant “true” or “presence,” and “0” referred to “false” or “absence.” The truth table was perceived as the “data” for running QCA analysis.

Table 4. Truth Table

Truth Table									
Home	Care	Manage	Formal Activities	Friends	Filial	Hobby	Optimism	Freedom	Cases
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	4
1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	2
1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	2
0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	2
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
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1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1

0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

4.6 Findings

Through analyzing the data with *fsQCA*, a complex configuration of conditions toward the feeling of home was generated (Table 5). To simplify the findings, ten combinations of conditions were further combined and minimized into four pathways. Pathways were illustrated in accordance to traditional QCA notation aforementioned. “*” was used to indicate *logical and*, and “+” to indicated *logical or*. Capital letters denoted the presence of a given attribute and lowercase letters indicated its absence (Dixon et al., 2004). These configurations presented distinct combinations of conditions that contributed to Chinese elders’ development of a sense of home in relation to the elder care facility in which they lived.

Table 5. Configuration of conditions

Complex Combinations	Row	Unique
	Coverage	Coverage
CARE*MANAGEMENT*FORMAL_ACTIVITIES*FRIENDSHIP*FILIAL*OPTIMISM	.40	.16
CARE*MANAGEMENT*FORMAL_ACTIVITIES*FRIENDSHIP*FILIAL*HOBBY*FREEDOM	.28	.04
CARE*MANAGEMENT*FORMAL_ACTIVITIES*FRIENDSHIP*HOBBY*OPTIMISM*FREEDOM	.24	.08
CARE*MANAGEMENT*FORMAL_ACTIVITIES*FILIAL*HOBBY*OPTIMISM*FREEDOM	.24	.08
CARE*MANAGEMENT*FRIENDSHIP*FILIAL*hobby*OPTIMISM	.44	.04
CARE*FORMAL_ACTIVITIES*FRIENDSHIP*FILIAL*hobby*OPTIMISM	.28	.04
CARE*management*formal_activities*friendship*FILIAL*HOBBY*optimism*FREEDOM	.04	.04

CARE*management*formal_activities*friendship*filial*HOBBY*OPTIMISM*FREEDOM	.04	.04
care*management*FORMAL_ACTIVITIES*friendship*filial*HOBBY*OPTIMISM*FREEDOM	.04	.04
care*management*FORMAL_ACTIVITIES*FRIENDSHIP*FILIAL*HOBBY*OPTIMISM*freedom	.04	.04

Simplified Approach

Pathway I: CARE * MANAGEMENT * FORMAL_ACTIVITIES * (FRIENDSHIP * FILIAL * OPTIMISM + FRIENDSHIP * FILIAL * HOBBY * FREEDOM + FRIENDSHIP * HOBBY * OPTIMISM * FREEDOM + FILIAL*HOBBY*OPTIMISM*FREEDOM)

Pathway II: CARE * FRIENDSHIP * FILIAL * OPTIMISM * (MANAGEMENT + FORMAL_ACTIVITIES) * hobby

Pathway III: CARE * HOBBY * FREEDOM * (FILIAL * optimism + filial * OPTIMISM) * management * formal_activities * friendship

Pathway IV: FORMAL_ACTIVITIES * HOBBY* OPTIMISM* (FREEDOM * friendship*filial + FRIENDSHIP+FILIAL * freedom) * management * care

4.6.1 Pathway I

The first pathway represented 17 participants' cases. Among them, 14 cases draw from the two large facilities and 3 cases from a medium facility. There were four routes in this pathway to induce the outcome of home (see Figure 1). In this configuration, *care*, *management*, and *formal activities* were necessary conditions for the construction of home. With the presence of institutional conditions, the remaining five variables from social and personal aspects (*friendship*, *filial*, *hobby*, *optimism*, *freedom*) were substitutive to each other. However, *hobby* and *freedom* turned out to be not as important as *optimism* in this pathway because their influence could be substituted by the sole presence of *optimism*.

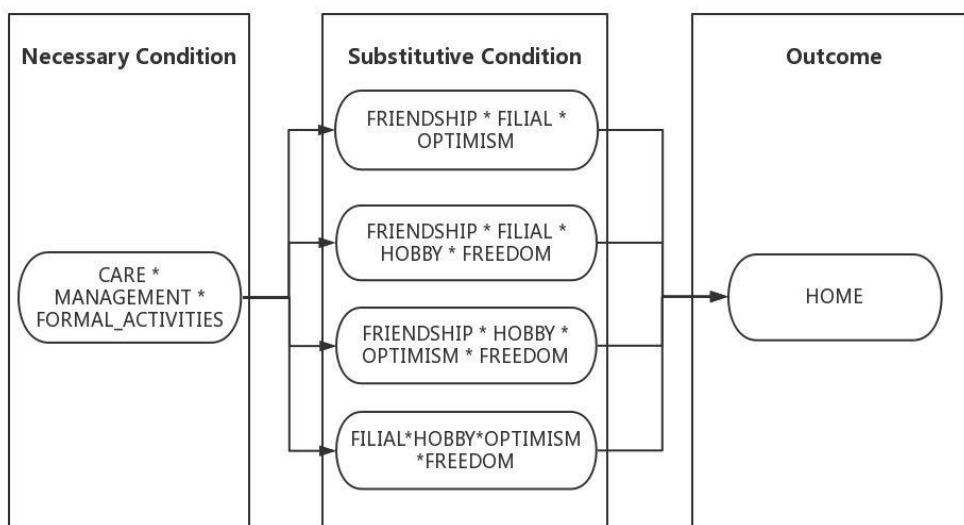


Figure 2. When all institutional conditions are fulfilled (Pathway I)

In interviews, about half of the participants drew special attention to the importance of institutional conditions. For example, Mr. Zhao, a 59-year-old resident who entered an elder care home because of paralysis, provided a detailed reflection on why he considered the facility as a home,

I think living here [in the facility] is better than at home. I have a more enriching life. The facility has set standards for their caring services. They are more professional at providing activities, taking care of us, and maintaining good sanitation. When I was at home, I just kept myself alive, and that's it. I don't have many family members. Only during festivals, my relatives would come and buy some food for me. At other times, I just pulled myself through.

In comparison to life at home, Mr. Zhan experienced more contentment with his current lifestyle. Without worries about having three meals on time and the burden of doing house chores, Mr. Zhan was able to allocate more personal time to carrying out personally meaningful activities such as exercising and writing.

Results also indicated that institutional conditions were prominent criteria for selecting an elder care facility. For example, Mr. Li, an 81-year-old retired factory director, visited six different facilities prior to his move. Mr. Li was financially well off and his children were filial;

what he was looking for in an institutional care environment was to have an easy and comfortable life. Accordingly, the quality of institutional conditions was critical to Mr. Li's developing feelings of home. Similarly, Mrs. Lin, a 5-year resident of a large facility said,

I read an advertisement about this place in the newspaper, and I thought it would be a nice place to stay. We are old and we hope to live as comfortable as possible. We hope to eat healthier and better. What else would an old woman wish for? So I visited the place three times. I wanted to know what kind of meals they served, what residents' lives looked like, and all kinds of other information. In the end, I decided to move here. It is much better than the previous two places where I lived.

In addition to the quality of care and elders' evaluation of management, offering group activities and events were also significant institutional factors that shaped their sense of home.

The leader let me organize a singing activity. Gathering elders to sing and do some entertainment. My job is to make elders happy. It is that simple. So now we sing on Tuesday, on Wednesday we review yesterday's task, and we do whatever the teacher tells us to do. We practice together. (Mrs. Wu, 74 years old, 9 years in elder care home)

One reason is that singing together cheers me up and I can also socialize with many more people. I enjoy staying with the group.... My attitude about group activities is, if I have time, I will be there. Since it is a group thing, there must be some reason to have that, right? So, I am pretty active in the group. (Mr. Hu, 81 years old, 1 year in elder care home)

As a configuration, this pathway depicted a promising approach that leads to elderly residents' feeling of home, with the highest coverage of 44.74% among the 38 cases. All of the institutional, social and personal conditions were required to be present, though the three institutional conditions (*care, management, and formal activities*) are the most indispensable in the configuration. In addition, this configuration suggested that social and personal conditions were conjointly impacting elders' feeling of home. Attributes belong to social and personal dimensions could be substitutive with one another.

4.6.2 Pathway II

The second pathway represented 8 cases, and consisted of four key elements— *care*, *friendship*, *filial*, and *optimism*. As shown in Figure 2, this pathway was presented with the absence of hobby, meaning that the eight elderly respondents identified in this configuration experienced a lack of personal hobby. Meanwhile, *management* and *formal activities* were substitutive variables. This suggested that in order to obtain a feeling of home, elderly residents required either holding a positive evaluation toward *management* in their elder care home, or participating in activities or events organized by the facility.

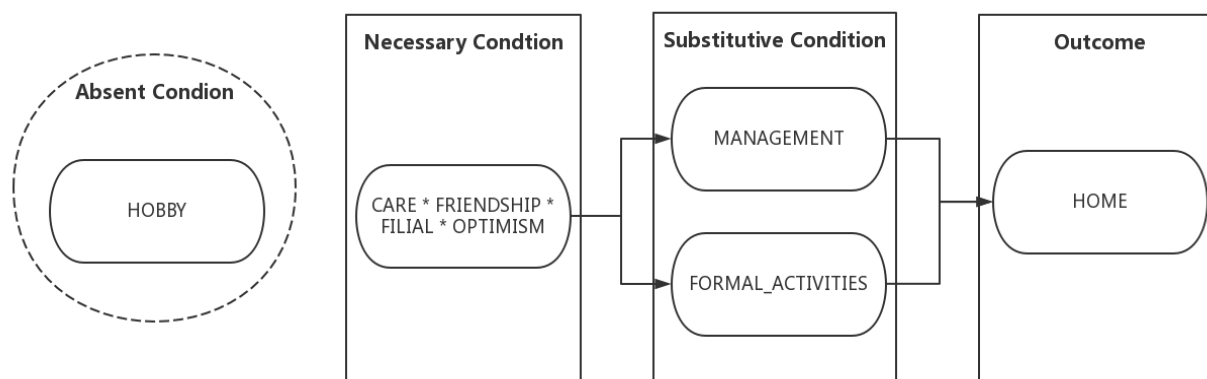


Figure 3. When personal hobby is missing (Pathway II)

Two cases in the large facilities were identified by this pathway. Mrs. Gao, for example, lived in a large facility for three years, having relocated following a bone fracture. Mrs. Gao could participate in only a few activities organized by the facility because of her declining health. However, she felt satisfied with living in the facility, especially the high quality of *management*. In her words,

It's quite warm [to live here]. For example, there is no repetition of the three meals a day. The leader [of the facility] is good at managing [the facility]. [Our] food and drink is good. There are a lot of activities for us [in this facility]. And you can see these little gifts, like tooth brush, tooth paste, and soap and towels are also frequently given [to us]. It's quite warm [here]. In this facility, generally speaking, the elderly can truly live happily here.

Mrs. Gao did not care much about geographic separation from her children because they continued to visit her more than once a week. While having filial children, Mrs. Gao also enjoyed friendship with other residents and a few caregivers. She lived in a separate area from the able-bodied residents. There was a rigorous gated policy applied to all residents in her living area. When asking how this safety policy affected her life, Mrs. Gao regarded herself quite adapted to the lifestyle. She showed an optimistic and positive understanding of living in a residential care setting.

Where people live is their home, isn't it? ... When you live in an elder care home, it is thus a big family [for you]. Your original family is just a small family... [And] this big family requires management, security and institution, and restriction as well... In this big family, our needs for security, catering and hygiene are all taken care of, and everything is cared for, this makes me feel happy... I was brought up in a rough life, suffering from a hard time. Now I am taken care of, with the meals sent to me [everyday], and I don't need to concern myself about anything, hence I am happy now.

Similarly, Mrs. Guo also considered the facility as her home. She moved into the elder care facility to avoid potential conflicts with her children. Being a Xi'an local resident, moving into the facility did not separate her from her social ties, and she did not experience any significant changes after residential care placement. In her words,

After I came here, my schoolmates and friends continue to visit me... so that I don't feel lonely... Meanwhile, some of the elderly here in this facility are my previous schoolmates and colleagues... Many of them are my acquaintances before... We usually spend time together, chatting and shopping. Generally speaking, life has not changed a lot.

Besides *friendship*, *filial* was another important source for her feeling of home. Mrs. Guo's four children made a timetable to coordinate their time to visit her regularly. Mrs. Guo participated in shared activities organized by the facility, even though she participated in those activities to fill up her time. Mrs. Guo showed her optimism in psychological adaptation into her new life in the facility by stating,

The concept of home generally includes other relatives, right?... With social development, big families gradually become small families. Eventually, [we elderly] become the Empty Nest Elderly. You have to get used to this situation. Your children have work to do... [Hence,] the traditional composition of home surely requires relatives and friends. But nowadays... your thoughts have to be advanced with the time and reality.

Optimism, together with the support from social ties and family, enabled her to develop a feeling of home. As a configuration, this pathway revealed how the feeling of home could be achieved without a particular personal *hobby* within the place. The institutional, *friendship*, and *filial* support, together with personal *optimism*, could still be sufficient to promote a feeling of home among Chinese elderly residents.

4.6.3 Pathway III

The third approach represented two cases. *Management, formal activities, and friendship* were absent in this pathway (see Figure 3). This indicated a weak supporting condition for both institutional and social aspects. *Care, hobby, and freedom* were three key determinants in this configuration leading to the outcome of home. And the attributes of *filial* and *optimism* were found to be substitutive of each other, and also compensated for one another's absence. This combination of conditions suggested that either supports from one's inner strength or from family members could be sufficient to promote the feeling of home when they jointly functioned with the three core attributes.

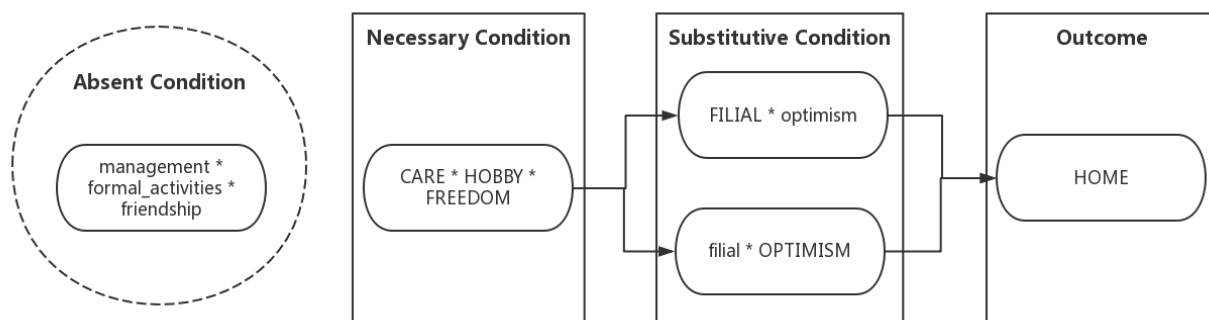


Figure 4. When management, formal activities and friendship are missing (Pathway III)

This pathway was demonstrated by 85-year-old resident Mr. Han, who has lived in a small facility for a half year. He moved into the elder care home because he could not bear the burden of taking care of his son any longer. Mr. Han's son was not a filial child according to Chinese culture standards. The son did not have a stable job but had a habit of high consumption. Mr. Han had to do the housework and cooking and spent his entire retirement pension on his son. To rectify this situation, Mr. Han decided to move into an elder care home. This facility was small, offering services to fewer than 60 older persons. The majority of residents had cognitive or physical impairments. Mr. Han was one of the few residents who were able to take care of themselves.

Because of the facility's size and the need of extensive care for most residents, there were not many activities available. Instead of making friends within the institution, Mr. Han went to a park near the facility to exercise and socialize. When asked why he chose this small facility, he replied,

The good thing [about the facility] is that there is a park on the east side of the facility. The distance is about 500 meters, just one stop by bus...I like to exercise. When I exercise in the park, I make friends and stop for a chat. I feel good about [this lifestyle], ease of mind.

Mr. Han developed a stable life routine. He went to exercise in the morning and rested in the afternoon. Although he had unpleasant experiences with children, he was content about his current lifestyle because he was free to do activities that please only him. The lack of activities and *friendship* within the facility seemed to be irrelevant to Mr. Han, since he was able to find alternative sources to compensate for his social needs. The only concern that Mr. Han had in regard to the facility was the constant increase in monthly fees. Mr. Han preferred to age in the facility if the facility would stop increasing their fees. Otherwise, he might be forced to find an

alternative place. Nevertheless, without considering the future, Mr. Han indicated that he still considered the facility as his home because he enjoyed his life at the moment.

Another participant, Mrs. Xu, lived in a medium facility for approximately 9 months. In her experiences with the residential care environment, Mrs. Xu expressed satisfaction with its care services, and she was able to continue her hobby of exercising. After moving into the facility, Mrs. Xu kept her previous lifestyle of living alone. In Mrs. Xu's view, geographical separation from children did not affect their emotional closeness. She understood her children's difficulty with taking care of her while they had to make a living. Meanwhile, Mrs. Xu was certain that whenever she was in need, her children would give a hand. She said,

Children are busy but they are filial to me. My son, grandson and daughters are all filial. I know if they come to visit me too often, they may lose their bonus. But if I am sick, they will all come.

Throughout the interview, Mrs. Xu complained about how one of the directors treated residents badly, as shown in the following:

The director Yang is financially well off but we are not. She looks down upon us, and she is mean to us...This is not only my opinion, we all say so...why she must take control and swear at us.

Mrs. Xu certainly did not like the way that the director Yang interacted with residents. However, she noted that the other director was a nice person. When she weighed the benefits and costs, rather than staying at home and hiring a private caregiver, Mrs. Xu showed strong preferences to stay in the facility.

As a configuration, this pathway showed weak support of social conditions, given that the outcome of home could be achieved with the absence of *friendship*, and only one route required family supports. In addition, the requirement for institutional conditions was also weak in this pathway since *care* was the only attribute from the institutional aspect. The estimated impact of

institutional and social supports seemed to be substituted by a strong presence of personal attributes, like *hobby*, *freedom*, and *optimism*. In other words, this pathway suggested that a strong presence of personal conditions could compensate for weak supports from institutional and social conditions.

4.6.4 Pathway IV

The fourth pathway represented two cases. As shown in Figure 4, this configuration was present with the absence of *care* and *management*. *Formal activities*, *hobby*, and *optimism* were the three key determinants. Meanwhile, *friendship*, *filial*, and *freedom* were substitutive variables. The impacts of the two sources of social conditions (*friendship*, *filial*) were combined with each other, and substitutive with *freedom*. The social conditions and *freedom* could also compensate for the absence of the other. This suggested that in order to obtain the feeling of home, elderly residents should either develop or maintain a personal social network, or enjoy personal freedom to arrange their daily lives.

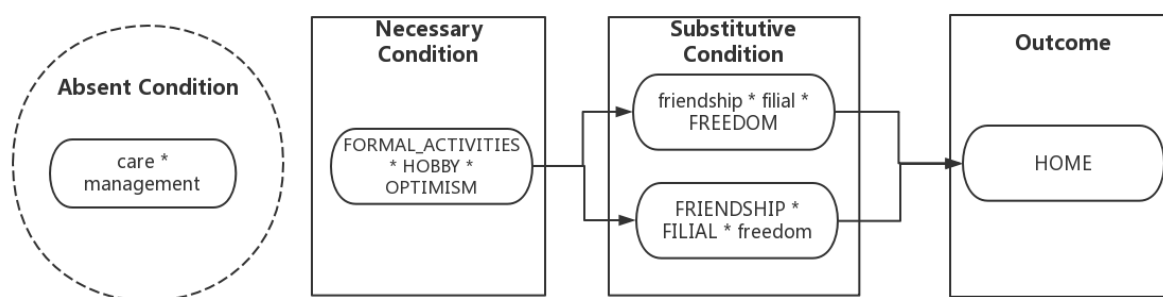


Figure 5. When care and management are missing (Pathway IV)

The two cases identified with this configuration came from one large and one medium facility. Mr. Wang, for example, lived in a large facility for two years. When he was young, he served in the military and later transferred to a military supplies factory. In 1997, a sudden cerebral infarction left him paralyzed on one side of his body, making life difficult to sustain

without help from family members. After the loss of his spouse, Mr. Wang was forced to move out from home because of serious conflicts with his son. To reduce his children's burden and improve family relationships, Mr. Wang moved into an elder care home. In general, Mr. Wang considered the facility as his home, even though he had major complaints about laundry services and the young director. In his words,

[The young director] rarely comes to our apartments and greets us...like not caring about us at all. She often dresses up and drives away. I mean, the work she does is more than cosmetic... [The facility] arranges resident forums, and we make suggestions for improvement. The problem is that they never get those suggestions implemented.

In spite of these complaints, Mr. Wang indicated that he was willing to age in the facility. He enjoyed participating in various group activities that were regularly organized by the facility and residents. He was content about maintaining his personal hobbies, such as writing and singing.

He said,

I feel like after moving here and living here, I became happier. I love singing, as always. In our facility, we have a choir; I am one of the members. And I am in charge of teaching them how to sing. I remember when I was in the military, I loved singing already. I am from Shanbei. Singing is a tradition for boys and girls from Shanbei— we love singing. I especially love those military songs.

Mr. Wang showed an optimistic and positive understanding of living in an elder care home rather than relying on children. In his view, living separately from children was not an unpleasant experience; rather, it was a good and rational choice in old age. Having a free and meaningful life was essential to Mr. Wang's development of a sense of home in the residential care environment.

Similarly, in the second case, Mrs. Yuan also considered the facility as her home even though she had complaints about provision of food and a delayed reaction to the broken shower system in the facility. Mrs. Yuan loved dancing, exercising, singing, and practicing calligraphy,

and she often carried out these activities with her friends and other residents. Mrs. Yuan's children made regular phone calls to check on her.

In the facility where Mrs. Yuan stayed, maintaining personal freedom might be a problem for some residents because the facility required all residents to submit written request if they needed to go out. However, Mrs. Yuan indicated that this safety policy did not bother her because she always found her way out. After moving into the facility, Mrs. Yuan found a partner, and this companionship made her especially happy.

Above all, Mrs. Yuan was an optimistic person who was able to find joy and hope in life. She was resilient, ready to face challenges and life difficulties. She said, "We can bear the poor food here. I mean for real, because I had hard times before and I pulled through...I think that I have a fulfilling life [in the facility]." When asking about the traditional Chinese culture adage, "raise children for one's old age," Mrs. Yuan gave the following response,

The greatest filial duty should be companionship, but they [children] can't do it. They have their own families. My oldest daughter-in-law, for example, goes to work every day. They can't accompany me. I am quite an independent person. I don't want to act in accordance with the will of others. I thought I could afford to live by myself. There is no need to read children's mind, right?

Mrs. Yong had a clear understanding of how life should be in old age, and she planned her life well. Together with *friendship* and activities that she loved, Mrs. Yuan was able to develop a feeling of home even when she was not satisfied with the quality of *care* and the *management* of the facility.

As a configuration, this pathway revealed how the feeling of home could be achieved with weak institutional conditions. The provision of group activities by the facility and the strong presence of either social or personal conditions could still be sufficient to promote the outcome of home among Chinese elderly residents.

4.7 Discussion and Implications

The pathways identified in this study offer a new framework to understand how institutional, social, and personal factors conjointly shape Chinese elders' construction of home in LTC settings in China. Scholars from a wide range of fields have long reached a consensus that home entails multifaceted meanings, while acknowledging the intricate and constitutive relationships in person-environment issues (Cloutier-Fisher & Harvey, 2009). However, most theories and empirical studies seek to delineate the notion of home by categorizing meanings into different dimensions without actually exploring the dynamic and interrelated nature of elements in different dimensions. This study adds to the body of literature by analyzing how a sense of home in residential care environments can be achieved with pathways that contain sets combining necessary, substitutive, and absent conditions. We summarize our findings in the following section to further highlight our contribution to the literature of home in the studies of environmental gerontology.

4.7.1 *Multiple Pathways Leading to the Feeling of Home*

The most prominent finding in this study is that varied combinations of conditions can lead to a sense of home, and this outcome could only be obtained by sets of explanatory conditions rather than one individual attribute. Our QCA findings identify four pathways to the outcome, which correspond to four combinations of attributes in institutional, social, and personal domains.

Pathways I and II represent a greater proportion of the sample than Pathways III and IV, meaning that the first two pathways were associated more frequently with the outcome of home than the other two configurations. Pathway I showed that institutional conditions were the foundation for provoking elders' sense of home while social and personal conditions were

interchangeable with one another, in which they conjointly generated this outcome when all three institutional conditions are present.

The emphasis on institutional conditions in Pathways I and II was in accordance with the literature of residential care services in China (e.g., Mu, 2012; Zhang & Min, 2015). Most nongovernmental facilities in China encounter similar challenges in their recruitment of qualified caregivers, implementation of standardized managerial regulations, provision of satisfying living conditions, offering basic medical services and diversified social activities (Dan, Guo, Mao, Gong, Jin, & Feng, 2013). Because of these widely recognized problems, when elders and their family members make a selection of elder care home, they often place the quality of institutional conditions as their top selection criteria (Jiao, 2010; Zhao & Wang, 2007). After residential care placement, institutional factors continue to influence elders' adaptation and life satisfaction (Wang & Xue, 2006).

The third and fourth pathways have limited coverage but they still empirically reflect possible combinations of conditions that could induce elders' sense of home. Pathways III and IV indicate that when institutional conditions were weak (when at least two institutional attributes are missing), elderly persons could still obtain a sense of home. Under these conditions, there was a heavy emphasis on elderly residents' social and personal competence. This observation was in line with the premise of the "environmental docility hypothesis," which states,

The more competent the organism—in terms of health, intelligence, ego strength, social role performances, or cultural evolution—the less will be the proportion of variance in behavior attributable to physical objects or conditions around him... With high degree of competence he will, in common parlance, rise above his environment. However, reduction of competence, or deprived status, heightens his behavioral dependence on external conditions (Lawton & Simon, 1968, p. 108)

To obtain a sense of home in a poorer environment, elders must possess at least two personal attributes as well as social ties either within the facility or to family members, in order to compensate for weakened institutional conditions. The high requirement for individual competence might explain why there are limited cases corresponding to Pathways III and IV. For elderly residents with chronic diseases or restricted mobility, the quality of residential care environments is intimately linked to their everyday life experiences and feelings toward the place. Overall, the four pathways demonstrate how a sense of home could be achieved through alternative ways of combining attributes. However, considering elderly residents' care needs in elder care homes, the quality of institutional conditions should be given sufficient attention.

4.7.2 Impact of a Single Condition on Elders' Feeling of Home

Based on the premises of QCA and our research findings, we noted that the sole presence or absence of any individual condition cannot inhibit or induce the outcome. However, an individual condition could bring about different levels of significance to the outcome when they were configured with other conditions. For example, among the three attributes of institutional conditions, *care* was present as a necessary condition in three pathways, including the two most promising ones (Pathways I & II). The pattern of its presence suggested that the absence of *care* may have a strong impact that hampers elderly residents from constructing a sense of home while its presence alone was insufficient to provoke the outcome. It must work with other attributes to induce a sense of home, as shown by Pathway I. Chinese older adults and their family members often choose institutional care over traditional family-based care based on their expectation for professional staff with the necessary skills, abilities, and time devoted to the provision of professional elder care (Chung et al., 2008). For this reason, Chinese elderly residents often place heavy emphasis on instrumental assistance and attention to their physical

and medical needs in residential care environments, particularly for those who live in hospital-like facilities (Hwang, Hsieh, & Wang, 2012). In this study, participants mentioned that living in an elder care home made them feel safe because they knew that they were being taken care of. The frequent presence of *care* as a necessary condition in pathways also revealed that a high quality of care services served as the foundational attribute to foster elderly participants' sense of home.

Among the three attributes of institutional conditions, *management* and *formal activities* were not as important as *care* because they presented as substitutive conditions, and they were substitutive to each other, as shown in Pathway II. The presence of *formal activities* seemed to be more important than *management* in eliciting the outcome when it was configured with other social and personal conditions (i.e., Pathway IV). This finding is in line with what Cutchin et al. (2003) discussed in their analyses of the process of becoming “at home”; they reported that involvement in nonfamily activities in place is a significant predictor of place attachment and at homeness. Social involvement in meaningful activities promotes a sense of belonging and collective group identity (Shippee, 2012). More important, providing shared social activities in elder care homes is linked to enhanced opportunities for residents to form social relationships and to enrich their lives.

Furthermore, our analyses reveal that the two social factors (i.e., *friendship*, *filial*) were equally important to the outcome. In Pathway I, the presence of either one of the social factors was indispensable among the four routes. And in Pathway II, when institutional conditions were relatively weak (in comparison to Pathway I) and when personal hobbies were absent, the two social factors appeared as necessary conditions for the outcome. Under the influence of industrialization, modernization, rapidly reduced family size, and increasing number of working

wives, the feasibility of providing family care for the elderly has weakened while the utilization of elder care services has dramatically increased in contemporary Chinese society (Sheng & Settles, 2006). However, supporting elders' utilization of residential care services does not imply the erosion of the traditional value of filial piety. After moving into an elder care home, adult children continue their filial roles by providing care to their parents in varied ways, such as frequent visits, providing emotional and instrumental support, helping elders to deal with medication issues and administrative problems, paying the fees, etc. (Zhan et al., 2011). In our study, except for those who have serious conflicts with children, most elderly participants valued their intergenerational interactions, and expressed appreciation or acknowledgement for their children's various kinds of supports.

Similarly, friendship within the facility was also meaningful. Friendship allows elderly residents to mutually exchange assistance and be reciprocal to one another's emotional needs. This, in turn, strengthens their resilience toward hardships in challenging living environments (Kontos, 1998; Shippee, 2012; Wreder, 2008). Previous literature generally suggested a similar finding, that older adults are active in developing new social relationships, and their relationships within the place/facility contribute to their morale (Sherer, 2001), and overall well-being (Street et al., 2007). Taken together, *friendship* within the institution and supports from children were forms of social capital, which enabled the elders to seek help and pull them through problems and hardships.

Moreover, when institutional conditions were weak (i.e., Pathways III & IV), personal conditions (i.e., *hobby*, *optimism*, *freedom*) were significant for the construction of home. Among the three personal attributes, the presence of *optimism* was most important. As shown in Pathway I, among four sets of substitutive conditions, *optimism* can only be substituted when *hobby* and

freedom were both present, suggesting that the sole effect of *optimism* equals the combined effects of *hobby* and *freedom*. The significance of *optimism* was even more overt when certain conditions were absent, such as in Pathway II and Pathway IV. If the presence of social conditions served as elderly participants' social capital, then optimism is a form of psychological capital. Specifically, this notion focuses on elders' positive awareness of their life situations rather than incompetence, weakness, or hopelessness. With better psychological strength, older adults would be more resilient to adversity and loss (Perkins et al., 2012), and capable of coping with environmental changes and challenges along with their aging process (Komatsu, Hamahata, & Magilvy, 2007).

Moreover, optimism is associated with what Brandtstadter and Greve (1994) called the *accommodation* form of coping or the "secondary control strategies" (Heckhausen, 1997). These terms refer to mental strategies that elderly persons may adopt as they face negative life situations, such as to "reformulate goals and aspirations, mollify emotional irritations, reappraise problems as being unimportant, look to religious or spiritual beliefs to palliate losses" (Glontana, 2011, p 201). In this cross-sectional study, many elderly participants have resided in elder care facilities for many years. In interviews, some of them shared their psychological journey of living in such environments. Most of them agreed that cognitive appraisal and self-preservation, looking for positive aspects of life, were important to their feeling of settling down, but this process takes time.

Freedom was the least important personal factor affecting the outcome. Although *freedom* was present in Pathway III as a necessary condition, it was irrelevant in Pathway II, and it could be substituted by other attributes in the first and second pathways. Contrasted to the literature of Western societies where personal freedom and autonomy are highly valued (Haak et

al., 2007; Perkins et al., 2012), Chinese elders seem to care less about the notion of freedom, especially in a collective living environment. Our participants showed a great understanding of rules and regulations, and considered regulations to be mechanism to protect their safety and maintain collective harmony in the facility. This observation may be explained by the nature of social relationships in the Confucian culture. People in Chinese society are sensitive to others' opinions, appraisal, or criticism; they pay close attention to social rules and standards, and honor reputation in groups (Yang, 2008). Because most elderly residents grew up in a socio-cultural environment where conformity was highly valued, following rules and regulations as well as communal living did not seem to be a challenging task. This finding does not suggest that freedom is not important at all to elders in institutions. Rather, it means that Chinese elders have a high tolerance for rules and regulations. While *freedom* may foster the outcome of a sense of home when it is configured with other attributes, its sole presence or absence does not have a direct or strong impact on the feeling of home.

4.7.3 Rethinking the Conceptualization of Home

For four decades, we have witnessed continuous change and advancement in practice and theories about home and environment constructed by environmental gerontologists, human geographers, environmental psychologists, and scholars in related fields (Lewicka, 2011). Theories in environmental gerontology (EG), for instance, originated from Kurt Lewin's conceptual formula of $B=f(P, E)$ (i.e., behavior is a function of person and environment) in 1951, to the Press-Competence Model introduced by M. Powell Lawton and Lucille Nahemow's in the seventies (Rowles & Benard, 2013). These early EG theories placed a heavy emphasis on addressing connections between physical and social environments in affecting individuals' aging processes and outcomes. However, physical environments or other geographical and material

surroundings, have commonly received less attention and research interest compared to the social domains of an environment (Wahl & Lang, 2003). The notion of home has traditionally been viewed as a social construct, related to the physical world but certainly not rooted in the characteristics of a physical setting (Lewicka, 2011). Theories have not been explicit in explaining the ways physical or institutional settings actually influence older persons' social and aging experiences.

Later, in the sixties and seventies, scholars adopted perspectives from environmental psychology, adding concepts of "self" and "identity" as well as individuals' subjective experiences to the understanding of P-E relations (Wahl & Weisman, 2003). And in more recent decades, there is an emerging trend of theoretical developments in EG focusing on the fluid, dynamic, and temporal aspects of integration within an environment, such as Cutchin's (2003, 2004) "place integration" and Rowles and Bernard's (2013) patterns of remaking home. Meanwhile, interdisciplinary collaboration has dramatically increased in recent years, which further diversified the conceptualization of P-E relationships and home experiences (Rowles & Bernard, 2013). Because of these endeavors, the existing theories have well documented major and minor domains of home. However, theories fail to explicate the exact interaction among different domains of the concept of home. This shortcoming in EG theories was recognized by Lawton as early as 1980, when he stated,

Many theorists believe that the interchanges between person and environment are so intricate, so continuously shifting and mutually causal, that it is difficult to view them as separate entities...however...when one must operationalize, measure, and treat variables statistically, the problems become hopeless unless distinctions are made...(Lawton, 1980, p. 11)

The lacuna in current theories exists not because it is unimportant to delineate the interaction between people and their environment. Rather, it can be attributed to the complexity

and the: interactional” nature of P-E relations in the construction of home. In this study, based on a configuration logic and set-theoretic approach with the method of QCA, we attempted to reveal how individual attributes in three major domains may interactively induce the outcome of a sense of home.

Our findings make clear that institutional conditions are comparatively independent of social and personal conditions. No substitutive relationship could be found between any individual institutional condition and any individual social or personal condition. On the contrary, social and personal conditions are more intertwined with each other, as personal conditions could generally compensate for the absence of social conditions, and vice versa. If we put this finding into an equation, then it would be:

$$H=I + (S\times P)$$

We may interpret this equation to mean that a sense of home can be obtained when institutional conditions are present as a foundation, while there are interactions among attributes in social and personal aspects.

However, there are preconditions in this equation for a sense home. Most sufficient combinations to the outcome will occur where the presence of institutional conditions and social or personal conditions are relatively high, as reflected in Pathway I. To put it another way, too many absences in institutional conditions and social or personal conditions may hamper the induction of the outcome.

Furthermore, combinations with either a high sole presence of institutional conditions or a high sole presence of social or personal conditions are ambivalent as fully sufficient configurations to the feeling of home. In cases when either the presence of institutional conditions is high or social and personal conditions are high, only certain combinations of

attributes fit the configuration requirements to obtain the sense of home, as shown in Pathways III and IV.

Taken together, we conceptualize different pathways to find a sense of home for Chinese elders in long-term care facilities. These pathways may offer insights into understanding the interconnections among the domains of environmental gerontology, social psychology, and the personal well-being of older adults. Our theoretical equation, derived from the Chinese context, may deserve caution when interpreting data from non-Chinese cultural contexts. The theoretical insight, however, provided by introducing the method of QCA to environmental gerontological research may point to a new direction for future research, which may enable a better understanding of the intricate and mutually interactive factors among different domains in the construction of home.

4.8 Limitations and Conclusions

In this study, we introduced QCA as a valuable tool to uncover how individual conditions within institutional, social, and personal domains generate conjoint impacts on older Chinese adults' construction of home in residential care environments. The QCA method enables us to go beyond the "net effect thinking" of most causality research, and recognizes the complexity that exists in the social sciences (Tanner, 2014). Our empirical findings heighten the complexity of "home" by offering three critical insights: 1) it is the combination of institutional, social, and personal conditions that conjointly induce a sense of home, rather than any individual condition/attribute; 2) alternative combinations of conditions can lead to the same outcome of home; 3) the impact of individual condition/attribute to the construction of home may vary, depending on how it is configured with other conditions. Instead of looking for a "best" configuration to an outcome, QCA allows us to uncover the number and character of interrelated

conditions for different explanatory models (Rihoux, 2006). The findings have potential to contribute a new conceptual model that is sensitive to the Chinese context, and may lay the foundation for policy makers and elder care home owners by presenting alternative pathways that could enhance elderly residents' sense of home.

While QCA has its own unique advantages over conventional quantitative or qualitative research, it has limitations as well. Based on a configurational approach, the selection of factors and adjustment of factors would have significant impact on the emergence of pathways that lead to the outcome (Ordanini, Parasuraman, & Rubera, 2013). In this study, the selection of factors was theoretically informed and derived from the initial qualitative analysis. We selected two or three factors from each of the three domains of home, based on the frequency and importance of its presence. However, due to constraints in the number of conditions that could be included in QCA, some factors might have been overlooked, such as “normalized life routine” “independence,” and “evaluation of amenities.” To fully understand in what contexts the sets of conditions could induce the outcome of home; future research needs to make multiple attempts to uncover the varied interactional relationships among individual conditions as well as the relationships among sets of conditions and the outcome.

Moreover, this study bears similar shortcomings as other cross-sectional research. Although we acknowledge that constructing a feeling of home in elder care homes is sensitive to the length of stay and that it might be a continuous process, this study is not capable of explaining a temporal relationship between the conditions and the outcome. Future studies should address this issue to explicate whether newcomers or old tenants in elder care homes share similar pathways in their process of obtaining a feeling of home.

Nevertheless, QCA is fundamentally a case-sensitive approach which allows researchers to take on a holistic view to understand how different conditions interact and conjointly produce an outcome (Rihoux, 2006). With QCA, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in environmental gerontology by making a first attempt to expose the intricate relationships among factors of home and to identify possible combinations of necessary and substitutive conditions that induce a feeling of home.

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5 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation research is based on qualitative analyses of two data sets: One investigated Chinese elderly immigrants' home-making process and experiences in the context of the U.S., and the other examined older people's perception of home after relocating to LTC facilities in China. This chapter summarizes and discusses major findings that were extrapolated by the two sets data, while relating to the earlier international theoretical and empirical work. The purposes of this discussion are to a) delineate and interpret what home mean to older people in different residential and aging environments, b) to identify sources of feeling of home, and c) to draw implications from examining how older people prioritize components and attributes in re-making a home after relocation.

5.1 What Does Home Mean to Older People?

Analyses revealed that a sense of home, in its essence, entailed individuals' subjective feelings and aging experiences toward their residential environments, including feelings of comfort and safe, being accepted and supported, and feeling independent and in control. These feelings in relation to the dwelling environments were simultaneously shaped by objective components and attributes in living environments and conjunct with individuals' actions and emotions. The following sections present and discuss place-based feelings associated with the notion of home in both the U.S. and residential care environments in China.

5.1.1 *Comfort and Safety*

Elderly participants' statements in both sets of data reaffirmed existing literature by pointing out that home is a place of comfort and safe (Mallett, 2004; Molony, 2010). In the contexts of aging in the U.S., home was found where older immigrants identified their residential environments as familiar, comfortable, and secure. Transnational migration at an old age is

known to associate with numerous challenges, such as limited access to transportation and lack of language and cultural skills (Trang, 2008). Elderly participants reflected upon these issues as constraints in their home-making experiences, especially in the first few years after migrating to the U.S. Yet, given that they have resided in the U.S. for a rather long period of time and obtained citizenship (except for one participant), they were likely to gain a certain level of cultural awareness and access to aging and welfare benefits and programs.

Depending on elders' financial circumstances, many, if not most senior immigrants either relied on children or government for financial supports. In this study, despite the few participants who had worked and accumulated some assets in the U.S., the majority of older adults depended on the government for financial assistance, housing supports, and utilization of government-funded community services. These resources from public institutions effectively empowered elderly immigrants to combat challenges in re-establishing a bond with a new living environment (Cutchin, 2001). In line with other relevant research, whether co-residing with children or living separately in a public housing, as long as the dwelling place granted elderly immigrants feelings of being comfortably and safely anchored and meeting their fundamental material and social needs, they would likely to call the place as "home" (Hsu, 2013; Liu, 2014; Wiles et al., 2011). As one of the participants reflected, a home is where one can survive. Drawing from this perspective, the conceptualization of home must contain a material dimension that supports human beings' psychological and safety needs.

In LTC contexts of China, the vast majority of elderly participants perceived high quality of care services and living in a safe and comfortable environment as fundamental to their positive residential experiences. Terms like "secure shelter" and "comfort" are commonly used in literature to describe meanings and experiences of home (Dyck et al., 2005; Nakrem et al.,

2013). In a phenomenological study, for example, Johnson and Bibbo (2014) investigated how older adults constructed the meaning of home in nursing home in two waves of data collection and analyses. They found that residents clearly valued the theme of “safety” and “being cared for” in regard to their feeling of home. Similarly, elderly Chinese participants in this study indicated that they felt safer living in the facilities and had easier life than they were in their former places. They knew that they could receive immediate assistance when needed and had access to basic necessities without making extra efforts, such as food, safe outdoor areas, clean space, etc. However, feelings of comfort and safety were embedded and greatly influenced by material aspects of the facilities. Building designs, amenities, food, location of the facility, and operation and management of services strongly influence whether older adults had their needs met. Home, as a material site, offers people culturally valued resources and material (Dyck et al., 2005) that should foster a sense of being relaxed, protected, and comfortable.

Taken together, for elderly immigrants in the U.S., their comfort and safety primarily relied on their access to welfare benefits, governmental supports, and housing options, which focused more on the socio-political aspect of living environment. For older adults in LTC settings in China, they constructed a sense of home based on whether they could receive needs-matching services, a safe living environment, and easy way of life. Their feeling of comfort and safe had more association with institutional conditions in a material sense. Although Chinese older adults, whether moving abroad to America, or moving out of home to an assisted living facility, share the same commonalities of seeing safety and comfort as the most important factors for achieving a sense of home. The resources that facilitated this sense of home differ. For Chinese Americans, it is their status of becoming an American and their ability to obtain social benefits and services that facilitated this accomplishment of finding a sense of home—a macro-

level policy factor. For Chinese in mainland China, after moving to a LTC facility, it is the care facilities conditions, management, and services that enabled the creation of the sense of home—a mezzo level factor. Even though finding a sense of home ultimately is a personal achievement; it requires macro or mezzo levels of societal or societal environment to facilitate this achievement. While this social or societal environment is fundamental, cultural and social relationships are also necessary in the process of finding this sense of home.

5.1.2 Being Accepted and Supported through Meaningful Relationships

Themes emerged in both sets of analyses suggest that home as a concept is essentially constituted by social connectedness and sense of belonging, which in turn provoke older people's feelings of recognition, acceptance, and being supported. Although individual dwellers are the center of their feelings of home, the meanings of home went beyond the individual. Each person, consciously or unconsciously, contributes to the 'social fabric' of their dwelling place (Rowles, 1983, 1991), and it was the bonds between people that foster a sense of home. As commented by Golant (2015), relocation might be a difficult decision to make for people in old age because they are afraid to integrate into the new living environments as "nobody knows their names" or "as a stranger with no history." (p. 53). As human beings, most have fundamental desires and needs to be involved in a social web that generate our sense of belonging and worthiness from a social aspect.

In the context of making a home in the U.S., elderly participants noted the importance of family connections as well as opportunities to socialize with people who share similar language, cultural, and migration experiences. In the Chinese understanding of home, family relationships constitute the basic element in defining home, and these relationships often include family members who are related by blood lines, marriage or other meaningful familial connections

(Lan, 2002). For older immigrants in this study, most of them made relocation decisions because they valued family togetherness with children. After a few years in the U.S., many participants moved out of their children's places, but children still played important roles in their lives, providing them financial and practical supports when needed, and more importantly with emotional backup and love.

Besides social continuity with family members, findings revealed that the feeling of home for older immigrants also stemmed from their appreciation and active engagement with others in the same ethnic group. Numerous migration studies have reported older East Asian immigrants' hardships of aging in a transnational aging context, where they often endure negative psychological burdens, such as loneliness, depressions, and social isolation (Chun et al., 2011; Hsu, 2013; Kim et al., 2015). Several elderly participants in this study also reflected upon their experiences of being trapped in communities without much social interactions outside the family due to environmental constraints and lack of linguistic skills. However, after joining local ethnic community and adult day care centers, they had opportunities for meaningful social interactions to take place, and such interethnic interactions granted elders the feelings of being supported and recognized as one of the members who share similar life experiences in a foreign land.

These positive social experiences were critical to Chinese older immigrants' home-making process and outcomes, since the Confucian culture has always stressed the importance of 'man-in-society' (Morton, 1971). In a relevant research conducted in New Zealand, Liu (2014) noted the interplay between the sense of belonging, identity, and the concept of home. The claim of 'being Chinese' had pervasive impacts on Chinese immigrants' conceptualization of home. In this study, though elderly participants did not mention their identity as being Chinese directly,

the contentment they gained through meaningful social interactions conveyed the importance of interethnic social togetherness. This finding reaffirmed Rowles's (1983) idea of "social insiderness" where meaningful integration into the social fabric surround a dwelling place can result in a strong place-based identity and feeling of home. For older Chinese immigrants in this study, their interethnic social relationships not only increased their chances to receive practical and informative supports in daily life but served as a buffer for them to face home-making challenges in a foreign land in a collective way.

The importance of being accepted, valued, and supported through developing meaningful relationships and participating in collective activities also contributed to older adults' feelings of home in LTC facilities. In line with research in Western societies, although intergenerational relationships and frequent interaction with children were valued by Chinese older adults, internal social relationships within the facility seemed to be more salient to residents' everyday life and home-making experiences (Street et al., 2007). Adult children may have played supplement role in assisting their aging parents while residents had more frequent and intense contacts with each other in institutional contexts. Specifically, in this study, elderly participants were all content about their reciprocation of informal assistances from friends and neighbors. Depending on personal resources, personalities, and skills, they showed each other kindness by exchanging material, practical and emotional supports. Remarks like 'we do things together here' and 'we are like a big family' suggested that home is a place where older adults feel a sense of belonging, recognition, and acceptance.

Several participants reflected upon the fact that they successfully adjusted to life in LTC because they were recognized as important members in activity groups and valued as "warm-hearted persons." Being welcomed and accepted by others served as an important contributing

factor for new residents to re-gain a confidence in integrating into an unfamiliar dwelling environment. Prior literature has argued that social supports and connectedness are perceived as adaptive mechanism for older person to develop necessary resilience toward personal and environmental adjustment in old age (Auslander & Litwin, 1991; Bisconti & Bergeman, 1999; Marshall & Mackenzie, 2008). Social engagement not only effectively reduced elders' feeling of isolation but also empowered seniors to face shared environmental challenges, which in turn fostered more positive residential experiences, and eventually helped develop a sense of belonging and home.

Furthermore, elders' home feeling of being accepted and valued in social groups also derived from their participation in collective activities, either initiated by residents or formally organized and supported by LTC facilities either to entertain or to educate residents. In addition to these overt benefits, participation in social activities increased opportunities to promote residents' collective collaboration, which in turn enhanced elders' shared group identity and promoted their internalization of shared sentiments (Shippee, 2012). Through engaging with others and make contribution to group events and activities, residents may potentially gain a feeling of usefulness, being needed, and competence. Echoing views from other research, these positive sentiments effectively provoked elderly residents' identification with the place and feelings of being a part of the 'big' family (Prieto-Flores et al., 2011; Street et al., 2007).

The interaction and relations between residents and staff members also attributed to whether older adults perceived LTC facilities as a home. When staff approached elders in a family-like fashion, residents were more likely to obtain positive residential experiences. Without children nearby, staff members usually took on the role of being 'fictive kin' (Karner, 1998). Elderly participants reported that they were especially content when they could build

reciprocal relationship with staff and directors. As stated by Matthews (2002), a place we call home is often characterized by “people with whom one belongs; who care about you deeply; who want you to be well and do well.”(p. 40). Like in a home, family members would spend time to chat about issues in life, care about one another’s’ well-being, recognize needs and expectations, and know how life history has shaped each other’s life choices and aging experiences. Findings in this study coincided with Coughlan and Ward’s (2007) research that relationships were the foundation of care and also the foundation of residents’ feeling of home. Physical and cognitive declines often accounted for why older people move into LTC facilities. After entering into an unfamiliar environment, older people were in a great need from others to reinforce their positive self-images and to gain confidence to face uncertainties in life and loss of competence due to health issues. Social engagement and positive resident-staff relations helped residents to adjust life quickly after LTC placement and bond together as a family. In short, Similar to research in other relevant studies (Brownie et al, 2014; Ryvicker, 2009; Wreder, 2008), internal social relationships were prominent to Chinese older adults’ home-making experiences in LTC environments. .

It is noteworthy that Chinese communities, whether in China or in the USA, have been recognized as having a highly social oriented culture, which places a great emphasis on social relationships and mutual interdependency (Lu, 2009). For both elderly immigrants in the U.S. and residents in LTC facilities in China, they showed a strong desire for social belonging and gratification of having meaningful and harmonious relationships.

5.1.3 A Sense of Independence and Mastery

As a complex and abstract notion, home is not merely a place tied to safety, comfort and opportunities for being accepted and supported; it also contains personal experiences of

independence, autonomy, and mastery. A vast amount of literature has argued that older people who could exert control over their lives and environments are likely to experience a greater sense of self-worth and are more satisfied with lives (Golant, 2015). Consistent with the literature, findings in this dissertation research also revealed the positive relationships between older adults' feelings of home and their favorable residential mastery experiences and being independent (Fay & Owen, 2012; Haak et al., 2007; Nakrem, Vinsnes, & Seim, 2011; Perkins et al., 2012).

In the U.S., Chinese elderly immigrants expressed their strong desire for being independent from adult children, both residentially and financially. This finding corresponded to previous migration research that the traditional Chinese cultural norm of interdependence and filial expectations are likely to be altered in the receiving context (Glick, 2010; Lan, 2002; Lin et al., 2015). Participants perceived their dependence on adult children as a burden, and such heavy reliance accumulated over time seemed to decrease elders' parental authority, feelings of usefulness and competence as they used to be. Thus, soon after they obtained alternative sources of supports and housing options, most of them preferred to have an independent living space. In Wiles and colleagues' (2011) research, they contended that independence and autonomy associated with a dwelling place contribute to older people's preferences of aging in place. The independence could referred to the freedom of carrying out personal care without extensive interferences from family members; making one's own decisions, keeping one's own life pace, and being autonomous economically and socially. For Chinese older immigrants in this study, their independence and sense of mastery in place was strongly influenced by their legal status, access to local resources and aging services. The great of impact on environments on older immigrants' home-making experiences are discussed later in this chapter.

In LTC contexts of China, elderly residents' feeling of home was also closely related to their sense of being independent and feeling of mastery. LTC facilities are known as having rules and regulations. Elderly residents recognized various institutional restrictions and the fact that they were living in a collective setting, but they managed to maintain their independence by control over daily issues, such as carry out self-reliance activities, plan their days, and choose activities and social relationships as they preferred. Age-related limitations were potential threats to residents' independence as they were forced to constantly adjust life patterns to fit with the collective rhythms in institutions. Yet, consistent with other research, being independence was critical to residents' sense of home for it may strengthen older adults' self-confidence and generate a confirmatory effect, which creates a sense of pride within oneself and among other residents (Haak et al., 2007). In many cases, older adults' independence was often reframed in LTC settings. In cases where residents experience physical or cognitive declines, some would lower their expectations, place more value on things that they have control over, and uphold their current state of functional ability as a way to maintain independence (Perkins et al., 2012). Depending on elders' health conditions, personalities, and other individual attributes, being independent was fundamentally a subjective experience and feeling in relation to place.

More importantly, older people often perceive independence as an ability to manage daily lives and obtain a favorable mastery experiences with environments (Ball et al., 2000; Leith, 2006). Sense of mastery means that older people can do things as they please and in other words, "in your real home, you're the boss" (Grogger, 1995, p. 147). Specifically, a sense of mastery in LTC took many forms and was influenced by varied experiences. In line with other research, feeling capable of doing things, acting in ways as one preferred, and having defined and valuable role in trusted relationships all contributed to residents' sense of mastery and home (Monoly,

2010). As Leith (2006) indicated in the phenomenological analysis in regard to the meaning of home in congregate housings, older women' personal independence and residential mastery in both micro- and macro-spheres provoked their at-homeness. Such feeling of mastery and home-making experiences primarily came from their autonomous decision to relocate and constant efforts to actively re-integrate into new living environments. Lawton (1990) coined the term 'control centers' to depict home as a place where one has easy access and control over necessary resources within a reasonable proximity (Monoly, 2010; Swenson, 1998). Under environmental restrictions in LTC settings, having complete personal freedom, choices, and access to varied resources is often constrained. For some older adults who are affluent in economic and social resources, they can shape environments to match their needs and capabilities, such as choosing a luxury single room and acquire extra care services. However, in situations when elders have limited resources and capabilities, they often bend their will and try to be resilient to what environment and life could offer to them. As Golant (2015) stated, "for better or worse, older people have their sense of confidence even if they have only the illusion of control—that is, if they perceive it to be true." (p. 29). Nevertheless, having power over one's life and environments were significantly associated with older adults' meanings and experiences of home, regardless whether it is in the U.S. or China. Other than modifying physical features in a dwelling place or relocating to a more aging friendly community, a key to mastery is older adults' adaptation in both actions and mind. Restructure a home in a new living environment requires time and adjustment; this meant that in essence, home should be perceived as a fluid and dynamic process that compromises congruent individual and environment relations.

5.2 The Process of Making a Home

The results of analyzing Chinese older adults' living experiences after relocation confirmed theories and empirical findings of previous studies that the construction of "home" is an ongoing process, involving constant adjustment between individuals and environments (Cutchin, Owen, & Chang, 2003; Falk et al., 2012; Manzo, 2003). Although the two sets of data analyses in this dissertation research were cross-sectional, elderly participants' detailed narratives revealed that re-gaining a sense of home in a new living context did not come from a vacuum. They often had mixed and ambivalent feelings toward the place they move to. In accordance with Cutchin's (2013) place integration theory, findings in this study suggested that rather than thinking about a congruent 'fit' between personal competence and environments, the construction of home requires enduring negotiation and adaptation to bond older people with place, and continuous transformation and reinforcement in this relationship.

5.2.1 Home-making in the U.S.

In the transnational aging context, study findings suggested that Chinese elderly immigrants took multiple steps to re-gain their feeling of home after relocating to the U.S. Upon arriving in the country, they completely relied on children for all aspects of supports in life. The lack of mobility, limited language skills, and deficiency in cultural awareness greatly impeded older immigrants' opportunities of social interaction and access to aging services, particularly in their first few years after arrival (Gentry, 2010). However, as duration of residence prolonged and with supports from family members, most elderly immigrants began to adjust their lifestyle and mindset and allocate resources to enrich their aging experiences, normalize their lives, and re-make a home.

Different from domestic or internal migration, aging and adaptation in a transnational context appeared to be more of a time-dependent process (Treas, 2014). Elders with higher personal competence, resources, and supports, their home-making process may take less effort and time while for others, making a home could be a life-long struggle. However, regardless of the length of time, “making” a fit with new environment seemed to be an inseparable experience for all older immigrants. The “making” usually take varied forms and is affected by a number of factors, such as individuals’ characteristics, changes in actions and mindset, coping resources, patterns of family interaction and relationships, and etc.(Chun, Chesla & Kwan, 2010). For Chinese older immigrants, transforming traditional cultural ideal of intergenerational dependency to independence was a common adaptation in life ideology. Numerous studies have shown that alternation of traditional values and lifestyles according to customs in Western societies was common in immigrant families (Chun, Chesla & Kwan, 2010; Li, 2011; Pang et al., 2003). Findings in this study further supported the literature by highlighting the importance of elders’ alternation in cultural ideals in their settlement experiences. If older Chinese parents insisted to uphold traditional patriarchal authority while children had successfully acculturated into American society that emphasized individual rights and freedom, then their incongruent life ideologies could result in misunderstanding and family conflicts (Pang et al., 2003).

To re-create a feeling of home in a foreign land is a complex process for older Chinese immigrants. It places high demand on older adults’ coping strategies and resources, and it is also greatly influenced by what the environment could offer to them. Their place integration experiences involve intense interaction with all aspects in the receiving country, including access to micro-level social networks, meso-level involvement with local community, and influences from the macro-level socio-cultural and political environment (Gierveld, Pas & Keating, 2015).

Findings in the study revealed that older immigrants' eligibility of governmental supports had direct impact on whether they can live in a separate housing away from children and whether they have access to ethnic-based community services. Their access to these social benefits was essential to their home-making experiences and outcome. Yet, gaining access to these benefits was not an overnight event. They had to have lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years, they had to take a citizenship test in English, they had to learn enough English to pass the test and swear the oath in English. In the meantime, they are living in the American social context in which their children live and work. The different social values, particularly, the value of independence, may have been probably essential in their search for their own identity and space. Even though there faced all kinds of challenges of aging in the transnational context, many older immigrants still strived to make the best of what they could to live well in the foreign land, and eventually find a place that they could call "home". In this sense, home is not a fixed notion, rather, it is "a more mobile conception" (Rapport & Dawson, 1998, p. 7), where it "might always contain elements of our having been, but its main significance lies in our becoming." (Hayes, 2007, p. 14). Thus, for Chinese older immigrants, the main concern will be placed on how to advance residential environments to strengthen older persons' capabilities to effectively deal with challenges in life and help them ease the process of turning an unfamiliar place into a home.

5.2.2 Home-making in LTC Settings in China

For older adults living in LTC facilities, their home-making experiences placed a great demand on their adaptation, through either action or mind or both. Adaptive actions primarily manifested in re-establishing life routine, maintaining hobbies or cultivating new interests, developing trust in social relationships, and being actively involved in collective activities. The importance of adjusting one's own life patterns and activities to fit with features in environment

is seen in Cutchin's (2013) description of habit formation and becoming at-home. Drawing on Dewey's (1957) perspective of pragmatism and place integration theory, Cutchin (2013) argued that habits are not simply automatic motor response to environmental stimuli, but are series of "integrated systems of activity" (Dewey, 1957, p. 39) that are bonded to the place where people live. Cutchin (2013) stated, "as we co-develop with these systems, we unconsciously internalize predispositions (habits) inherent to those social structures that guide our thoughts, values and behaviors...the positive habits that are developed by older people in assisted living as providing the skills to get the most out of their situation" (p. 116-117). Elderly participants' adaptive actions in this study were equivalent to what Cutchin has referred to as habits in place. Routines, hobbies and new social relationships were toolkits that elders could draw on to help them cope with environmental press and integrate with their new home.

Moreover, findings in this study also highlighted that older people's home-making process and experiences involved a great extent of human agency. In their conceptual framework of person-environment (P-E) processes, Wahl and Oswald's (2013) suggested that agency and belonging are two major processes to build connection between people and environment in old age. Processes of agency at a behavioral level, defined as "reactive and proactive aspects of using, compensating, adapting, retrofitting, creating and sustaining places" (Wahl & Oswald, 2013, p. 55). Rather than approaching older people as passive recipients in their environments, a large body of literature has stressed their active roles in shaping residential experiences in LTC settings by taking various strategies, including personalizing the environment (Falk et al., 2012), participating in place-based activities (Cutchin et al., 2003), reconsidering their routines (Shin, 2014), and becoming familiar with LTC environments using previous life experiences and knowledge (Reed et al., 2003). Given that LTC environments are characterized by having rules

and regulations, elders' development and utilization of coping strategies cannot be separated from institutional supports, such as policies in place, staff's attitudes, and actions toward residents (Cutchin, 2013).

Other than re-establishing P-E relation through actions, many residents adopted mind strategies to help them to overcome environmental barriers, be resilient to age-related limitations, and show cognitive appraisal toward their life status quo in institutions. In this study, several participants described how they changed their view about aging and institutionalization and re-evaluated their current living environment. They recalled their residential experiences in the first one or two months, characterizing it by feelings of uncertainty, homelessness, and displacement. However, as elders got familiar with various features and services in the facility, many accepted the fact that they were in need of care services. Terms like "easy life" "convenient" "comfortable" "safe" "no burden on children" and "being cared for" frequently appeared in elders' reflections. Once residents recognized the benefits of living in an elder care institution, they would re-organize their thinking and re-create a bond with the place.

Adopting mind strategies to re-create a bond with place is a way to demonstrate the power of agency and older adults' positive psychological capital. Accompanied by adaptive actions and supports from institutions, elderly residents who demonstrated optimism and resilience seemed to have an easier time to obtain a feeling of mastery. They focused on major and minor accomplishments, such as maintaining a good health condition or managing physical declines, carrying out house chores, developing meaningful relationships, being recognized in group activities, and etc. They would look for the bright side of situations and develop the mindset of "making the best of it." Such statement coincides with the relevant research in the Western society.

In Lee, Simpson and Froggatt's (2013) study, they indicated that when confronting with loss of control and independence in LTC facilities, elderly residents appeared to perceive the situation as impediments to conquer and tried to highlight benefits of living in institutions. Moreover, in Johnson and Bibbo's (2014) work, they found that most of their participants showed resilience toward LTC placement, especially after a longer residential period. They argued that the participants in their study came from the generation who experienced the Great Economic Depression in history, in which they embraced the mindset of "putting your mind to it" and strategies to "make the best of it" with limited resources and constrained living environments (Johnson & Bibbo, 2015). Similarly, the cohort effect may also apply to interpret Chinese elderly residents' development of resilience in institutions. The majority of participants in this study had experienced wars or political upheavals in Chinese history. They have encountered difficult life situations, such as shortage of food and other necessities for survival, and living with extremely poor housing conditions. The historical experiences of hardship of these participants may have enabled them to deal with life and environmental obstacles in a more creative and effective way. Focusing on positive things in life and benefits of living in LTC institutions could potentially lead to enhanced feeling of mastery, which was essential to elders' construction of home.

Moreover, the dynamic relation between older people and the place also is related to individual differences. A resident who perceives the facility as home may correlate to a number of factors, such as the length of stay, residents' socioeconomic resources, the nature of family relationships, prior knowledge about elder care institutions, personalities, previous residential experiences, the environment of the facility, the quality of services, and etc. The length of stay, for example, is often examined in research about elders' transition and settlement to LTC

facilities (Lundh et al., 2000; Saunders & Heliker, 2008). Heliker (2006) reported that during the first month after LTC placement, residents often felt a sense of homelessness because of the unfamiliar environment, loss of contact with precious friends and loved items, and powerlessness to reflect personal identities. However, as residents got used to life in the facility, they started to develop new social relationships and bond with the facility. After a few months, residents began to appreciate life in the facility and gradually they gained a bond with the place (Heliker, 2006). Findings in this study support prior literature that the length of stay per se does not determine LTC residents' construction of home; yet, longer residential experiences may bring about a higher level of familiarity, deeper feelings and enduring memories, promoting a sense of home. Additionally, older person's social economic abilities would also have an influence on their selection of the facility, affordability to purchase varied care services and the number of adaptive options available to them, may in turn affect elders' home-making experiences after relocation.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to point out that old age is characterized to a great extent by diversity. People have dissimilar aging trajectories, experiences with their past residential environment, family lives, needs and expectations in life, which will all shape how they respond behaviorally and emotionally toward their new living environment (Mebrabian, 1980). An example is seen in Golant's (2003) work where he stated, "some persons have always lived in less than perfect places, will always be difficult to satisfy, or will have profound difficulty adjusting to any setting that deviates from their expectations." (p. 641). In essence, a feeling of home is a subjective experience that requires a congruent fit and adjustment between individual's resources, competent level and expectations with features in environments. Certainly, there is no one-size-fits-all living environment that can promote a sense of home for all tenants. However, with advancement of LTC physical features and services, accompanied by recognizing

occupants' personal biographies and needs, there are chances to maximize residents' feeling of home, or at least offering them institutional supports for adaptation. In short, home is a fluid concept that comes gradually with some assured qualities, including safety, comfort, independence, and mastery while simultaneously, home is also a place that individuals have to make and in which they assign their own meanings and feelings of attachment toward the place.

5.3 Environmental Supports and Policy Implications

In previous sections, two premises of home have been highlighted: (1) home is a dynamic concept that demonstrates changes along with individuals' aging process as well as their residential environments; (2) home is a subjective concept that provokes compound and rich feelings to individuals. The following section adds another layer to the conceptualization of home by revealing the importance of physical and social dimensions. Aging itself is embedded in a physical and social space (Scharlach & Moore, 2016). Thus, when investigating whether a residential place indeed offers sense of home for its tenants, examination of physical and social environments to capture the complex and multi-dimensional relationship between home and individuals' aging experiences becomes essential.

5.3.1 *Environmental Supports and Home in the U.S.*

Findings based on the sample of Chinese elderly immigrants revealed that home-making experiences were closely tied to their access to local resources and embedded in the larger socio-cultural and political environment of U.S. Different from young immigrants, a large number of older immigrants did not have experiences with the U.S. education or workforce, and most of them could not drive, nor had the mastery of English language and cultural competency (Pang et al., 2003; Treas & Mazumdar, 2002; Wong, Yoo, & Stewart, 2006). Transnational immigration at an old age is usually not an individual act but heavily linked to family ties (Glick, 2010).

Although immigrant children play a key role in supporting their aging parents, literature has noted changing family relationships among recent immigrant families (Wong, Yoo, & Stewart, 2006). Residing in an unfamiliar environment, aging parents are no longer authority figures in the family. Rather than giving orders and advices to children, they rely on children for all forms of assistance, such as taking them to grocery shopping, helping with interpretation or handling legal arrangements. More often, without cultural familiarity and language skills, older immigrants seldom have a chance to be exposed to a new culture, and living outside ethnic enclaves further increases their dependence (Treas, 2002). This heavy reliance on kinship could potentially diminish elders' self-identity as a knowledgeable and independent person who used to have wisdom in life.

In addition to shifting power in family life, older immigrants' difficulties also arise from structural and environmental constrains, such as availability, accessibility, and affordability of aging services with language assistance (Pang et al., 2003). Similar to American seniors, this dissertation study found that older Chinese immigrants also valued independence in residence and daily activities and preferred having stable monetary sources. They demonstrated their competence as self-acting agents to maximize congruence with environment, yet they are powerless in mastering their life in a new place without formal supports from public institutions. The notion of home, despite its positive depictions as a haven, presentation of autonomy and freedom, and the showcase of self, could also signify a place that creates frustration and social isolation (Milligan, 2009) as well as disempowerment and alienation (Von Humboldt, 2016; Rabiee, 2012). When older immigrants feel that they are being "trapped" in their community, having little influence on family members or others, their lives are boring and meaningless, then, they could hardly attach positive feelings toward the place and age well. A place that is called a

home must come with some enjoyable and supportive qualities that empower older people to sustain independence even with age-related limitations. It must make people feel good about life, and keep them “emotionally fulfilled and intellectually stimulated” (Golant, 2015, p. 8). To develop a sense of home, older immigrants need extra supports from their dwellings, neighborhoods, communities and the larger socio-cultural and political environment to make up for their increasing physical limitations or incompetence in order to help them overcome structural and cultural barriers.

Literature have suggested that supportive social relations constitute an important attribute to positive aging and older people’s functional status (Asghari, Ghaderi, & Ashoty, 2006; Litwin, 2004a; Von Humboldt et al., 2013; Von Humboldt, 2016; Zancocci et al., 2008). Empirical studies also confirmed that the number of friends in later life usually decrease as older people step away from their home surrounded with previous ties of friends from the neighborhoods and/or workplace while experiencing age-related deterioration of functional ability (Carr & Moorman, 2016). As a result, older people may place more emphasis on maintaining meaningful social relationships and interactions with whom they share similar interests with (Li, Ji, & Chen, 2014). In consistent with the literature, this dissertation research finds that elderly participants expressed their eagerness for meaningful social contacts and showed gratification when they were able to interact with people who spoke the same language, shared similar cultural understanding of life, had common interests, and experienced comparable constrains of living in a foreign land. Their struggling residential experiences in the first few years after migration made them especially grateful when they had access to the Chinese association or being admitted to the ethnic-based community center. These sites all provided with culturally meaningful activities, which actively promoted older immigrants’ engagement

with interethnic contacts and fostered a strong sense of belonging, acceptance, and support. With these overt or latent benefits of social interactions, a sense of belonging was prominent to turning an unfamiliar place into home. As Wood and Waite (2011) stated:

Belong is a dynamic emotional attachment that relates people to the material and social worlds that they inhabit and experience. It is about feeling ‘at home’ and ‘secure’, but it is equally about being recognized and understood (p. 201).

In short, this study adds empirical evidence to the recognition of structural, cultural, and environmental constraints that placed on Chinese older adults’ home-making experiences in U.S. Family members, social workers, and policy makers should accept older immigrants’ limitations, be aware of their expectations and needs, and recognize the fact that their settlement experiences are strongly influenced by and interwoven with policies and practices in an extensive and comprehensive social and political milieu of the resettlement society.

5.3.2 Environmental Supports and Home in LTC settings in China

Findings from analyzing data in LTC settings in China also lend support to relevant literature in regard to the importance of physical and social environments in shaping older people’s residential and aging experiences. Elderly residents’ narratives demonstrated their strong desires for feelings of safety, familiarity, comfort, being accepted and supported, as well as being independent and in control in an caring setting. These feelings were intimately tied to facilities’ physical-spatial design, policies, management and quality of care services, as well as environmental supports on internal social relationships.

First of all, the majority of older adults living in LTC facilities endured age-related limitations at varying degrees, either physically or cognitively. They needed an aging friendly environment to compensate for their loss of competence. The quality of supportive features is well presented in Moos and Lemke’s (1980) assessment list of LTC environments. They

included criteria as show in the following: physical amenities that associate with convenience, comfort, and attractiveness; safety features that prevent accidents; architectural designs that enable residents' necessary functioning in daily life; barrier-free environments that promote elders' mobility and independence; leisure and recreational space that encourages social interaction and participation in recreational activities; and community accessibility concerning whether residents have easy access to the outside community (Moos & Lemke, 1980). This list provided detailed typologies; in essence, it features LTC environment as an external "source of incentives, opportunities, or resources" on elders' home-making actions and experiences rather than constrains (Golant, 2015, p9).

Among those varied features in LTC settings, it is worth mentioning the critical role of care services to elders' construction of home. Findings from QCA analyses made clear that institutional conditions were the foundation to Chinese elders' home-making outcome while the quality of care was the most influential attribute among all institutional conditions. Being cared for and living in a safe environment appeared to be the most fundamental expectation from residents' perspective. Ideally, home should embrace all forms of positive feelings attached to the place, such as joy, safe, comfortable, autonomy, and empowerment. Similar to healthy elders who reside in their own place, elderly residents hold the same expectation from their dwelling environment. However, confronting with physical and cognitive declines, older adults need care services to help them achieve a comfortable life with enjoyment. Cases like ignoring residents' needs, failing to provide necessary services, or being disrespectful always directly and severely intrude older persons' attachment to the place and their well-being.

Moreover, as findings in Chinese long term care facilities have shown that the provision of care services as an integral part of LTC culture, with a home-like physical design and a high

quality of care services would function much better than a hospital-like ‘curing’ environment in stimulating residents’ emotional identification to a place (Leith, 2006). Like the concept of safety, feeling of comfort and relaxation are also influential to elders’ feeling of home. In other words, ‘being in a place’ is fundamental to define home, but what is more importantly is older people’s ‘feeling in a home.’ (Knight, Haslam, & Haslam, 2010).

Researchers have pointed to the importance of social aspects of environment in LTC settings (Coughlan & Ward, 2007; Fay & Owen, 2012; Shippee, 2012). In consistent with other relevant studies, findings from this research also revealed that friendships, pleasant staff-resident relations, and participation of shared activities contributed to elders’ positive home feelings. Social contexts were equally influential as physical features do on residents. Friendship, for example, is known as carrying more positive weights than costs; it includes “companionship, shared leisure, emotional support, social integration, and informational assistance”, and it is a prevailing determinant of older adults’ well-being and life satisfaction (Carr & Moorman, 2011, p. 152). Moreover, participation in collective activities, no matter organized by the facility or driven by residents, served as a crucial way to foster friendships, a sense of belonging, and group identification (Heenan, 2010). Place-based activities were central to residents’ life in LTC for they promote frequent and effective social contacts that empower elders while adding structure and meaning to elders’ residential experiences (Ellemer, De Gidler & Haslam, 2004; Knight, Haslam & Haslam, 2010; Drury & Reicher, 2005).

From a micro perspective, social factors of home cannot be interpreted without given sufficient considerations to distinct physical features, policies and management of services within each facility. Simultaneously, what seems more prominent to social and cultural contexts in elder care institutions is LTC policies from a national level. In recent decade, the number of

non-government owned LTC services in China has proliferated, but the quality of services varied from facility to facility, depending on each facility's financing status. However, literature suggests that non-government owned/private facilities share common challenges in their financing and operation (Dan et al., 2013). For example, without effective monetary supports or relaxation of policies from government or solid sponsorship from consortium, most private facilities bear heavy investment burden with exceptionally lengthened payoff period and small profit. To sustain normal operation, facility owners are forced to control their follow up investments or cut daily expenses, which directly resulted in the shortage of care staff members with proper training, poor physical environment, limited exercise and recreational amenities, inadequate medical services, and high admission fees (Ye, 2012).

These barriers from a macro aspect of social-political milieu have profound impact on varied physical and social supporting features in facilities. For instance, findings in this dissertation suggested that having an enjoyable and personalized resident-staff relationship was significant to elders' positive residential experiences. In Spencer and colleagues' (2001) study, for instance, they noted that relaxing relationships between staff and residents along with shared awareness of mutual support of elders with varying capabilities contributed to a strong social cohesion in caring homes (Spencer et al., 2001). Similarly, Chinese older adults also showed appreciation to staff members and directors who paid special attention to their needs and showed true concern for their well-being and life issues (Park et al., 2006). Without doubt, well-trained and experienced staff members are better at communicating with residents and encouraging social interactions, activities, and friendships (Park et al., 2012). However, not every LTC facility is capable of hiring well-trained staff with experiences, especially in the social context of China where the majority of care staffs are middle-aged women, coming from rural areas with

very little or no education (Dan et al., 2013). Shortage in the number of frontline care workers, lack of proper trainings, and high turnover rates indeed hindered mutual supportive resident-staff relationships.

Furthermore, findings in this research provide insight into the understanding the necessary conditions for a pleasant home environment for older people living in LTC settings. Although non-government owned facilities varied in size and in quality of services, it was necessary for aging policy makers, LTC planners, and care providers to gain a greater understanding how older people actually perceive their environments and what makes a good home-like long term care environment, for the sake of policies improvement and practices enhancement.

Older people move into LTC facilities with expectations and needs, and the facility is where they experience their day-to-day existence and the “product of their activities and construction.” (Kontos, 1998, p. 181). The importance of hearing older residents’ own voices lies in its potential to needs-matching and person-centered services that can be effective and responsive in helping residents achieve a comfortable and enjoyable life. In developed countries, the shift of policies and practices from conventional delivery of services in LTC to person-centered (PC) and participant-directed (PD) has grown dramatically in recent decades. The primary philosophy with this new model of care is to provide environmental supports to meet older persons’ preferences, values, and capabilities in a relaxing setting (Hooyman, Mahoney, & Sciegaj, 2016). Apart from the traditional service delivery model, PC and PD models of care effectively promotes older persons’ self-determination, choice, and control and empowers them by balancing authority between care providers and residents.

Narratives from Chinese older residents revealed that they had no little complains about rules, regulations or collective lifestyle in LTC environment. This was different from most literature in Western societies. However, through conducting self-reliance activities, continuing pervious hobbies, re-establishing a life routine, participating in social activities and engaging in social contacts, Chinese elders showed similar interests and needs as their American counterparts in terms of being independent, active and valued, and being in control.

In addition to these essential feelings of home, each elderly resident is unique in their expectations and needs as a result of dissimilar life history, habits, personalities, competence levels, beliefs, personal resources, and etc. It would be beneficial for care providers and staff members to conduct needs assessment for each resident and offer them appropriate opportunities to strengthen their coping strategies. Maximizing residents' rights to decide what services and supports work the best for them could strengthen their autonomy and sense of mastery. This awareness of individual differences and needs laid the foundation for offering effective environmental supports, which has been confirmed to be helpful to reduce older people's psychological instability and anxiety after relocation (Komatsu, Hamahata & Magilvy, 2007). The connection between residents' needs and what their living environments could offer to them should continue to adapt changes in residents or the environment.

Taken together, there is no single set of standardized criteria that can define what type of LTC environment assure older persons' feelings of home. However, there are certain home-like qualities in LTC environment which may reinforce older people's attachment to the place. As inspired by Golant (2015) and Lemke and Moos's (1980) work, this study suggests that the physical features of dwellings should compensate for older residents' loss of physical and cognitive abilities; provide sufficient personal space and communal areas for residents to carry

out their necessary functions; ensure services and assistances to effectively meet residents' expectations and needs; provide professional counsel and training to care givers in regard to their caring and communication skills; encourage residents' maintenance of previous friendships and visits from family members; offer activities that match residents' interests and competence; create opportunities for residents to feel accepted, recognized, and valued in the community; provide opportunities for residents to express their personal opinions, beliefs, and expectations; engage residents in planning and delivery of services; assist residents to gain access to necessary goods and services.

5.4 Conclusion

This research began with an intention to obtain knowledge about the meanings of home and the process of making a home in varied aging contexts. For this dissertation research, there were four specific objectives: 1) to examine the process of re-constructing a sense of home in a transnational aging context among Chinese elderly immigrants; 2) to examine factors that contribute to older persons' construction of a sense of home in LTC settings in China; 3) to delineate the levels of importance among the factors and the interaction among these factors in relation to Chinese older persons' sense of home in elder care institutions; 4) to identify pathways that generate older persons' sense of home in LTC service settings. The focus of the research is to draw strategic and practical implications to maximize older adults' residential experiences by investigating the association between their perception of home and both objective and subjective features with dwelling places.

Findings confirmed with literature that home environments mattered significantly to older people, as their dwellings and surrounding environments affect almost every aspect of their of living and feelings. No matter aging in the U.S. or in LTC settings in China, older people expect

their environments to bring about positive residential experiences by compensating for their declines, maximizing their opportunities for independence and mastery, keeping them active and engaged with others, and eventually making them feel good about the place and themselves.

To promote the congruence between older people and the place they live, a critical implication for future research is consider how to optimize living environment that can match with older people's competence, expectations, and needs. By offering environmental supports, older people not only obtain positive experiences of 'being in the home' where they can easily carry out most of their essential activities for a good life, but also gain a 'feeling of at homeness', meant that they could enjoy a comfortable and independent lifestyle, have control over their place, and feel accepted, supported, and valued by having meaningful relationships attached to their dwelling place.

A supportive home environment certainly embraces some assured objective qualities that provoke or reinforce positive residential and aging experiences for older people. However, upon those defined environmental features, it is necessary to be aware that each elderly person holds dissimilar perception toward their dwelling place. Older people's previous life experiences, health conditions, interests, character, and all other personal attributes conjointly play a part in affecting how they prioritize factors in defining a home. As presented in the third article, there were multiple combinations of factors that can generate older persons' feeling of home, and some factors were more salient and meaningful than others. Older people do not hold same expectation from their environment, and they acquire the feeling of home through different pathways. Thus, future advancement of aging policies, services and practices should be flexible and wise enough in order to address the heterogeneity of older people. Also, the P-E interaction is known as dynamic and fluid. People often encounter new challenges and changes as they age,

which require adaptation in a continuous manner in both the individual and the environment. Longitudinal study designs will be better at track variability and changes in individuals and environment and capture the complexity of P-E interactions, and ultimately provide more solid and inclusive evidence to understand what features that constitute a good place for older people to live.

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