

Social connections and wellbeing amongst  
Chinese asylum seeking and refugee  
families in Glasgow: A qualitative study

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## Abstract

The impact of social connections on refugees' wellbeing has been well established in previous refugee studies. However, the impact on Chinese asylum seekers' and refugees' (ASRs) wellbeing has rarely been studied.

This study aimed to understand what living a good life means to Chinese ASRs in Glasgow and how social connections help to achieve wellbeing for individuals and families. The study employed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to guide inquiry, a methodology that examines lived experience in detail. Data collection was conducted in Glasgow in three phases utilizing individual interviews, family interviews, and a participatory exercise. Thematic analysis and IPA were adopted for data analysis.

First, the study explored the wellbeing constructs of 25 ASRs through interviews; second, participatory research was employed to understand participants' social connection patterns in three groups with a total of 15 participants. Finally, an in-depth study was conducted to determine how the five families define and understand wellbeing, with an investigation of their perceived pathways to achieve those goals.

The findings show children's education, social connections with friends and family, competency in the English language and staying healthy are key facilitators for attaining wellbeing. The study also revealed that Chinese ASRs have limited knowledge and awareness of social services, and a lack of opportunity to interact and give help in host community. In general, the ASRs live in isolation, with limited support or channels to achieve all the elements of a good life they have envisaged. The data from the family interviews suggest that each family's division of labour, and bonding relationships with their own ethnic group and Chinese ethnic agencies, which act as bridges, are key pathways to living a good life.

This study presents evidence on the importance of social connection to ASRs' wellbeing. Findings of the research suggest that policy makers and service providers should design more programmes and services to facilitate interaction among Chinese ARSs, their host community and social service providers to more effectively assist refugees in the resettlement process.

**Key words:** Refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, social connections, wellbeing, resettlement



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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Rationale of the study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify what constitutes living a good life for the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in the host community, Glasgow. With the increasing number of people from China claiming asylum and given the ‘leave to remain’ status, very little is known of this population as local agencies seldom see them in the service delivery process. Critical issues and challenges facing ASRs have been widely studied in refugee literature. This thesis chose to look at living a good life from the perspective of the Chinese ASRs, and understand some of the means to obtain a life that has motivated their migration. The lack of utilisation of services could signify the fact that they do not need help or that they are isolated and disconnected (Mitchneck, Mavorova and Regulska, 2009; Berthold et al., 2019). There is little research that would explore the ways in which this ‘hard-to-reach’ populations live in host community. This study seeks to explore in great depths the lives of the Chinese ASR individuals and families, and the impacts of social connections on achieving their goals of living a good life.

Even though both individuals and families will be interviewed, the main focus of the research study is families. First, there is a lack of existing literature looking at family as a unit in the asylum seeking and refugee (ASR) population, for instance, the British Red Cross report (2015) had stated clearly that more research needed to be taking family as a whole to understand lives in resettlement for ASR families.

Second, the Chinese population traditionally and culturally has strong familism, coined by Lau (1982). It is used to characterize the culture of Chinese families and people rely on social networks of family members and close friends for resources, information and emotional support. The reliance of Chinese migrants on informal support and keeping their concerns within their close circles reveal that they have a strong tendency toward self-help and self-sufficiency (Wong, 2007 p. 87). Since this research project proposes to investigate the wellbeing of Chinese ASRs, and because of the collective nature and the Chinese cultural influence of familism, families were the main focus of this study. Finally, case workers in agencies such as the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) and the British Red Cross (BRC) in Glasgow indicated that the majority of the recent Chinese migrants from China are families with young children.

Human migration and resettlement have been a historical phenomenon since the evolution of the human race. People moved to different places in search of food, water, safety, security, employment and opportunities for a better life. Involuntary migration often takes place in crisis situations such as natural disasters, civil wars, political persecution and economic hardship. Refugees face severe challenges in the process from fleeing their own countries to arriving and resettling in a host country. Social connections play an important role in the resettlement process through social relationships, support and networks for refugee communities (Strang and Quinn, 2019; Ager and Strang, 2008, Goodson and Phillimore, 2008). The relationship between wellbeing and resettlement is not straightforward. Ultimately, successful resettlement needs to be reflected in a subjective sense of one's wellbeing and will be determined by numerous factors and subjective experiences in the process. The

opportunity to flourish, to become at home, to belong is powerfully shaped by the prevailing social climate and structures that are openly inclusive or exclusive (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010).

I have always had an interest working with refugees since I was young. Growing up in Hong Kong, I remembered walking by the refugee camps for the Vietnamese people and looking inside through a fence wondering why they had to live in such conditions. They had no freedom, and I saw children, same age as me, ten years old and younger, walking back and forth gazing outside the fence. My curiosity regarding the refugee population has grown since then. I started working with refugees when I was a social work student in the United States. I was doing my internship at the outreach department in a senior centre, and I decided to conduct a qualitative study of the minority elderly in the city of Grand Forks, North Dakota. In the process I discovered there were many isolated elderly who were refugees from places, such as Bhutan, Nigeria, Somalia and Iraq. I did a qualitative study about their lives and found out their strengths and challenges in the host community. Throughout the process, I not only learned much about the lives of the twelve older adult refugees, but also became a friend of their families. It is through this journey that I found out what mattered the most to them and the kind of help they needed to live a good life in the resettlement process. Most of the elderly lived with their families, but they felt very isolated as their adult children were working full time, and their grandchildren were busy at school and with after school activities. The lack of language skill and the cold harsh weather made it impossible for them to even venture to the grocery store by themselves. Their struggles were beyond description

especially those who had been waiting to find out the whereabouts of their spouses and other family members, whom they had not heard from in years.

Upon completion of my master's degree in Social Work in the United States, I took up a position as a volunteer co-ordinator in a refugee agency in Grand Forks, where I had already been volunteering for some time. It gave me the opportunity to understand this population first hand; from receiving them at the airport, doing assessments of their needs and concerns, visiting them at home, recruiting and training volunteers, and pairing families up with volunteers that match their needs. Their needs and concerns were huge, and some were critical, and I came to realize how important the assessment process was before we could assist them to rebuild their lives. Asking refugees to fill out a two-page form the day after they arrived would not give us a full picture of what their needs were therefore I took up the advocacy role in the agency to include home visits to find out how the agency could best support them once we knew the family better.

One particular incident surprised me was when I got a call from one of the leaders of the Chinese community to assist with a family domestic abuse issue. Being the only social worker in the community I took up all the responsibilities whenever people called especially the so-called 'elders', the leaders of the community. I found out that this family in fact came to the US as refugees, and they had never told anyone about their status. I had known them for five years and I only came to know about their situation when they needed my assistance in seeking formal help regarding the domestic abuse case. Since then, I learned that there were more Chinese refugees in the area, and that they were an extremely isolated group, who did not disclose any of

the issues they were facing unless they really had to. The opportunity to undertake a PhD study with the Queen Margaret University on the topic of psychosocial wellbeing of the refugee population came in 2015, and I decided to explore the lives of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in Scotland - what this population perceives as living a good life and their means to achieve such a life. It is my hope to come up with strategies to help them handle the challenges faced in the host community.

In addition, my experience with the Chinese communities in the US and the UK led to the conclusion that they are largely a close knit group, and people do not seek help with things they consider shameful, such as borrowing money, disclosing marital conflicts, and children failing school. Social support and relationships have consistently proven, in general, to help us live healthier, happier, and longer. Literature on migration wellbeing, and many disciplines such as psychology and sociology has however, pinpointed the challenges of living in isolation with mental health concerns. Chinese communities for migrants/ASRs are to a certain extent influenced by Chinese traditional culture, beliefs and values. Its network of relationships is mainly limited to mostly the same ethnic group with people that share similar social support.

The Chinese concept, '*guanxi*', refers to aspects of social relations which literally means 'interdependent relationship'. It is argued that the most important outcome of *guanxi* connections maybe trust between two individuals(Yang, 1994) as trust among members of the in-group and distrust among members of the out-group is one of the strongest characteristics of interpersonal relations in China (Butterfield, 1983). Trust

impacts social relationships and norms of reciprocity between people. Knowing the cultural values, beliefs and practices of the Chinese gives insight into their patterns of their behavior in a host community. When '*guanxi*' is applied to discussions of relations between individuals in friendship, the term indicates carefully constructed and maintained relations between two persons which involve mutual benefits and obligations. It also extends to personal connections between individuals in their formation and maintenance of long term relationships, which follow subtle social norms (Qi, 2013). Understanding the Chinese cultures such as the norm of interpersonal relationships, the unwritten rule of seeking help and returning favours, and their personal and traditional way of living are helpful in understanding and interpreting the group of participants in this study.

## **1.2 Background of this study**

According to UNHCR, the number of refugees worldwide stood at 21.3 million at the end of 2015 which is when I started working on this literature review. At the end of 2019, there were 126,720 refugees, and 45,244 pending asylum cases in the UK (UNHCR, 2019). Amongst asylum seekers, the top three countries of origin were Eritrea (3,568), Pakistan (2,302) and Syria (2,204), but China registered as the country of origin for a significant number. According to the Scottish Refugee Council report, the largest number of claims during 2014 – 15 came from people whose origin was the People's Republic of China (when data on outstanding asylum claims in Scotland was included in the figure) (Refugee Council, 2015). However, only 6% of new refugees engaged with the Holistic Integrated Service (HIS), classes and services offered by SRC to prepare refugees for living a new life in the host



country. A workshop organized by the SRC in September 2015 with the aim to gather refugees from different ethnic groups in Glasgow to discuss issues they were struggling with, even though a Chinese interpreter was present, not one single Chinese refugee participated in the workshop.

Subjective wellbeing is an issue of increasing attention in China after decades of economic growth and improved life style for many (Bian, Zhang, Yang, Guo & Lei, 2015), however, recent studies show mixed results and on the whole, a substantial proportion of Chinese people are unhappy about or dissatisfied with their current life. According to the OECD wellbeing research published in 2011, China has the lowest reported life satisfaction of all the countries covered, despite being wealthier than India or Indonesia. Research shows very scant information regarding the Chinese migrants or their mental health status. Quoted from a UK government report on China – Country of Concern from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2015), civil and political rights in China remained subject to tight restrictions, media censorship continued, and space for civil society remained constrained. Of principal concern were detentions of human right defenders for the peaceful expression of their views and China's ongoing clampdown on freedom of expression, association and assembly. Even though the freedom of religion/belief was provided for under the Chinese Constitution, it was restricted in practice. For example, house church leaders continued to be detained and sentenced to long imprisonment, and the spiritual practice group, Falun Gong continued to be subject to repression with its members persecuted. The systematic persecution of practitioners has resulted in up to a million Falun Gong practitioners being sent to forced labour camps, psychiatric hospitals and brainwashing centres (Matas and Chueng, 2012). Professor Matas, who was

nominated for the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize for his dedicated work in human rights advocacy, also found evidence that practitioners' vital organs have been harvested for transplants (Matas & Kilgour 2009). In addition, the One-child policy of China lead to forced abortions and sterilisation against the will of women and families, while ongoing reports of arbitrary detention and imprisonment of Tibetan key people and monks continued. The initial informal contact with key informants in the Chinese community in Edinburgh and Glasgow area have disclosed reasons such as political and religious prosecution for fleeing China and claimed political asylum status in the UK.

### **1.3 Definition of research problem**

According to annual reports and staff testimonies in the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and British Red Cross (BRC) the Chinese refugee population in Glasgow, Scotland is almost invisible in-service delivery sectors even though their number has significantly increased in recent years (Scottish Refugee Council, 2014). Research regarding this population is lacking and how they have been navigating in the new place is not known. Social connections are important determinant of overall wellbeing (Fleche, Sorsa, Smith, & Sorsa, 2012) and it is unclear why the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) seldom seek help in local agencies. Are they managing well or just lost in the new place? The answer is unknown to researchers, policymakers or professionals working with the refugee population in the host community.

There were areas for consideration in delineating the research questions and methods of inquiry. Firstly, in the field of refugee studies, there has been very limited

scholarly attention given to the Chinese refugees even though they have gained international attention, especially after incidents such as the June Fourth student protest at Tiananmen Square in 1989. Secondly, most wellbeing research adopts a quantitative approach such as surveys, however there is a need for in-depth qualitative studies in understanding the subjective perspective of wellbeing (Correa-Velez et al. 2010). This study proposed to find out the subjective experiences of Chinese ASRs and how social connections help achieve wellbeing. Thirdly, the refugee population in Scotland is increasing and knowledge of refugees' integration in Scotland is sparse (Mulvey, 2015). Another phenomenon that emerged from both the annual reports of the Scottish Refugee Council and staff who work with refugees in Glasgow, is the under-presentation of the Chinese refugees in any community engagement seminars or activities (Scottish Refugee Council, 2014 p.79). How they navigate in a new place without much support and services from the host community sparked the inquiry of this research project. A qualitative wellbeing study on the Chinese ASRs will be helpful in understanding the lives of this 'hard-to-reach' group.

#### **1.4 Aims of the project**

The aim of the research is to critically examine the relationship between social connections, namely bonding, bridging and linking social capital and subjective wellbeing of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in host community, and whether social connections serve as a means to the end of improved wellbeing.

The research takes as its starting point the uncertain situation in which the selected group of recent migrants (who had applied for asylum or received 'leave to remain'

status) from China was found at the time of this research and highlights the potential risks this posed to their overall wellbeing. At a time when this population appeared to be isolated and sought minimal help from the host community, investigating their social connection patterns can provide information and insights into their daily lives.

The specific research questions of the proposed study are:

**1. From the perspectives of Chinese migrants in Scotland, what are the core constructs associated with wellbeing?**

Goal: This is the exploratory stage for the researcher to get to know the Chinese community, understand how they define wellbeing from their perspectives. This will help identify Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in the process, which is the targeted population in this study.

**2. What patterns of social connections are displayed in the Chinese asylum seeking and refugee population?**

Goal: To find out what Chinese ASRs social relationships with their own ethnic group and others in the host communities are like can help shed insights into the patterns of social connections of the participants.

**3. What roles do social connections play in achieving the constructs of wellbeing identified by the Chinese asylum seeking and refugee families?**

Goal: To examine the relationship between social connections and subjective wellbeing of Chinese ASR families, and how different types of relationship interact with one another in the process.

### **1.5 Brief discussion of theoretical frameworks**

This study is based on a constructivist and interpretivist epistemology. As such, it is assumed that truth and meaning are created by a subject's interactions with the world. Participants construct their meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. The struggles and challenges that refugees are facing and how they see wellbeing will be explored from their perspective, therefore, an emic approach will best suit the goal of this research project.

The thesis identified, reviewed, and discussed a number of available wellbeing and integration frameworks in the literature that could provide practical theoretical guidance to conduct this study. This research study focuses particular attention on the domain of asylum seekers and refugees' subjective wellbeing in terms of their social connection capacity and interactions among bonding, bridging and linking capital. Social capital theory (Putnam, 1993; Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990) and the "Indicators of Integration" (Ager & Strang, 2004) are utilized in the study. Social connections, which formed the backbone of social capital theory and closely related to '*guanxi*' (social connections equivalent in Chinese culture), is one of the major groups of the integration indicators.

### 1.5.1 “Indicators of Integration” and social connections

The “Indicators of Integration” (IOI) integration framework, developed by Ager & Strang (2004), defines the different types of social connections that refugees need to access essential supports to optimize their personal wellbeing. The IOI framework draws on Putnam’s work on social capital. Based on the social capital theory, as formulated by Putnam (1993), and later other scholars, three major categories of social connection - bonding (comprising same-ethnic contacts), bridging (comprising contacts within the local population), and linking capital (comprising contacts with institutions and services) are defined. It is through these connections that refugees can access other markers of integration such as housing and employment.

Developing the model, Ager and Strang (2008) draw attention to the bonding that can emerge from refugees having access to support from co-ethnic groups. How social bonds affect development of bridges and links have not been well researched in existing literature. Bourdieu (1986:249-50) defined social capital as:

*“The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.”*

The idea Bourdieu mentioned here of a credential for credit, which he sees as essential for social capital, is explicitly communicated in the notion of *guanxi* (Qi,

2013) – a parallel to the Chinese theory of social connection (based on trust, reciprocity of favours and reputation). This will further be explored in the next chapter, the Literature Review.

Considering Putnam's theory of bonding social capital leads to more favorable bridging and linking social capital, and the argument that Ager and Strang (2010) made regarding the potential danger of 'separate, very bonded but disconnected communities', some groups remain highly bonded in their own ethnic group with minimal interactions with other ethnic groups or the wider society as a whole. Putnam assumes that bonding leads to bridging capital but warns of exclusive bonding capital as it can perpetuate poverty among a poor close-bonded community. However, Bourdieu argues that it is not easy for certain population in society to build up bridging capital as they do not belong to a certain social class with a fair amount of resources to start with. Individuals with strong bonding capital could serve as bridges and links at times for their friends in the community. How the interactions among the three domains of social connections affect wellbeing at individual, family and community level is not well researched in migration literature. How the pattern of social connections manifest within the Chinese ASRs and its impact on their wellbeing will be one of the key questions explored in this study.

### **1.5.2 Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) Framework**

The WeD wellbeing model, which has an emic focus, will be used as a reference point to look at wellbeing of refugees taking into consideration the subjective perception from participants. Refugees face critical issues in resettlement, and there are numerous studies of wellbeing of refugees assessing some of the practical

functioning aspects of refugees and their coping mechanisms in daily lives (Chase et al, 2013; Carswell et al., 2011; Correa-Velez et al., 2010). Social relationship is an important factor directly or indirectly impacting wellbeing (Goodson and Phillimore, 2008; Kearns et al., 2015). The Psychosocial Assessment of Development and Humanitarian Interventions (PADHI) was established in University of Colombo in 2006. One of the objectives was to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the determinants of wellbeing in Sri Lanka and develop tools to assess wellbeing. It was developed in post conflict Sri Lanka informed by the Psychosocial Working Group framework. It recognises the social relationships, networks and alliances as important aspects of people's lives. Kawachi and Berkman (2001) reported that lack of social connections as a risk factor for social exclusion and poor health.

There is a lack of research on finding out the 'voice of the refugees' and their perspectives. The "Wellbeing in Developing Countries" (WeD) model viewed wellbeing as an ongoing social process encompassing the interactions with the material, relational, and subjective dimension. It focuses on "Doing Well, Feeling Good and Doing Good, Feeling Well" as the conceptualisation of wellbeing (White, 2008) The material dimension brings together items commonly distinguished as 'human capital' such as assets and welfare. The relational dimensions include intimate relations of love and care as well as the human sphere of capabilities and attitudes to life. Lastly, the subjective dimension looks at people's perceptions of their positions in the areas of material, social, and human, and their cultural values, ideologies, and beliefs. Overall, wellbeing is not simply about 'the good life', more importantly, it is about 'living a good life'. Wellbeing, in the WeD model, took on a



holistic view that includes not only health, but also a moral sense of feeling at ease with one's place in the world, which is critically related to one's relationship to others (White, 2010).

### **1.6 Overview of research design**

A qualitative approach using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a methodology was applied to this study. The aim of adopting IPA is to provide a detailed account of a relatively small group of individuals' lived experiences, and the meanings they give to their experiences. The researcher will take on an interpretative role in the research process trying to make sense of the participants' sense of their world through dialogues and activities. As Freedom (2011, p. 543) stated:

*“...Dialogue is thought to offer a hermeneutic valence for people's engagement with understanding and the means of encountering truth. Understanding, therefore, cannot be conceived of as a fixing of meaning but as an event in which meaning is generated and transformed.”*

In order to discover meanings in the data, one needs an attitude open enough to let unexpected meanings emerge (Giorgi, 2011; Lopez & Willis, 2004). The ultimate goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees. Reflexive thinking throughout the entire research process to keep bias and assumptions in check, therefore, is required. More details about the specific design of the study are provided in Chapter 3.

## **1.7 Overview of the chapters**

Chapter one presents the background to the research problem, including a general overview of research and the asylum seeking trend of the Chinese migrants, whose country of origin is China. Also, a brief introduction of theoretical frameworks and methodology, the motivation for conducting this study especially my personal interests and experiences regarding the topic, as well as the urgency and concern of the overall situation of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees are presented. It concludes with an overview of the chapters.

Chapter two presents a literature review of existing knowledge and empirical evidence of issues concerning refugees in resettlement. The Chinese migrants' experiences in the UK is highlighted especially those concerning the refugees and asylum seekers. Key conceptualisation of wellbeing, social capital, and the "Indicators of Integration" are presented in great depth regarding their definitions and their relevance to the study. They are also examined in relationship to the research topic – how social connections impact refugee wellbeing in existing literature. It concludes by discussing the research gap, objectives of the study and the research questions it sets to answer.

Chapter three presents the study methodology, which includes the research design of the study, and the research process itself of phase one, two and three. In addition, the setting of the study, ethical considerations, and researcher's reflexivity is presented. The chapter ends by looking at the limitations of the study.

Chapter four presents the findings of key informants and phase one. It highlights the interviews of twenty key informants from various agencies, organisations from both government and non-government sectors, and its contributions to the background knowledge of the targeted participants of the study. In phase one, twenty-five participants were interviewed and they self-identified as either asylum seekers or refugees. The findings of what makes a good life is presented. The chapter concludes by pointing out that social relationship and connections is one of the most significant factors impacting a good life for participants.

Chapter five presents the findings of Phase two, which consists of participatory action research. There were three groups and altogether fifteen Chinese asylum seekers/refugees. The participatory exercises were facilitated by the manager and case worker of the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) in terms of providing office space for the event and co-ordination. This chapter presents the findings of the social connection patterns of participants in terms of bonds and bridges capital, their level of trust and opportunity to give in the host community through social mapping and card sorting exercises. It concludes by highlighting the bonding and bridging capital of participants and some of the issues emerged in the process.

Chapter six presents the findings of phase three, which is a family wellbeing study utilises participatory exercise and family interviews in the process. Five families were recruited and family members discussed what living a good life means for them, and how they achieve those constructs in their daily lives. This chapter concludes by summarising the five families' strategies to achieving a good life and at

the same time, highlighting some of the concerns and barriers they identified in the host community.

Chapter seven analyses the findings from the three phrases as a whole in the light of the research questions set out for this study. Importance and relevance of findings are discussed with reference to existing literature and frameworks used as reference points of this study. This chapter analyses the kinds of social connections (bonds, bridges and links) participants possess, and what the patterns of those connections are like in achieving the subjective constructs of wellbeing.

Chapter eight concludes by discussing the significant implications for research and practice, and proposing recommendations for the host community and agencies to consider when working with a 'hard-to-reach' population. Based on the findings drawn on the knowledge, information, and perspectives of the Chinese ASR population, together with my interpretations, it is hoped that agencies and organisations could come up with effective strategies and creative ideas to support this population.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

The overarching goal of this research study is to generate understanding and knowledge of the role of social connections play in refugee and asylum seekers' (ASRs) wellbeing in the host community. To reach the goal, a critique of the current body of knowledge in the area of refugee wellbeing in host country is required. This chapter aims to review existing literature in the area of refugee wellbeing and how patterns of social connections impact the experience and facilitate wellbeing. Thus, the arguments presented throughout this chapter provide a foundation to inform the research questions and methodological design. It serves as background for analysing the findings of the Chinese ASRs' lived experiences in Chapter 7 – the Discussion.

This research study focuses on ASRs' wellbeing in the context of resettlement. It involves locating an isolated, hard-to-reach group of population from China/the People's Republic of China (PRC) living in Scotland in a new sociocultural context. Refugee wellbeing has been widely researched, however, not in the context of the Chinese ASRs. This study draws on the theory of social capital to examine how social connections impact the subjective wellbeing of the Chinese ASRs. This literature review involves multi-disciplinary search including psychology, sociology, anthropology, social work, economics, and law. An analysis of current discourses on critical issues facing ASRs in general will be discussed, as well as the theoretical frameworks this study adopted as reference points.

This chapter starts with a summary of the research literature that underpins the current study and the importance of examining those literatures. The background information pertaining to the migration history of the Chinese, the Chinese population in the UK, and the asylum-seeking trends might throw light on the experiences of the Chinese refugees in the host community. Then, various bodies of literature regarding the research topic will be discussed. Most of the literature concerns professionals and students, who went abroad to study and work from China. Literatures that discuss the life of migrants, excluding the professionals and students, will be included in the literature search as this study targeted on migrants who possess limited resources of all types. International students and professionals brought with them different kinds of assets when they go abroad such as economic and human capital. In addition, there is a big difference in rights and entitlements between international students and asylum seekers. Understanding wellbeing and integration in the asylum seeking and refugee population is the focus of this study. Wellbeing is a broad phenomenon, and this study will examine wellbeing in the context of refugee resettlement. Various wellbeing frameworks and how wellbeing is measured from relevant literature will be presented. Overall, this chapter aims to provide the background information of the subject under study, as well as analyse those important findings in existing literature. It will then conclude by explaining the rationale behind the focus of this study, and how this body of research inform the research questions.

### **2.1.1 Literature search strategy**

The literature search was conducted using electronic databases such as ProQuest, Medline and Google Scholar to identify relevant peer reviewed journals, articles,

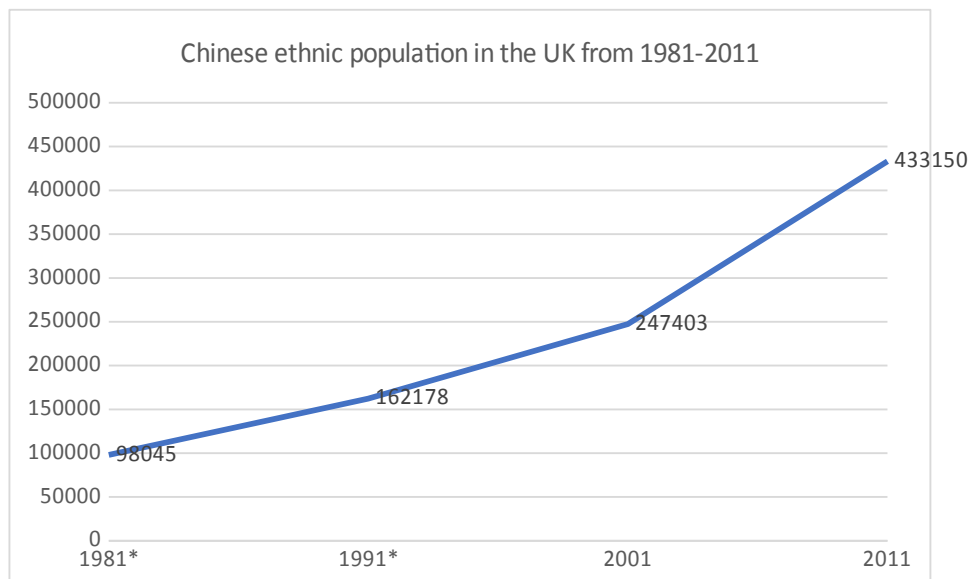
thesis and dissertations for review. The key word search terms '*migrants*', '*refugees*', '*refugee families*', '*integration*', '*resettlement*', '*wellbeing*', '*integration indicators*', '*social connections*', '*bonds*', '*bridges*', '*links*', '*social capital*', '*Chinese refugees*', '*mental and psychological health*' and '*outcomes of resettlement*' were employed in the search process. All references from selected relevant papers were reviewed by title and abstract to determine their potential relevance to this search process. Grey literature such as policy documents, government documents, non-profit organizations' research publications and agency reports, newspaper articles, and relevant publications and books concerning refugee wellbeing and social connections were identified.

## **2.2 History of Chinese migration in the UK**

### **2.2.1 Migration trends of Chinese migrants**

The Chinese migration could be traced back to as early as 1814 when Chinese came to Britain as seamen. The earliest Chinese settled around the seaports of London, Liverpool, and Cardiff (Ng, 1968). The Chinese migration was also influenced when Britain grew its involvement with the acquisition and development of Hong Kong and the treaty concessions in Shanghai, Qingdao, and other ports in mainland China. After the World War II, Britain experience a new influx of Chinese migrants from the region of Hong Kong, the New territories and Guangzhou region. These Chinese migrants were later joined by their families in response to changing immigration laws. Historically the Chinese population has been growing in the UK since 1981 (Figure 1).

**Figure 1 Chinese ethnic population growth in the UK**



(Owen, 1995<sup>1</sup>, p. 16; Office for National Statistics, 2001; Office for National Statistics, 2011)

Since post world war II until 1980s, most of the Chinese immigrants arriving in the UK were from the New Territories of Hong Kong and their descendants. The first generation of migrants were mainly involved in catering and restaurant business while second and third generation of Chinese immigrants found employment into the mainstream UK labour market. Besides, many new immigrants also run business like traditional Chinese medicine, hairdressing, beauty or nail salon, and import and export trade (Lathan and Wu, 2013).

In the 1960s, the UK had witnessed a growth period of the Chinese restaurant businesses (Yuen and Richman, 2003). Chinese people emigrated for different reasons, such as social, economic and political at different times and circumstances. It is estimated that five million Chinese workers moved to different countries, such

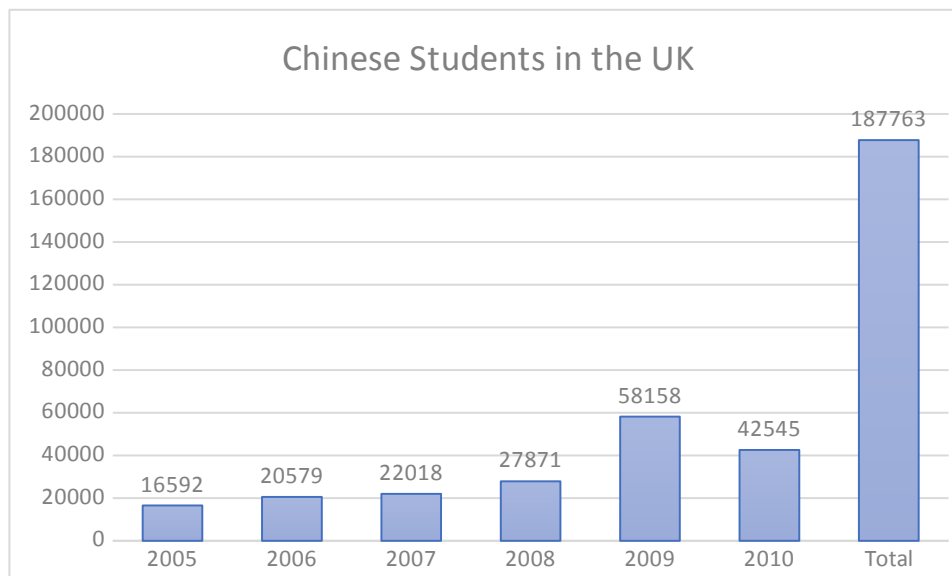
<sup>1</sup> Owen (1995) cited census 1981 and 1991 Chinese population data.



as America, South-East Asia, Australia and South Africa from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century as contract labourers (Zuang and Wang, 2010). By the early 1990s, approximately a quarter of Britain's Chinese population were born in the UK, a third were born in Hong Kong and the rest came from Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and the PRC (Storkey & Lewis, 1996). Most Chinese migrants after the Second World War were from Hong Kong, and they were largely a well-educated group. More recently, there has been increasing migration of professionals and business people (Benton & Gomez, 2008).

Since 1985, when restrictions on emigration from China were lifted, there have been an increase of people migrating to the UK from Fujian and the northeastern provinces (Pieke, 1998). Most of them engaged in catering and restaurant businesses. After 1990s, the UK Chinese population became more diverse as more students and immigrants arrived from China. In recent years, Chinese students are one of the main immigrant categories which came to study in the UK and Europe. Between 2005 and 2010, the total number of Chinese students studying in the UK increased over 10 times (Figure 2).

**Figure 2 Number of student visa issued to Chinese national (2005-2010)**



Source (House of Commons and Home Affairs Committee, 2011 cited in Unterreiner, 2015)

According to the Office for National Statistics (2012), 40,000 people came to the UK from China, and it was the largest migrant group in the UK in 2012, when a large number of students came to the country to pursue their studies. It was for the first time China has provided more migrants than any other nations in the UK. Currently, it is estimated that there are about 400,000 Chinese people in the UK, which is around 0.7% the population in the country (Office of National Statistics, 2019). In Scotland where the research site is located, there were 33,706 Chinese people according to the 2011 census, up from 16,310 (2001 census), making Chinese the second largest minority ethnic group residing in Scotland.

The changed economic political role of China after the open-door policy (1978) was evident. Economic and political reforms since then led to a new “emigration regime” (IOM, 1995). Additionally, grey literature including newspaper and online materials

highlight the persecution of students at the Tiananmen Square in 1989 and the persecution of the practitioners of Falun Gong practitioners since 1999 have led to Chinese people seeking asylum abroad. Some students from China applied for political asylum in the countries where they were pursuing their studies at the time after the Tiananmen Square protest in Beijing in 1989 (Lam, Sales, D'Angelo, Lin, & Montagna, 2009).

### **2.2.2 Immigration status**

Nation States generally make a clear distinction between 'genuine' refugees, who flee persecution because of their membership of a persecuted group, and economic migrants. In reality, the distinction is quite blurred (Bloch, 1999) and many from China are 'forced migrants' whose economic situations at home had made it impossible for them to make a living for themselves and their families. These migrants left China; many attempted to claim asylum but the success rate of this population remained very low, according to the Home Office in the UK (Refer to Table 1, p. 41-42). Fearing possible repatriation, many have gone 'underground' and are surviving within the informal economy (Lam et al., 2009). London has been the major destination for undocumented labour since it provides opportunities of informal work (Lam et al., 2009).

A large proportion of the newer migrants from China have insecure immigrant status since UK immigration policy has been increasingly selective regarding skills and country of origin (Sales, 2007). Some without formal legal status have over-stayed their permission to stay in the UK after temporary study and work visa, while others enter the country without proper documents, with false documents, using dangerous

and difficult routes, and/or with the help of smuggling agents (Lam et al., 2009). The notorious Dover incident in 2000, where 58 bodies of Chinese people were discovered in the back of a lorry, highlighted the grave concern of the problem. In 2004, 23 Chinese cockle pickers drowned in Morecombe Bay, where they were caught by incoming tides. Subsequently, interest in Chinese migrants, forced labour, human trafficking and irregular working practices in the UK has increased greatly.

Pieke (2010) points out that Fujianese migrants tend to rely on snakeheads, who take responsibility for arranging and physically transporting workers to the UK for a fee. Agents also assist people with obtaining visas. The fees charged by travel facilitators vary considerably from £9,500 to £28,700. The costs of the fee often come from family and friends. Once the migrants arrive in the UK, family members pay the fee to the agent or facilitator in China. Thereafter, the migrant owes money to family and friends, rather than to the snakeheads or agents. Many of the Chinese arrived the UK using these agents.

### **2.3 Experiences of Chinese migrants in the UK**

Chinese people are often seen as a silent and self-sufficient community, which, as stated in a Home Affairs Committee report, prefers 'self-reliance and mutual aid within the family and community' (Runnymede Trust, 2018). As a Home Office minister pointed out: 'There is a great desire among the Chinese to sort out their problems for themselves and not ask others for help' (National Children's Centre, 1982). Therefore, Chinese people have always been thought of by statutory bodies as having sufficient resources to meet the needs of the people and their families.

Chinese in the UK is highly polarized; some came as international students to pursue

higher education and work in skilled professions, while others are subjected to unsafe means of travelling to enter the country illegally (Runnymede Trust, 2016)

This research focuses on the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees, those who were given 'leave to remain' status in Scotland; research on Chinese migrants in Scotland remains scant in literature. Chinese are a very diverse group coming from different parts of the world, and the literature review process only examines the population originated from China and those who came with limited resources and assets. The UK Chinese historically are perceived as one of the more successful minority groups in the UK. Chinese students are one of the highest achieving ethnic groups. On the other hand, Chinese migrant workers are under-researched, as they are generally seen as a close, self-sufficient group in the UK (Lo and Chen, 2012). Much of the research on migrant workers in the UK focused on eastern European migrants in approximately the past 10-15 years. They came from places such as Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Hungary.

Previous studies done on Chinese migrant revealed issues including language barriers, a lack of community support, and social isolation (Chan & Yu, 2001; Cheng, 1996). A study on Chinese migrants conducted in Birmingham (Huang & Spurgeon, 2006) revealed additional issues participants face, including symptoms of poor mental health, such as moderate to extreme feeling of loneliness besides social isolation, language barriers, lack of information and access to services including health services. The authors also acknowledged that the Chinese is a population which is very difficult to access in the city of Birmingham, and they seldom utilize formal services or seek help from government agencies.

There has been very little research done on the Chinese migrants in Scotland.

Cheung (2002) conducted a study relating to childbearing of Chinese women in Scotland. Glasgow has become more diverse and the home for many asylum seekers since it became the place of dispersal for asylum seekers in 1999. In a recent report on changing ethnic profiles of Glasgow and Scotland in 2017, and the implications for population health, the author, David Walsh threw some lights on the Chinese population in the area (Walsh, 2017). Data was obtained from the census between 1991 and 2011 regarding non-White ethnic minority group. One-fifth of Glasgow's total population with one-quarter of children under 16 will belong to a non-White minority group by 2031.

In the report, Chinese men and women tend to have a lower risk of many diseases, however, Chinese men and women were shown to be at much greater risk of all liver diseases than the White Scottish population. There has been increase in levels of frequent and heavy drinking among Chinese men. In the area of mental health disorders, Chinese men and women have a lower risks of hospitalization compared with the White Scots. Other research, however, has highlighted the fact that high levels of unreported psychological distress was present among certain Asian communities, particularly among women. Levels of self-harm are also known to be higher among South Asian women compared with the White population. The report also stressed the probable adverse impact of racial discrimination on mental wellbeing among minority groups. The stigma of being asylum seekers and refugees faced by minority groups can be a 'fundamental cause' of poor health.

From this recent report, there were implications that the under-report of mental health diseases and the stigma attached to legal status in the UK might be the reason of lower risk of hospitalization for some ethnic groups compared to the local population. It was clear that Chinese men reported drinking heavily and the Chinese population had a higher risk of liver diseases. With limited research available on the most vulnerable group of the Chinese population – the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs), understanding how the Chinese ASRs' lives are like and their strategies to manage their lives become important. Besides, a refugee study in Glasgow identifies the lack of family, friendships with Scottish people, and knowledge about services and wider society create significant barriers for refugees to achieving wellbeing (Strang & Quinn, 2019).

### **2.3.1 Chinese Asylum Seeking in the UK**

The UK government adopted the so-called 'China policy' that granted 'exceptional leave to remain' to any Chinese citizen who was in the UK by June 4<sup>th</sup> as a response to the Chinese government cracked down on the students' protest movement in 1989. This policy continued until 1993. In the mid-1990s, the UK policy towards Chinese migrants tightened after a sudden increase of application for asylum from smuggled migrants, mainly from the province of Fujian (Pieke & Biao 2007).

Chinese people seeking refuge outside of their homeland started as early as the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. From pre-World War II when China was at war with Japan to the ongoing political and religious persecution, people fled from China because of civil war, the Cold war, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and China upholding domestic policies, which violated the fundamental human rights of its

people. Literature about asylum seeking populations from China remains scant. To this date, there is only one article published in 2014 regarding the experiences and perceptions of family planning of female Chinese asylum seekers living in the UK (Verran et al., 2015). Information gathered about the Chinese ASRs in this chapter was mainly from news articles, Human Rights Watch, United Nations website, and personal encounter of refugees' testimonies during Amnesty International meetings at the University of Edinburgh. The Home Office, Country Policy and Information Note concerning China and the treatment of the Falun Gong group listed clear criteria on the grounds of granting asylum (Home Office, 2016) to the practitioners of the group. The Chinese refugee forum hosted since 2012 at the National University of Singapore has started a number of initiatives to unravel the forced exile and resettlement experiences of Chinese refugees. It gathers scholars and experts of the field to fill the research gap and sheds insights into the ramifications of forced migration Chinese refugees during the decades from 1945 through the early 1980s (Ho, Madokoro, & Peterson, 2014).

Many enter the UK irregularly or by claiming asylum while lacking the understanding of the local immigration system. They find work through their own ethnic network or word of mouth, and they end up largely in Chinese businesses working long hours in poor and exploited conditions (Kagan et al., 2011). Chinese people travelling to and entering into the UK often rely on the services of professional travel facilitators, often referred to as 'snakeheads' as discussed in the earlier section. At the end of 2018, there were approximately 3.5 million people around the world waiting for a decision on asylum claims (UNHCR). The number of people from China classified as refugees has also noted a steady increase, from



190,369 in 2011 to 212,911 in 2015. In 2014, China produced the highest number of successful asylum seekers in the US who suffered from years of political instability and a declining securing situation (U.S Department of Homeland Security, 2014). In 2017, the top leading country of nationality of persons granted either affirmative or defensive asylum was from China (21%), according to a government report (U.S Department of Homeland Security, 2014). According to UNHCR Global Trends report in 2015, the number of asylum seekers registered from China in 2015 stood at 57,705 compared to 10,617 in 2010.

According to the UK government report, in recent years, Chinese from China continued to be a significant group of people claiming asylum in the UK. China was the ninth of the top ten countries of origins for asylum applications in the UK in 2009, with 1415 people seeking asylum (UNHCR, 2009). Between 2010 and 2019, a total of 11176 Chinese nationals applied for asylum and only 524 (4.7 %) granted permission to stay in the UK. 7866 (70.4%) application were refused and 2291 (20.5%) applicants withdrew their applications (see table 1). In 2011, about 8 per cent of asylum applications was granted leave-to-remain (LTR) in the UK, whereas in 2016, 2017, and 2018, less than 2 percent of the applicants was granted the LTR status. In addition, from 2010 to 2015, roughly 15 per cent of the total applications were withdrawn by applicants. That percentage increased to 25.8 and 22.6 in 2016 and 2017 respectively, and it went even higher to 50.9 in 2018, which was 3 times compared to the 2015 figure.

**Table 1 Asylum seeker application between 2010 and 2019 in the UK by Chinese Nationals**

Year	No of application	Granted leave (%)	Refused (%)	Withdraw (%)
2010	1899	111 (5.8)	1486 (78.3)	246 (12.9)
2011	1265	102 (8.06)	838 (66.2)	199 (15.7)
2012	900	52 (5.8)	640 (71.1)	119 (13.2)
2013	934	53 (5.7)	683 (73.1)	153 (16.4)
2014	1151	40 (3.5)	964 (83.8)	108 (9.4)
2015	1325	79 (6)	1119 (84.5)	95 (7.2)
2016	825	15 (1.8)	582 (70.5)	213 (25.8)
2017	942	14 (1.5)	582 (61.8)	213 (22.6)
2018	1084	19 (1.8)	582 (53.7)	552 (50.9)
2019	851	39 (4.6)	390 (45.8)	393 (46.2)
Total	11176	524 (4.7)	7866 (70.4)	2291 (20.5)

Source: (Home Office, 2020)

A study conducted by Lam et al. (2009) provided significant information concerning the group of Chinese people living in London, who claimed political asylum in the UK. Many leave families behind, and the long separation from families, relatives and friends could cause severe isolation and emotional distress. Summary of their problems include isolation, economic hardship and poverty, poor work conditions, insecure legal status, language barriers and problems in learning English, and a lack of information and support. Even though mental health issues remain a taboo subject for the Chinese population, authors reported participants discussed issue like depression in a focus group when they mentioned “*going crazy, sky falling down, and troubling mind*”. With the increasing number of people from China claiming asylum in the UK and very little is known about this population; understanding how this population manages their lives will be beneficial for policy makers and service delivery sectors.

## **2.4 Challenges facing asylum seekers and resettling refugees**

In this section, I will present three important aspects of the processes of asylum seeking, migration and resettlement in the UK. First, the challenges related to the asylum seeking processes, such as long waiting time and limited welfare support will be discussed. Second, the focus will be on the dispersal policy and its implication of asylum seekers. Lastly, the overall challenges related to everyday lives, such as employment, language barriers asylum seekers and refugees face in the host community will be presented.

### **2.4.1 Asylum seeking process in the UK**

Under the Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999), the Home Office has the responsibility to process asylum claims and provide the required support to asylum seekers. In order to claim asylum in the UK, one has to prove that he/she is unable to live safely in his/her home country because of fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (1951 Refugee Convention).

Applicants have to be physically present within the UK soil to apply for asylum.

The Home office provides housing and financial support to applicants and they are sent to one of a number of UK Initial Accommodation (IA) centres located across the UK. At these centres, the local authorities provide housing and food for a limited period (usually up to four weeks) while applicants' asylum claims are being processed. If the applicants' asylum initial application is successful, then they are sent to any area within the UK under the Home Office policy of mandatory dispersal while application decision is made. In many cases, the Home Office takes over 6

months to make a decision on the asylum application (Plimmer and Tighe, 2017; Refugee Action, 2018), and it is often a much longer process as asylum seekers go through the lengthy appeal process. Asylum seekers are not entitled to work or to claim any mainstream or welfare benefits. However, applicants are offered some basic support such as groceries and other essential items. They are also provided cashless benefits or prepaid cards which they use to buy required goods.

The asylum seeking process poses challenges and problems, such as poverty and mental health issues. Some areas of policy had received critical comments include the lack of the right to work for asylum seekers (Edwards, 2005); dispersal, detention and deportation (Bloch and Schuster, 2005); and housing arrangement (Phillimore and Goodson, 2006). The number of successful asylum applications in the UK has been low, for example, 67% of initial decisions were refusals in 2011. Also, the success rate of appeals tends to be low, roughly about 27 or 28% from 2009 to 2011 (Belinder, 2013).

Spicer (2008) in his study with asylum seekers found that children and families experience challenges while accessing social support and welfare services in the UK as they are not familiar with the health and social welfare systems. For example, a mother living with her disabled husband and their children described health care providers and local authority agencies that administer the welfare benefits as unapproachable and unsympathetic. It is important to understand families' experiences of social exclusion and inclusion when formulating policy and providing resources and support. Parents also experienced difficulties and delays in enrolling their children in local schools and sometimes the children have to wait for months

before they could start their education. Such problems could be exacerbated by the limited availability of interpretation services (Spicer, 2008). These issues and challenges pose great risk to their health and wellbeing and in their resettlement in the UK.

Similarly, study conducted by Chase (2013) with unaccompanied young asylum seekers aged between 11 to 23 from 18 countries such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Nigeria found that temporary immigration status place these young asylum seekers in limbo. Immigration status, uncertain future in the host country, the sense of loss of identity create anxiety and difficulties among the young people. They experience loss of security when they could not understand the local language or express themselves independently without the support of interpreters. These led to various emotional health concerns, including problems with sleeping, anxiety, chronic depression, and suicidal thoughts. This negatively impact their overall wellbeing in host communities.

#### **2.4.2 Dispersal Policy and its implication on asylum seeker**

As the number of asylum seekers continued to rise in the late 1990s, the UK government introduce a dispersal policy in response to the increasing pressure on housing and local services. It put asylum seekers in designated areas around the UK, where social housing was available. The reception areas, where the asylum seekers are sent, are typically deprived urban areas with large supplies of vacant housing (Phillimore and Goodson, 2006). With the development of the dispersal programme, the government adopted various policies to deter asylum seekers in large numbers. These policies are exclusionary and discriminatory in nature and limiting the

integration and resettlement of asylum seekers in the country (Sales, 2002). This led to asylum seekers being housed among communities in low-income, high unemployment communities with limited experience of immigration, and this in turn perpetuate a cycle of social exclusion (Sales 2002; Woodhead 2000; Zetter and Pearl 2000).

Sending asylum seekers in the new reception area have adverse impact on them as they are separated from their friends, families or other form of support. It creates isolation and put them in a situation with limited social network and support in the new area. The National Immigration, and Asylum Act, 2002 also introduce further restrictions on asylum seekers which has implication on their education, training and employment. This includes the withdrawal of subsidies to help pay for some form of trainings and the removal of the rights to apply for permission to work in the UK (Phillimore and Goodson, 2006). Some evidence suggests that areas where new migrants are sent already experience extreme levels of deprivations. It also indicates that urban areas with high concentration of minority ethnic population experience high level of social exclusion. This is associated with various factors, such as racial discrimination and unemployment (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001; Phillimore and Goodson, 2006). The restriction to public fund or welfare schemes create challenges for asylum seekers in managing their everyday life. This greatly impact the overall wellbeing of this population.

Apart from the isolation and lack of social networks in dispersed areas, asylum seekers describe living in low-income white-majority neighborhood as dangerous and threatening. In these areas they felt isolated, vulnerable, and fearful. Some of them experience violence and racial harassment in the community (Spicer, 2008). Parents terrified of letting their children go outside home to play as neighborhood could be deemed unsafe for their children. They also tend to experience multiple challenges in establishing social links.

Social exclusion is recognized as an interaction of various factors, including poor health, poverty, cultural marginalisation and restricted mobility (Davies 2005; Pierson 2002). The asylum and refugee population living in the UK have reported experiencing social exclusion, poor housing, poverty, poor access to health and social welfare services, limited English language support, isolation and limited supportive social networks. Studies found that asylum seekers experienced more acute social exclusion than refugees since their rights – entitlements to welfare services and where they live are undermined by the UK government policy (Woodhead 2000; Zetter and Pearl 2000; Zetter et al. 2005). In addition, the changes in welfare policies and social support system have made asylum seekers dependent on the state-supplied housing and financial support, which the public perceived them as being a “burden” to the society (Sales 2002). With the increase in asylum numbers, refugees are targeted and considered as “exploitative” and “bogus asylum seekers” (Bloch and Schusters, 2002, p.38). It has created an environment where asylum seekers are viewed as unwelcome (Robinson et al 2003). This led to problems of discrimination, dislocation and powerlessness, particularly the black and minority ethnic groups (Pierson 2002).

Besides asylum seeking families, pregnant women seeking asylum is another vulnerable group in the UK with specific concerns related to their health and wellbeing (Aspinall and Watters, 2010). They experience additional challenges, such as their antenatal care can be interrupted due to dispersal, and it often takes weeks before they could access maternity care services in a new area. Such interruption could potentially have adverse consequences if the women have underlying health conditions like diabetes and hepatitis which require regular care and support (Feldman, 2013; Lephard and Haith-Cooper, 2016).

### **2.4.3 Overall challenges facing asylum seekers and refugees**

Refugee wellbeing has been widely researched as shown in existing literature. This section aims to present some of the challenges faced by resettling refugees, such as language barriers, housing, employment and mental health concerns. Besides, the change in family dynamics and how it impacts lives in resettlement will be examined. The focus of the review remains the concerns of asylum seekers and refugees faced in the UK and how they tackle those challenges in resettlement process.

Depending on the socio-cultural contexts in which resettlement takes place, resettled refugees often face a unique set of challenges and stressors related to acculturation into a new cultural setting, including experiences of discrimination, physical safety concerns, and ongoing educational, financial and employment hardships in the course of rebuilding and recovery (Davidson, Murray, & Schweitzer, 2008).

Refugees must learn to navigate an entirely new community, language and cultural



system, while simultaneously coping with the loss of homeland, family and way of life (Tran, Manalo, & Nguyen, 2007).

Language barrier is one the most cited concerns for refugees in a host country. In a study of refugee and asylum seeker in the UK (Spicer, 2008), some parents stressed that their limited spoken English undermined their confidence, making them feel apprehensive when engaging with services and, for some, the English-speaking population more broadly. According to the British Red Cross Report (2015), language is also one of the main barriers to employment among the refugee families; along with qualifications not being recognized and a lack of work experience in the UK. Nawyn (2012) highlighted the primary concern among the Burundian and Burmese refugees about their lack of English abilities which would limit their employment prospects. Language barriers create extra barriers from limiting their access to information to employability. With limited language skills of a host country, it compounded the effects of other challenges, such as communicating with the local people and agencies. Morrice et al. (2019) highlighted the significance of the English-language proficiency on resettled refugees' experiences, and those who have low proficiency of the language are at a higher risk of long-term dependency and exclusion.

The Chinese refugee population appears to have the highest employment rate amongst other ethnic groups, reported by the Scottish Refugee Council (2015), but the type of work and work environment is not known. Literature on the Chinese migrants in different parts of the UK reported poor, harsh working conditions, such as working in the kitchens of Chinese restaurants and take away places. Pietka-

Nykaza (2015) identified obstacles for refugees with professional qualifications, such as doctors and teachers, to access to employment in their professional fields. It provides insight into how refugees themselves approach the process of integration into their professions and how they overcome the obstacles in the UK.

Housing is another critical issue, and most refugees have experienced multiple moves in one city in the first year of resettlement. Overcrowding situations, lack of heating, poor sanitary conditions and unsafe neighborhoods are common complaints. Also, the location of the resettlement plays a crucial role in aspects, such as facilitating or hindering mobility, connections with friends and the quality of education. For example, the geographic isolation and the scarcity of specialized services affect the experiences of refugees in remote areas. The refugee women narrated experiences of social isolation associated with far distance from community networks (Murray et al., 2019). In another study among African refugees (2011), families expressed similar concerns over housing reflecting the over-crowded nature of settlement, along with dissatisfaction with school services, unsafe neighborhood, and not feeling at home (Weine et al., 2011). Glasgow in the UK, where the majority of asylum seekers reside, also reported poor housing arrangement and living conditions through the advocacy of agencies such as the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and Freedom from Torture. A written submissions received by the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into asylum accommodation, as reported by Karin Goodwin in November 2016, claimed poor treatment by staff, allegedly illegal evictions, overcrowding and substandard condition of the flats had put asylum seekers' physical and mental health at risk. Graham O' Neill, the policy officer for SRC, commented the accommodation system in Glasgow for asylum seekers was

actually harming people – survivors of torture and people who have experienced sexual violence are particularly at risk of further harm if they are expected to cope with unsafe or inappropriate housing arrangement. A spokesperson from Freedom from Torture also highlighted similar concerns.

Refugee children and families are at substantially higher risk than the general population for a number of specific psychiatric disorders related to their exposure to war, violence, torture, and forced migration (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Also, children who are separated from their families during pre and post migration are said to be at increased risk of psychological and social challenges (Bean, Eurelings-Bontekoe, & Spinhoven, 2007; Hodes, Jagdev, Chandra, & Cunniff, 2008). Forced migration experiences are often characterized by disruption, loss, and rebuilding key social networks and thus, risk lacking sufficient social support in host country (Liamputtong & Kurban, 2018; Oppedal & Idsoe, 2015). For refugee children, war-related mental health distress may occur alongside poverty, discrimination, isolation, and school difficulties (Denov & Bryan 2014; Ellis, et al., 2008).

Youth face unique particular challenges in the family when they may be encouraged to stay loyal to their ethnic values by their parents and elders while they are also asked to master the host culture in school and social activities (Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005). Situations often involve children and youth of the refugee to be spokesperson for their family, as they are the sole members that master the English language fast enough. Children and young people often experience role changes with their parents, and, thus, power struggle and conflicts arise between them. Parents reported two problems primarily – lack of confidence and disempowerment about

their parenting practices from living in a new culture. Physical punishment used by many Asian parents could create conflicts with the law in host countries, such as the UK (Lewig, Arney, & Salveron, 2010). Parents felt like they were often being watched and criticized for their customary practices of disciplining their children, and thus, were terrified about their children being taken away (McFarlane, 2010). That could create extra tension and confusion for parents, who have little knowledge about the law of a host country regarding disciplining their children.

Refugees face critical issues of housing, language and employment, which further put them at risk of social isolation and mental health issues. On the whole, refugees show greater levels of overall psychological disturbance than the general population (Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005; Porter & Haslam, 2005), including higher rates of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In a study in South Korea, 59.7% of refugees showed PTSD symptoms. Furthermore, PTSD symptoms and isolation showed a positive correlation (Ryu & Park, 2018). The experience of past trauma is only one of the many issues facing refugees (Davidson et al., 2008). In fact, the trauma is frequently not a past phenomenon, but can be ongoing, with family and friends still in refugee camps or unable to get in contact. In addition, refugees must learn to navigate an entirely new community, language and cultural system, while simultaneously coping with the loss of homeland, family and way of life (Tran et al., 2007). Besides, individuals who have experienced greater levels of trauma have a greater risk of developing psychological disorders long after resettlement (Steel, Silove, Phan, & Bauman, 2002). Social isolation, language barriers and discriminatory treatment in a host community could put refugees at further risk of mental health concerns.

There are inherent limitations in existing literature on refugee wellbeing. A large portion of research studies employed a quantitative approach, which does not capture participant's voice or the multidimensional nature of wellbeing. For example, checking the box of having housing does not provide any details of the type or conditions of housing one has, and how the living conditions impact wellbeing. Similarly, checking the box of having a job gives no indication of the work conditions or the satisfaction from work. Studies seldom consider what constitutes wellbeing in the first place from the perspective of refugees themselves, and how their resettlement experiences facilitate or hinder the pathways to living a good life in their terms.

## **2.5 Theoretical Frameworks on Wellbeing**

It is important to understand what constitutes wellbeing in the literature and the way it is measured in the context of migration. A number of broader theoretical and conceptual frameworks were studied to determine the most appropriate theoretical approach to understanding the types of issues potentially impacting the asylum seekers and refugees' wellbeing in a host country. In addition, the common ways in which refugee wellbeing is examined and measured in psychological literature are reviewed.

### **2.5.1 Defining Wellbeing**

Wellbeing is an increasingly popular and growing area of research in recent decades (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Seligman, 2011) even though its definition remains diverse and varied depending on disciplines and objectives of research. Ryff and Keyes (1995) concluded that "the absence of theory-based formulations of wellbeing

is puzzling” (pp. 719-720). While Thomas (2009) argued that wellbeing could be defined as “intangible, difficult to define and even harder to measure” (p. 11), Martin-Willet et al. (2019) stated that the definition of ‘wellbeing’ is debatable, calling attention to the unreliability of surveys in measuring wellbeing. Although there is no universally agreed upon definition of wellbeing in the literature, there is a widespread understanding of wellbeing as having emotional, physical, and cognitive components (La Placa et al., 2013). Frequently used indicators to measure wellbeing include physical health, mental health, social relationships, work satisfaction, academic success, and overall life satisfaction.

Historically in the discipline of psychology, two approaches of wellbeing emerged: the hedonic tradition, which singled out constructs, such as happiness and satisfaction with life (Diener, 1984; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) and the eudemonic tradition, which highlighted positive psychological functioning and human development (Waterman, 1993). In Sen (1993) & Vernon’s (2008) work, the authors conceptualize wellbeing in a more holistic sense re-emphasizing the importance of agency and ability to live, while the New Economics Foundation (NEF) links wellbeing to the possibility of experiencing positive relationships.

Importantly, many have argued that the understanding of wellbeing is directly tied to the broader social environment in a host community. This relates to the physical surrounding within which the individual is living their life, particularly how open and socially inclusive the structures are in the host community. This thesis sets out to investigate the subjective wellbeing of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees. Subjective wellbeing can be defined as how people evaluate their lives in terms of

their happiness and life satisfaction as a whole (Diener, Sapyta, & Suh, 1998; Myers, 2000). How an individual defines the constructs of wellbeing or views what is important in lives is largely subjective and dependent on one's perception and experiences in a host community, and it is subjected to change over time.

### **2.5.2 Refugee Wellbeing Frameworks and Models**

In the context of refugee resettlement, wellbeing has been an important area for policy makers, practitioners and refugees to look upon. To be specific, researchers tried to figure out the best approach to support the wellbeing of refugees. In this section, some of the wellbeing frameworks adopted in refugee studies will be reviewed.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as being 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (1948). There is a significant body of literature that addresses refugee wellbeing in relation to trauma experienced. Therefore, refugee wellbeing, within the medical-trauma framework, is seen as the absence of those symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other major depressive disorders (MDD). Within this framing, the most popular form of measuring refugee wellbeing is to assess individual's psychiatric symptoms. This approach led to a body of research indicating that refugees experience poor mental health outcomes with high rates of PTSD and MDD (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Carlson & Rosser-Hogan, 1991; Fazel et al., 2005; Porter & Haslam, 2005). In particular, this approach suggested that pre-migration trauma, such as exposure to violence and loss, is the most important factor contributing to psychiatric symptoms, particularly in the early months of

resettlement (Carlson & Rosser-Hogan, 1991; Fawzi et al., 1997). It also states that pre-migration trauma and difficult post-migration experiences predict symptoms of depression, anxiety, and somatization (Carswell, Blackburn, & Barker, 2011; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006; Steel et al., 2006)

In addition, research into the psychosocial wellbeing of resettled refugee youth has often adopted a trauma approach; too little attention has been given to the broader social structures of the host society beyond the resettlement period. Ultimately, successful resettlement - reflected in a young person's subjective sense of their wellbeing - will be determined by the extent to which the individual is able to become a valued citizen within the new country (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010). These authors call for in-depth qualitative studies in understanding 'the subjective sense' of individual and family along with the factors contributing to a good life, to understand the participants' point of view, which is also the intent of the present research proposal.

Indeed, the measurement of pre-migration trauma and psychiatric symptoms in resettlement might be helpful in generating interventions for the refugee population. The focus, however, is on the pathologies among people from refugee community (Lustig et al., 2004). Thereby, this model fails to acknowledge the wholeness of the person's life while casting him/her as victims of the past. This approach often applies surveys as a data collection tool which further restricts understanding the whole of the situation. The critique of using surveys as a quantitative approach includes methodological shortcomings, as the studies often ignore the voice of the refugees,



and the details of the experiences in a host community and how they impact wellbeing.

### **Psychosocial Working Group (Strang & Ager 2005)**

The Psychosocial Working Group provides a conceptual framework that facilitates the initial study of wellbeing. It defines three core domains: human capacity, social ecology, and culture and values that complement one another. This framework draws on social capital theory (Putnam, 1993) by stating that every key domain consists of the human, social, and cultural capital everyone needs to respond to challenges in life. Possessing the relevant resources in the environment, therefore, helps achieve personal wellbeing. Thus, wellbeing is seen as an outcome to be achieved by individuals, who are able to make use of available resources within those three domains when needed.

### **The Wellbeing in Developing Countries Model (WeD)**

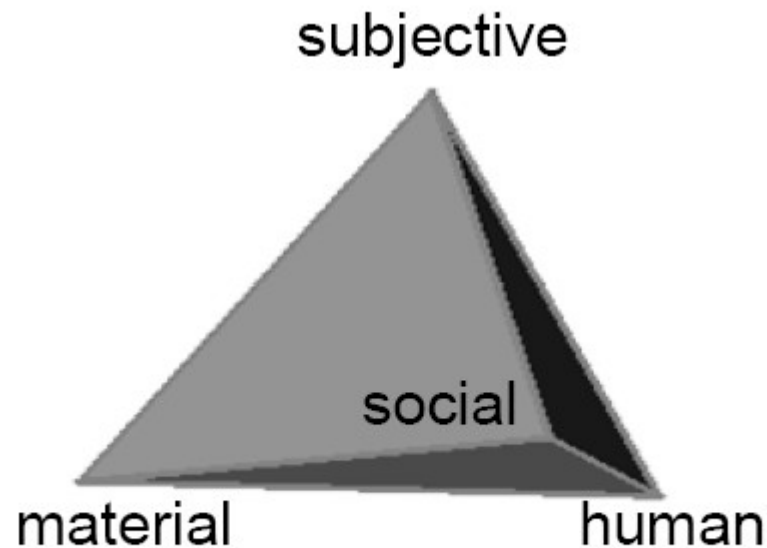
The Wellbeing in Developing countries model (WeD) highlights “Doing Well \* Feeling Good and Doing Good \* Feeling Well” as the conceptualization of wellbeing (Figure 2) The WeD was developed at the University of Bath and it explores the three basic dimensions: the subjective, material and relational (Figure 3). ‘Doing well’ conveys the material aspect or standard of living while ‘feeling good’ expresses the subjective dimension of personal perception and life satisfaction. The second line, ‘doing good, feeling well’ reflects specifically the findings in developing countries from the research group of WeD. Wellbeing was not simply about ‘the good life’, but about ‘living a good life’. This adds the aspect of a collective

dimension to subjective perceptions. The research team revealed findings that wellbeing reflect more than individual preferences, it included values and cultures that grounded in a shared understanding of how the world is and should be. ‘Feeling well’ suggests the importance of health to wellbeing, and how one feels at ease with one’s place in the world – which is crucially tied to relationship with others. This dimension of relationship is important to the understanding of wellbeing in the development throughout the WeD research.

**Figure 3 The logo of the Wellbeing in Developing Countries model**



**Figure 4 Wellbeing model in developing countries (White et al 2008)**



The material dimensions bring together items commonly distinguished as ‘human capital’ whereas the relational dimensions include intimate relationships of love and care as well as the classic ‘social capital’ components of social networks. The subjective dimension of wellbeing concern what people value and consider to be good, the desires they have and how they feel about their lives. It clearly implies a qualitative approach to study wellbeing (White, 2008) (See figure 4). Happiness, feeling well and doing good are highly personal and subjective notions depending on the intertwined socio-cultural, biological and psychological factors and the ongoing changes of all factors in a person’s lives.

The process of refugee integration is considered as a complex, two-way process that starts from the day of their arrival in the destination country (Ager & Strang, 2008; Lomba, 2010; G. Mulvey, 2013). Similarly, the experiential journey for wellbeing in a host country begins at the arrival. Michaelson et al. (2009) state that social wellbeing includes two critical components: ‘supportive relationships’ and ‘trust and belonging’, which have been extensively studied and widely discussed in the literature.

There were overlaps and differences in focus between various frameworks and models of wellbeing. The one thing they all have in common is the view that wellbeing is multi-dimensional (Michaelson et al., 2009; Stiglitz, 2009; Diener, 2009). The wellbeing frameworks discussed in the literature identify similar values pertaining to wellbeing. They draw a conclusion to pinpoint the importance of social capital in achieving wellbeing. It is not easy to capture all the dimensions and complexities of wellbeing in a single framework when the definition of wellbeing is highly contested.

The exploration of the existing research regarding refugee wellbeing have led to the adoption of the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) model as a reference point. The collective dimension is relevant to the specific culture of the Chinese people, and cultural values also influence other dimensions of wellbeing such as material and relational. The WeD model helps guide this study to incorporate a holistic approach and the subjective element to understanding what wellbeing means to the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees.

## 2.6 Measuring Wellbeing

According to Correa-Velez et al (2010), indicators of wellbeing include many aspects. They range from physical and mental health status (absence of diseases/psychiatric symptoms); structural factors that include the social climate of the host community (Ager & Strang, 2008); opportunity to study (Valtonen, 2004); choice and security of housing (Ager & Strang, 2008; Porter & Haslam, 2005); living near to members to one's ethnic community (Ager & Strang, 2008; Beiser, 2005); peace and security of the local area (Ager & Strang, 2008) and income from employment (Valtonen, 2004). The measurement of wellbeing as happiness often employs scales of overall life satisfaction and happiness (Keyes et al., 2002; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Over the years, researchers developed sets of indicators for wellbeing based on the goals and needs of the respective research purposes. The Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) framework proposes a set of indicators to measure wellbeing within the 362 OECD regions. Currently, there are nine wellbeing topics: income, jobs, housing, education, health, environment, safety, civic engagement, and accessibility of services. In terms of scope, the framework consists of 3 domains: Quality of Life, Material Living Conditions and Sustainability of the socio-economic and natural systems (OECD STAT, 2014). They are often quantitatively measured; participants rate the indicators on a scale based on their experiences as a service recipient in the community. This has limitations as the subjective person-centred perspective is not captured, which is crucial in understanding the full picture of participants under investigation. As OECD (2011) addressed the conceptual framework of wellbeing, and it suggested the importance of

taking into consideration of the appreciation by individuals in order to understand people's wellbeing.

Factors affecting wellbeing for refugee youth include mastering the language of the host country (Chapman & Calder, 2002) experiencing academic studies at school (O'Sullivan & Ollif, 2006) living with supportive family members (Chapman & Calder, 2002); feelings of belonging to one's ethnic community (Brough, Gorman, Ramirez, & Westoby, 2003; Lustig et al., 2004) and being able to develop positive relationships with the broader host community (Beirens, Hughes, Hek, & Spicer, 2007). Social capital (Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 1998) is a key factor for young refugees becoming establishing in the new country (Beirens et al., 2007).

### **2.6.1 Indicators of Integration Framework (IOI)**

The IOI framework is a conceptual model of refugee integration. The work was commissioned by the United Kingdom Home Office, and it was based on documentary and conceptual analysis and fieldwork done in settings of refugee settlement (Ager & Strang, 2008). The framework has been widely used to gauge the resettlement outcomes locally in the UK and internationally. IOI provides a strategic way to group similar domains under categories, not only for organization purposes, but also to enhance measuring outcomes in the ongoing integration process. The framework discusses integration as multidimensional and multilayered (Ager & Strang, 2008; Cheung & Phillimore, 2013). While Fyvie et al. (2003) argue that a holistic approach to studying integration is necessary based on the inter-relatedness of the factors; one way is to strategically group similar domains under categories.

Ager & Strang (2004) identified some common elements in the “Indicators of Integration” (IOI) to measure resettlement outcomes.

There are ten policy domains organized into four groups as shown in figure 5. First, it is ‘Markers and Means’ and it includes the functional domains of employment, housing, education, and health. Second, the social connections group, which draws on the social capital constructs of ‘bonds’, ‘bridges’ and ‘links’; the third group, ‘facilitators’ includes language and cultural knowledge, and safety and stability. Finally, ‘foundation’ which relates to the rights, expectations and obligations that go with citizenship. These indicators are intended to be used flexibly and are aimed at providing a basic framework to aid comparability between initiatives whilst allowing organizations to add their own indicators as they feel appropriate (Goodson & Phillimore, 2008). It has been employed as a structure for developing services which are aimed at supporting refugee in resettlement (Esterhuizen and Murphy 2007; Daley 2009; Scottish Refugee Council 2016). In addition, the framework has informed international scholars, researchers, and policy makers regarding its concepts and methodology (Beirens et al., 2007; G. Mulvey, 2013; Strang & Quinn, 2019).

**Figure 5 Indicators of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008)**

## Indicators of Integration



Developing the model, Ager and Strang (2008) draw attention to the bonding that can emerge from refugees having access to support from co-ethnic groups. The buildings of such bonds can lead to feelings of emotional support and confidence. However, Ager and Strang also argue that genuine community integration depends on the complementary development of such social ‘bonds’ and ‘bridges’ in order to avoid the emergence of ‘separate, very bonded but disconnected communities’ (2010; 598). How social bonding capital impacts the development of bridges and links is not so well researched in existing literature. The concept of ‘social connection’ is of equal importance in this thesis; its definitions and relationship with wellbeing apprise the second part of the research questions.



Social connections are difficult to measure, mapping social connections and wellbeing amongst refugees serves as a great tool for understanding the interwoven and dynamic relationship among all variables and factors in the realm of social connections, particularly for the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs). They were seen as invisible in the host community but portrayed as ‘managing their lives.’ Are they really managing or struggling? This remains a question that awaits investigation.

The IOI had a major impact on the discourse of refugee integration, and it plays a key role in shaping policy and practice. Social isolation has been one of the most frequently cited concern from literature, and it entails the negative impact on the wellbeing of this population (Quinn, 2014) . Measuring social connections, trust and the opportunity to give help would be effective for evaluating how well the ASRs live in host community. This led to the choice of adopting the tool as one of the methods to measure social connections of the Chinese ASRs in this study.

Putnam (1993) states that bonding capital helps with bridging capital. Ethnic communities, however, with limited bridging capital are bound to perpetuate the poverty cycle. This research study proposed to find out the patterns of bonds and bridges in the Chinese ASR community in Glasgow using the social mapping tool, which employs participatory activities to establish an understanding of potential connections grounded within a specific context (Strang & Quinn, 2019). One particular feature of the tool is that it is designed to avoid imposing assumptions about what an individual values as social resources. Adding to it, data regarding participants’ levels of connections, trust and reciprocity are collected in relation to

the particular resources mentioned as relevant by the collective group of participants. The benefits of this unique tool include making use of group participatory activities to encourage and engage discussion. Due to the vulnerable nature of the asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs), the activities benefit participants in terms of sharing knowledge of resources, meeting friends and knowing local service providers. It generates the score of trust as well as tapping into the norms of reciprocity; these are keys to social connections. The role of trust in seeking and receiving social support is crucial. ASRs often lack trust due to multiple reasons but often because of the betrayal by government of country of origin. Trust, in a way, acts as facilitator for individuals to obtain the support and resources they need (Strang & Quinn, 2019).

### **2.7 The role of social capital in Wellbeing**

In the social connection category, the definition of bonds, bridges and links, their interaction with each other and their processes have been debated in literature by scholars such as Putnam, Bourdieu, and Coleman. Putnam believes that positive things in social life are the outcome of social capital in community; while Bourdieu believes that social capital contributes to the reproduction of social classes and it benefits primarily the privileged dominant group. For Coleman, he assumes that individuals make rational choice. Bourdieu's analysis focuses on individual, families and particularly social classes, unlike Putnam and Coleman who focus on countries/big communities and small communities respectively. Bourdieu acknowledges the limited social connections among the vulnerable group affects establishing crucial bonds that lead to bridging social capital.

Coleman believes individuals who make rational choices benefit from the social capital they build, while Putnam believes that there are mutual benefits for the whole community with strong social capital in place. Putnam stresses the importance of social networks, norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness in the process of building social capital. For Bourdieu, the size of networks and the volume of resources are crucial factors in acquiring social capital; Coleman calls for obligations, expectations and trustworthiness, besides information channels and norms and effective sanctions.

### **2.7.1 Social capital in a family system**

Coleman explains the function of social capital within a family system, which is particularly relevant in this study in terms of the influence of parents' social capital on children's education. Most literature findings indicate the importance of children's education in the host country and the effort and capital parents are putting forth for their children to obtain a good education (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; Major et al., 2013). Though it is also documented that structural changes that families go through are accompanied by cultural changes brought about by the processes of acculturation and integration into the new society, these can often lead to intergenerational tensions (Sime & Pietka-Nykaza, 2015) affecting the social connections.

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and social class also resonate with the refugees' situation in the host community, as most of them belong to the poor social class with few social networks. Parents' expectations and aspirations for their children's academic success are evident in refugee literature; they, however, can be better explained using the concept of cultural capital. Likewise, Coleman's concept of

expectations that generate obligations provide some implications for the understanding of the role of parents' expectations on their children's education. The "different weight on education" of parents from different background is a core argument of cultural capital, not of social capital (Portes, 2000, p. 10). Particularly, Bourdieu's cultural capital theory has a significant link to the discourse of social capital. He argues that the unequal academic achievement of children is not just the outcome of children's intellectual capacity, academic aptitude or families' direct investment in children's education. Instead, children's different academic performance reflects the unequal transmission of cultural capital across different socio-economic and cultural groups as well (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 243–244). Bourdieu (1986) suggested that certain functions of cultural capital could perpetuate socio-economic disparity, and that educational investment is one of the best-hidden and most socially determinative strategies for passing on resources and values across generations. It could explain the phenomenon of parents paying great attention to their children's education in a host country.

Social capital was described as an agent that holds the individuals and a community together, which includes the relations and structures within a community. These refer to the trust, norms of reciprocity, expectations, attitudes, sense of belonging, civic engagement, community cohesion and networks as few of the agents for social connections. Interpersonal trust, reciprocity, and affiliation/membership of associations and organizations were all prominently linked with better health (Hurtado, Kawachi, & Sudarsky, 2011). Overall, social capital facilitates collaboration and coordination among individuals and organizations improving community functioning (Xin, 2018).

Social capital has been a major determinant of various areas of overall health in migration literature. Whether it is physical, mental, emotional or social health, social capital plays a major role in different populations across the lifespan (Xin, 2018).

According to the World Health Organization, social capital improves access to health information, provides informal healthcare and medical support, and thereby improves the effectiveness of health advocacy through well-organized and connected groups.

While reviewing the literature on social capital and refugee resettlement, there was no agreement as to a set definition of the term, but most definitions include three elements, namely social network, norms of reciprocity and trust (Ferlander, 2007)

Social capital has been a key concept underpinning much of government policy-making and a topic of debate in academic circles (Baron, sField, & Schuller, 2000; Gamarnikow & Green, 1999; King & Wickham-Jones, 1999). Generation of social capital – the values that people hold and the resources they can access depends on individually and collective socially negotiated ties and relationships. People sharing a sense of identity and holding similar cultural values facilitates the development of bonding capital, built together with trust and reciprocity in the relationship. Due to the controversies around the definition of social capital and the difficulties in operationalizing variables of social capital, measuring social capital becomes a very challenging task. Clear identification of concepts within social capital in research questions is, therefore, significant in guiding the research methods.

### **2.7.2 Social Connections – Conceptualization**

This section of the literature review focuses on the three types of social connections (bonding, bridging and linking), their definitions and roles in refugee wellbeing

studies. The Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) have been viewed as isolated and hard-to-reach; their minimal engagement in host community has led government and non-profit agencies to assume that they might be self-sufficient. Living well often entails securing social support to promote health through emotional support, instrumental help such as employment and financial needs, informational support to health-care related information or education opportunities for children, and lastly, the relationships we have with one another. Bonding is the main source of social support even though bridging and linking capital can potentially provide social support (Poortinga, 2012). Studying and measuring the bonding capital, and its relationship with the other two forms of capital is a more recent trend in the literature. Some studies have attempted to measure social connectedness (Mulvey, 2013), and there is little available evidence of the relationship between refugees' patterns of social connections and their overall wellbeing in existing literature (Strang & Quinn, 2019).

Overall, friendships that generate all types of social support translates to a better live. In the UK, Phillimore and Goodson (2006) discussed the social exclusion and segregation of the refugee populations in the UK, and the grave consequences that came with the UK dispersal policy. For example, unemployment and underemployment in deprived areas could exacerbate the problems of social isolation and exclusion, which undermine network building or cultivate a sense of belonging in a new place for the ASR population.

Social connections, in this proposed research study, adopt the definition derived from social capital theory. Among the prominent figures of the theory, the concepts of

social capital from Putnam, Bourdieu, and Coleman will be incorporated in the discussion of the theoretical perspective. For Putnam (2000), social connections among individuals, such as social networks, norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them, could be beneficial. Communities are likely to have lower crime rates, better health, higher educational achievement and better economic growth. Coleman (1988) viewed social capital as a resource that individuals and communities can draw upon. Its presence encourages actions that can help facilitate mutual benefits for those involved. Social capital plays a crucial role in creating human capital, such as skills and abilities, particularly seen in families for the next generations. Bourdieu (1986) saw social capital primarily as a resource for individuals, taking the sociological view of social capital. They made up of social obligations, connections, which is convertible at times into economic capital. Thus, economically privileged individuals possess the financial resources to obtain the necessary cultural capital as well as create social capital, utilized by their privileged position. For the asylum seeking and refugee population, who are deprived of any of the privileges to start with, social bonds might not generate bridges as Putnam suggested. Bourdieu's conceptual understandings of social capital, as a framework for critical analysis, are therefore, very valid in the discussion of the relationships between social capital and lives in resettlement. It will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

The bonding/bridging/linking social capital framework has significant theoretical and practical implications. Poortinga (2012) indicated that most bonding, bridging, and linking social capital indicators were positively related to self-rated health. Some have argued that in order to build 'bridges' between bonded groups, there need to be

opportunities for people to meet and exchange resources in ways that are mutually beneficial. Thus, it could generate reciprocal relationships and inter-cultural trust (Strang & Ager, 2010). Ryan et al. (2008) identified that the link between bonding and bridging is varied and complex; those with higher cultural capital such as qualification and linguistic skills are more likely to build on their thick bonds to establish bridging capital.

Xin (2018) conducted a thorough literature search on the topic of “bonding, bridging, and linking: Social capital and its potential health impact among refugees in their resettlement countries. Findings pertaining to bonding, bridging and linking capital are summarized. This is very relevant to the present study as it provides consolidated findings of other researchers in terms of the three different types of social capital in the refugee resettlement context. More importantly, it informs the research questions of the present study.

#### *2.7.2.1 Bonding Social Capital*

Bonding social capital, according to Putnam, is made up of the strong ties to people who are similar in terms of their demographic characteristics and reinforces ‘exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. Individuals generate bonds from immediate or extended families, friends and community members from the same ethnic group to receive emotional, informational, and material support. The existing literature has highlighted the importance of bonding capital on wellbeing in the refugee resettlement including diverse ethnic groups, such as the Sudanese, Cambodians, Somalis, Bosnians, Congolese, and Indochinese (Xin, 2018). Ethnic organizations also played a significant role in refugees’ bonding capital (Elliott &



Yusuf, 2014; Goodson & Phillimore, 2008). They provide learning opportunities, such as resume writing, and help in cultural, spiritual and socio-professional areas (Lacroix, Baffoe, & Liguori, 2015). Social events organised by ethnic communities brought people together in host communities, such as sports events and cultural events to improve social cohesion (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014; Pittaway, Bartolomei, & Doney, 2016).

Technology was identified as a significant facilitator for refugees in host countries. It helps in maintaining pre-existing bonds developed prior to migration as well as widen connections locally, nationally, and internationally (Lee, 2012; Williams, 2006) via phones, social media, such as Facebook and emails. Programs like information and communication technology significantly enhanced refugee communities' intra-community connectivity (Alam & Imran, 2015).

#### *2.7.2.2 Bridging Social Capital*

Bridging social capital, according to Putnam (2000), consists of the ties which exist between more distant acquaintances and gives rise to 'broader identities and wider reciprocity'. It refers to social ties across diverse groups, such as community support in the neighbourhood or co-workers. Literature has identified extensively bridging capital used by refugees in host communities to reach out to network with people from a different ethnic background (Allen, 2010; Dimitriadou, 2006; Smyth, MacBride, Paton, & Sheridan, 2010). To cite a few examples, refugees were able to connect with people outside their group through work and school activities. It helps them obtain information, build new relationships, and develop trust and mutual understanding with other groups (Major 2013; Goodson & Phillimore, 2008; Allen

2015). Also, refugees extended their social network through their neighbours, friends, and service providers from other ethnicities (Lamba & Krahn, 2003; Stewart et al., 2008; Willems, 2005). Ethnic organization or groups such as the Bhutanese community in the US arranged health workshops to discuss ways to gain more information and resources outside of their own ethnic community and how to make connections as well (Im & Rosenberg, 2016). The public library in Norway offered an introductory program to refugee students in Iraq, Palestine, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sri Lanka to communicate with Norwegian students and promote trust and safety among them (Vårheim, 2014). All these enhance the developing of bridging capital in host communities.

#### *2.7.2.3 Linking Social Capital*

Linking social capital refers to the resources and networks derived from relationships of particular communities that link to the State or other institutions of power and influence. Xin (2018) has identified various ways that refugees employed to acquire linking capital in existing literature. The first is through government and non-government organizations, such as providing employment opportunities, health care services and housing, and helping with opening a bank account (Keel & Drew, 2004; McMichael & Manderson, 2004). The second way is through ethnic organizations, which plays an important role in building social capital for refugee community. For example, the Liberian Association of Manitoba linked refugees with a local resettlement agency and welcome place to assist them in the integration process and sponsoring their family members to Canada (Lacroix et al., 2015). Next, schools and colleges provide opportunities for refugees to access different social strata. For example, colleges in the UK offered language classes and refugees could be linked to

other institutional networks through the school where they engage in information exchange and access to resources (Dimitriadou, 2006). Media/technology plays an important role in increased intra and inter-community connectivity; refugees linked themselves to a much broader world with internet connection and skills in technology for information, employment, education, and other services (Alam & Imran, 2015; Torezani, Colic-Peisker, & Fozdar, 2008). Besides, recreational events unite refugees within their own ethnic community and break boundaries between communities (Spaij, 2012, 2015). Through transnational network, some refugees were actively involved in events associated with, such as professional advocacy, interest groups, and religious organizations (McLellan, 2004). Finally, religious organizations were crucial in linking refugees with resources. Local congregations, for example, provide refugees with a variety of referrals, such as housing, job training, education, legal assistance, and translation (Ives, Sinha, & Cnaan, 2010).

## **2.8 Social Capital, Integration and Wellbeing**

After the discussion on all the theoretical frameworks in earlier section, it is clear that social capital plays a crucial and key role as both indicators of integration and wellbeing in the refugee/migration studies. The decision to adopt the Indicators of Integration (IOI) framework, the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) framework and the social capital theory in this research as reference points would help set the foundation for this research study.

IOI provides categories and domains of importance for refugee integration in resettlement. It laid the foundation for measuring how refugees are doing in each domain, and thus, providing data to inform service providers and policy. I see this

theoretically based framework as robust based on primary research, and it was tested and adopted by migration scholars nationally and internationally (Daley, 2009; Mulvey, 2013; Hersi, 2018). In the IOI framework, social connections is one of the key categories. After exploring where these come from, their values and their critique, as indicated in earlier sections, I decided to use the framework to look at how mainly social connections (bonds, bridges and links, borrowed from social capital theory) impact subject wellbeing in the asylum and refugee context. While the IOI framework has been used as a structure for developing services to support refugees, this provides insights into the proposed study, which study the same population group. Since wellbeing is closely related to our relationships with others and the WeD framework provides a holistic approach to examine subjective wellbeing, data generating from Phase 1 (what living a good life means) could draw a parallel comparison with the 10 domains of the IOI, as well as the dimension of relationship in the WeD framework.

This research study aims to investigate and measure the impact of social connections on Chinese ASR wellbeing in host communities. Based on social capital theory, as formulated by Putnam (1993), and later other scholars, such as Szreter & Woolcock (2004), three major categories of social connections – bonding (comprising same-ethnic contacts), bridging (comprising contacts within the local population), and linking social capital (comprising contacts with institutions and services) are defined. Different types of social connections have been linked to certain essential supports to optimize individual and family wellbeing. Having close bonds can improve the overall wellbeing of an individual, as well as his/her family in terms of emotional support, practical help, and accessing to information and resources. All these are

crucial, especially during early migration. Bonding allows the ASR population to get access to support from co-ethnic groups (Ager & Strang 2008). On the other hand, social capital is not equally available to all, and the outcomes of the processes are often not beneficial to people in poverty (Edward et al. 2000). For the population under investigation, the Chinese ASRs in the UK possess very little economic or human capital. Thus, social connections become crucial to their welfare, as suggested by Putnam (2000). Studying their social relationships and networks, and the patterns of their social connections can shed light on how this population access to resources and services. More importantly, how social isolation and exclusion and the deprivation of those key resources impact wellbeing and resettlement in the host community.

## **2.9 Chinese cultural values and how it relates to social capital**

We cannot understand the lived experience of Chinese migrants in the process of resettlement without considering their narratives and experiences within the context of culture. Kohls (1979) defines culture as:

*An integrated system of learned behaviour patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society. Culture refers to the total way of life of a particular group of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does and makes – its customs, language, material artifacts and shared systems of attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation (p.17).*

Culture as Chowdhury puts it, is a set of behavioural norms, meanings, and values or reference points utilised by members of a particular society to construct their unique view of the world and ascertain their identity (Chowdhury, 2012, p.70). Hwang, Myers, Abe-Kim, and Ting (2008) found that it is very important for researchers to understand the roles of cultural influence in studying, for example, the prevalence of mental illness, the phenomenology of distress, and the coping styles and help-seeking pathways. It is very relevant, especially in the study of the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in a host country.

In this research project of Chinese migrants focusing on their social connection patterns in the host community, it is critical to understand their cultural values and worldviews and how these values shape their belief systems, impacting their behaviours and coping strategies in managing lives in the UK. Therefore, what follows is a brief overview of some of these core values and worldviews, which could have an impact on the ethnic Chinese population.

### **2.9.1 Overview of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism and Their Impact on Chinese Values**

The worldviews of the Chinese people are more or less influenced by the philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (Chen, 2007; Leung, 2010). It will be helpful to understand these basic foundations of teaching in order to have an empathetic understanding of the cultural values of the Chinese people, their approach to life, and coping mechanisms. Therefore, it is relevant to look at the three philosophies briefly, which might have influenced the lives of the Chinese people.

Confucius (551-479 BCE) lived and taught at a time when there were social and political upheaval in societies due to constant civil wars between feudal lords. His main agenda was to develop and advocate a philosophy that could help bring back social order and harmony (Sun, 2008). The overarching principle of Confucianism is to cultivate the qualities of a virtuous person, and the process of this self-cultivation is a lifelong journey (Morton & Lewis, 2005; Yao, 2000). Becoming the ideal character of the virtuous man, it is important that the person cultivate and practice the five virtues: (a) benevolence and humanism (*ren*), which is the central virtues of Confucianism; (b) righteousness or morality (*yi*); (c) proper conduct or rituals (*li*); (d) knowledge or wisdom (*zhi*); and (e) trustworthiness or faithfulness (*xin*) (Chan & Lee, 2004; Yao, 2000).

Benevolence (*ren*) is regulated by righteousness and proper conduct rituals to make sure that the person not only does what is right, but also does it in the proper manner (Sun, 2008). Righteousness (*yi*) is shown by “matching one’s action with what is right and proper, and the highest form of righteousness is to honour the worthy with one’s action” (Sun, 2008, p,7). Proper conduct or rituals (*li*) refer to the traditional social pattern of conduct and relationships. It is like a set of rules that govern actions in each aspect of life and provides insights from the past into morality (Lau, 1979). Trustworthiness refers to keeping one’s words and being faithful (Morton & Lewis, 2005).

Besides, filial piety (*xiao*), reciprocity in human relations (*shu*), and loyalty (*zhong*) are important virtues often emphasised by Confucius in his teachings regarding benevolence (Lau, 1979). These relationships put everyone’s roles, duties, and

rankings in the society in place. Confucius believed that benevolence and hierarchy are necessary for the maintenance of harmonious relationships. Reciprocity in human relations is the ways of discovering what other people wish or do not wish to be done to them (Lau, 1979). It involves pondering on what one would like or dislike when one put oneself in the shoes of the other person. These values of Confucius are deeply embedded in the core of Chinese values, and they serve as a guide for people in all aspects of life, such as interpersonal relationships and education. These teachings laid the foundation of collectivism in Chinese culture with the themes of self-sacrifice for harmonious interpersonal relationships and interdependence between individuals, family, and society (Hong & Ham, 2001).

Confucianism heavily prioritizes family roles and commitment (Li, 2006). It views the family as the natural habitat of humans, the most desirable environment for mutual support and personal growth and as the building block for the structure and function of society (Moise, 1986). Confucianism emphasises family harmony, which includes preserving and increasing family wealth and status, continuing the family tree, worshipping the ancestors and being responsible to parents and other family members (Bockover, 2003; Zapalska & Edwards, 2001). In addition, loyalty (zhong) and responsibility (xiao) are the two important elements binding the family relationship together.

Taoism is considered another important part of Chinese philosophy founded by Laozi. Tao literally means the way or path in Chinese, and Taoism gradually developed into three schools of thought after Laozi: (a) philosophical Taoism; (b) religious Taoism, which includes elaborate ritual; and (c) the hygiene school of



Taoism, which promotes health and long life focusing on the balance of Qi (Chi), the life energy of our bodies (Smith, 1991). Taoism emphasises the importance of a harmonious relationship between humans and nature and its rhythms in achieving happiness and peace of mind (Lin, 2003).

Buddhism was introduced to China from India, and it appealed to the people due to its profound philosophy and the explanation of life and the universe, while taking account of the facets of human suffering and destiny (Morton and Lewis, 2005). The central teachings of Buddhism include: the Four Noble Truths, which are the building blocks of the teachings; the Eightfold Paths, which are considered the framework of Buddhism and explain the ideals ethical conduct, discipline and wisdom that guide the lives of its followers; the law of Karma that explains the cause and effect of people's actions of past lives and in this life; and the Six Paths of Reincarnation, referring to the six possible ways within the Wheel of Karma that an unenlightened individual can be reborn into according to his/her karma.

Although the philosophical details will not be explored in great depth here, how people's views and values are shaped by some of these influential schools of thoughts will be discussed. Fan (2000) believes that even though the Chinese people are diverse and they live in different communities and cities, it is possible to identify certain core cultural values that shape behaviours. On the other hand, people are unique in their own ways and shaped by their education, socio-economic background and personal experiences of life, and there bound to be differences in the degree of adherence to those core Chinese values.

Collectivism, face, filial piety, *guanxi* (social connection), righteousness, proper conduct and morality are some of the core values which are relevant to this research study. Kulich and Zhang (2010) identified the top five Chinese values studied in the field of communication. They were face, *guanxi*, harmony, *yuan* (fatalism, predestined relations, and destiny), and values related to conflict management and avoidance. These values reflected the teachings of the three main schools of thoughts of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism in the sense that people should put collective interests in front of personal interests, fulfil the duties of family obligations, treat others the way you want to be treated, and understand the relationship between humans and nature and karma.

### **2.9.2 Impact of Cultural Values on the Chinese Ways of Coping**

Saving '*lian*' (face) and maintaining '*mianzi*' (reputation) are extremely important concepts in the Chinese culture. '*Lian*' refers to one's integrity and moral character of a person, and the loss of '*lian*' for a person makes it very difficult for him/her to function properly in the community. '*Mianzi*' or reputation refers to one's public image, which often is built upon one's successes in life. People take into consideration these terms prior to disclosing their problems to others since it will be seen as a sign of weakness, and thus, losing face and '*mianzi*'. Consequently, concerns of face and feelings of embarrassment and shame could be seen as great obstacles in seeking help for the Chinese, particularly when they consider saving face as more important than asking for social support in difficult times (Ho, 1994). This mentality is strongly influenced by the ideas of proper conduct or '*li*' in Confucianism (Cheng et al., 2010). Overall, the Chinese ways of coping are

influenced by the teachings and philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, together with other traditional values regarding personal control, collectivism and views of life. They stressed the importance of managing and transforming one's thoughts and feelings into positive thoughts while achieving peace and serenity (Cheng et al., 2010).

## **2.10 Guanxi, trust and social capital**

In Chinese culture, the term '*Guanxi*' would be at the top of the list of discussions regardless of where one is or with whom. It is a Chinese term referring to interpersonal connections and has been receiving growing research interests in the western management field. '*Guanxi*' literally can mean one of the three things: 1) the existence of a relationship between people who share a group status or are related to a common person; 2) the actual connections with and frequent contact between people; and 3) a contact person with little direct interaction (Brian, 1994). '*Guanxi*' is commonly defined as special relationship two persons have with each other (Alston, 1989). Osland (1990) adds on, "...a special relationship between a person who needs something and a person who has the ability to give something." In other studies, '*guanxi*' is variously interpreted as particularistic ties (Jacobs, 1979); friendship (Pye, 1982); reciprocal exchange (Hwang, 1987); and social capital (Butterfield, 1983).

All these definitions are useful as they depict '*guanxi*' as a kind of personal relationship. Indeed, '*guanxi*' is a kind of special relationship, but relationships do not necessarily produce '*guanxi*'. It can be seen as a single process referring to

personal interactions between two individuals or as multiple processes, referring to a network of social connections. With the rising number of Chinese asylum seekers and refugees in the past decade, it would be relevant to look at how '*guanxi*' plays a part in bonding, bridging and linking within the social connection arena.

'*Guanxi*' can be viewed as long-term relationships which operate through trust, mutual obligations and reciprocity. It is commonly associated with an obligation of returning favours, which can be seen as the equivalent of reciprocity in the social capital theory. Returning a friend's favour is like the dynamic force behind the concept of '*guanxi*' and it comprises three separate aspects. It entails the emotional responses of an individual to a given situation; it is viewed as a 'resource that an individual can present to another person as a gift in exchange for something in due course; and finally, it includes the 'social norms by which one has to follow for the sake of getting along with others' (Hwang, 1987). In short, a person who receives a favour from someone is, thereby, indebted to the person who provides the assistance (Bian, 1994).

In the Chinese culture, people do not expect someone to return favours immediately. When a need arises in the future, the debt in question maybe called in. In this sense, a mutual exchange of favours resembles obligatory reciprocity. The notions of 'trust' and 'trustworthiness' are crucial for those partake in the '*guanxi*' relationship, particularly the favour is given in advance and the person who provides the favour might not get anything back in return for those who are not trustworthy. Trust between the two parties is essential to form the '*guanxi*' relationship. Research findings of Yip et al (2006) suggested that the trust index exhibits the most

consistently positive associations with all three outcome indicators – general health, psychological health and overall wellbeing of the Chinese rural population. This indicated the crucial role trust plays in the wellbeing of this population.

'*Guanxi*' functions as a form of social capital in which resources generated from interpersonal relationships have values for those who engage in this relationship. In social capital theory, Bourdieu (1986) views a credential for credit as essential for social capital, which is clearly conveyed in the notion of '*guanxi*'. Bourdieu sees social capital as a collective asset, which is exclusively shared between a person and the group he/she is a member. Likewise, '*guanxi*' encompasses a collective effort among those who engage in the giving and receiving relationships within the group. In this case, it is a private good which is shared exclusively within a certain group. Both Coleman and Putnam consider social capital as a collect asset but a public good rather than a private one; they ignored the restrictive elements of '*guanxi*' (Qi, 2013).

### **2.11 Implications of the literature for this study**

There is a pressing need to understand subjective perspectives of what counts as wellbeing in the field of migration. From the existing literature concerning refugees' wellbeing, there is a call for qualitative inquiry into the subject area. Refugee families struggle with unique issues, which are very challenging and unsettling. It is important to examine issues faced by the asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) from the family lens due to its complexity nature. Taking into consideration the collective aspect of Chinese families, their cultural belief systems, values and gender roles, how

Chinese ASR families tackle issues, such as language barriers, education, changes of family roles and dynamics could have significant impact on their wellbeing.

It is imperative to examine the role of social relationships play in wellbeing.

According to the research findings of the subjective wellbeing of Chinese people in the Western provinces, Bian et al (2015) suggested that people who are more socially integrated into the Chinese society are happier than those who are less socially integrated. The four different dimensions they looked at are marital relations, engagement in communities, social networks, and trust in others and institutions, which are relevant indicators of wellbeing. Social connections and refugee wellbeing are closely related, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Chinese ASRs' experience is rarely found in literature; the Chinese migrants' experiences in literature are relevant in terms of their psychosocial and cultural adaptation in a new environment.

While the subject of Chinese migration has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years, the movement and experiences of ethnic Chinese refugees on a global scale is a subject that has so far received almost no scholarly attention (Ho et al 2014). How Chinese ASRs experience and manage life in a foreign land with limited exposure to the broader communities and service providers remains a puzzle to policy makers and service providers. The lack of incentive to learn the local language, the difference between the Chinese cultural norms and practices and those of the host country, and the lack of knowledge of the laws and rights of the host country could undermine their wellbeing, particularly those who live in isolation. The phenomenon of the Chinese ASRs being perceived as close knitted, well-

bonded, self-sufficient, and likely to meet some of their basic needs, could, therefore, be problematic.

The theoretical frameworks of the Wellbeing in Developing Countries model, the 'Indicators of Integration' and the social capital theory were adopted as reference points in guiding the inquiry of this study. How the Chinese ASR families perceive wellbeing and how their social connection pattern impact the process of achieving those constructs of wellbeing deserves research attention adopting a qualitative approach.

## **2.12 Conclusion**

This study proposes to look at the patterns of social connections of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in a qualitative, holistic manner. Qualitative studies allow participants space to share their lived experiences and voice their concerns of the subject under investigation. Thus, there will be opportunity for choice, resiliency and empowerment to take place in the narratives; as well as to add knowledge of wellbeing with insights in the field of migration and refugee studies. The lack of literature from the Chinese ASRs and limited qualitative inquiry in refugee wellbeing studies, together with the theoretical considerations and discussion of existing frameworks laid the foundation of the present study. The body of research in existing literature has informed the formulation of the research questions and they are as follows:

1. From the perspectives of Chinese migrants in Scotland, what are the core constructs associated with wellbeing?
2. What are the patterns of social connections like in the Chinese asylum seeking and refugee population?
3. What roles do social connections play in achieving the constructs of wellbeing identified by the Chinese asylum seeking and refugee families?



## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Design**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter details the study's research methodology. It begins by discussing the ontological and epistemological stance taken by the researcher, which leads to a qualitative, phenomenological study design. It then describes the research process such as procedures for participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. The final sections address the study's trustworthiness, limitations, ethical considerations and researcher's reflection of the research process. The study aims to investigate the subjective wellbeing of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in Glasgow, Scotland. This study is exploratory in nature and it takes place primarily in the city of Glasgow to understand how social connections, namely bonds, bridges and links impact the subjective wellbeing of the population.

#### **3.2 Ontology and epistemology of the study**

In this section, I will discuss the ontology and epistemology that informs the current study. This will provide a context for the methodology and choice of methods employed. According to Crotty (1998, p.10), ontology is the study of being, and it is concerned with 'what is' while epistemology is the way of understanding what it means to know. This study is rooted in constructionism, which assumes that reality is the product of social processes (Neuman, 2003). It resonates with what Crotty (1998) suggested that 'reality' is seen as an interaction between the objective and the

subjective. A central principle of constructivist thinking, as Kant (1881/1966) the German philosopher highlighted in his work, *Critique of Pure Reason*, that one cannot isolate an objective reality from the person who is experiencing, processing, and labelling the reality (Sciarra, 1999). Kant put the emphasis on experience, and the perception of those experiences for something to become an object of knowledge.

Social constructionism implies that knowledge cannot be separated from our social experience. In this study, the research participants are the ones who experience the reality of living in the host community, where they encounter a different culture, such as language and traditions. Their encounters with this new culture and people, engaging with this new world and making sense of it are often based on their historical and social perspectives (Creswell, 2002; Crotty, 1998), thus, participants construct meaning from their experiences and perceptions. The concept of subject or people in their environment cannot be neglected in the research process as Crotty (1998) points out that all knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed through relations between people and their environment. Therefore, the design of this study followed a qualitative inquiry through various methods that include semi-structured interviews, participatory exercises and in-depth interviews. The perception of participant's experiences is thus captured through the careful designs of these respective methods.

Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge, which is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998). Different epistemological assumptions allow different methods of understanding our social world (Moses & Knutsen, 2007) therefore, epistemology focuses on issues like how we can learn of

the reality (informed by the ontological stance) and what constitutes the basis of our knowledge (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014). It is crucial to understand one's epistemological stances, as Darlaston-Jones (2007) argues that researchers need to understand their view of reality and the meaning they ascribe to knowledge to identify their role in the research process, including their biases and prejudices, which they inevitably hold. As Crotty (1998) suggests that a relationship exists between a researcher's epistemological stances, the theoretical approaches used, the methodology, and the methods. The articulation of one's philosophical perspective explains the method of the formulation of a research problem, research questions, and the method of addressing those concerns.

This study adopts an interpretivist epistemology inquiry, often an approach to qualitative research. It is assumed that truth and meaning are created by subject's interactions with the world. Participants construct their meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon, thus it is appropriate to explore the meaning of wellbeing and the challenges that asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) face from their perspective. Without the voice and understanding of the subjects, one cannot justify they are doing well or not by asking them to check a few boxes in a survey. Surveys pose several limitations; firstly, it restricts the response of participants to researchers' chosen categories, secondly, it does not allow room for participants to raise their concerns or voice their opinions of categories in the survey, thirdly, it restricts analysis of data to the correlation of the variables the study chose to measure. Last but not least, the lesson I learned throughout my work in the refugee resettlement process in the United States was that what one values might not be the same as the others or what people generally think it would be. Asking people a few

broad questions and checking some boxes cannot help us to truly gauge the problems at hand. Phase one of this study was designed to understand what matters most to the targeted population and examine what living a good life means to them.

The process is largely inductive and an emic approach is utilised. This approach is deemed relevant and suitable for studying the ASR's subjective experiences in the host community. Given the fact that very little is known about this population, it is best to study from the real experiences and people's interpretation of those experiences. As the ASRs engage with the host community, they construct meaning out of their daily experiences as they communicate with others, such as doctors and teachers in the community. This study sought out the perceptions of those experiences regarding their wellbeing, and how they achieve them in the host community.

### **3.3 Research Methodology**

Research methodology is a strategy for addressing research questions in studies. It translates ontological and epistemology principles into guidelines that denotes the research method (Sarantakos, 2005). It informs what and how we know the subject of inquiry, and the nature of the relationship between the knower and the known (Crotty, 1998). It, therefore, guides the methods to collect and analyse data. This study utilises the methodology of interpretative phenomenology, which was consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of social constructivism and interpretivism. It allowed the researcher's interpretation of the perceptions of participants. Interpretative phenomenology aims to give voice to participants

mediated through the research process involving the interpretation by the researchers (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006).

### **3.3.1 Underpinnings of Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA)**

Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) is an approach to psychological qualitative inquiry with an aim to provide insights into how participants, for example, refugees make sense of their living in a host community. It has become a popular methodological framework in qualitative studies, examining how individuals make sense of their lived experiences. A detailed analysis of personal accounts is typically paired with the researcher's interpretation. It gives subjectivity a privileged position, and researchers can capture the essence of lived experience of a group to find themes or commonalities. Smith et al. (2009) describe IPA as '*an approach to qualitative, experiential and psychological research which has been informed by concepts and debates from three key areas of philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography*' (p.11).

It is an idiographic case study approach that begins with individual cases and then moves toward a more general categorisation that is applicable to an entire group (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The aim of IPA is to provide a detailed account of meaning derived from a small group of individuals rather than making a generalized claim for a large group or population, as in the case of quantitative method (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). It has a more structured method of application than standard thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). IPA has been employed by a few researchers to investigate coping among refugees (Hussain & Bhushan 2010), those working alongside trauma survivors (Splevins, Cohen, Bowley, & Joseph, 2010), and mental

health professionals working with survivors of trauma (Satkunanayagam, Tunariu, & Tribe, 2010). IPA requires a dynamic research process with the researcher taking on a vigorous role. IPA provided the right framework for this study, which aims to look at how participants make sense of their experiences as asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs). The researcher took an interpretive activity process, putting aside her own preconceptions to understand the subjective personal experience of the Chinese ASRs. In another words, as participants make sense of their world, the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants' sense of their world.

Individuals' 'lived experience' is vital to this approach and their perception of the world and the meanings they give to their experiences. Once a participant has shared their experience with the researcher, he/she then can try to make sense of the participant sense of what has been shared. Phenomenology is interested in those experiences, which register as significant for the participant, those which become 'an experience' of importance rather than remain as just 'experience' (Smith et al., 1999). The researcher facilitates the participants in providing an account of their reflections within the research encounter (p. 190). Overall, it allows the researcher to put participants at the centre of the research process and help make their experiences visible when they make contact with people and organisations in the host community that surround them.

IPA aims to allow the researcher to develop an analytic interpretation of participants' accounts which should be prompted by, and clearly grounded in, but which may also go beyond the participants' own sense-making and conceptualisations. IPA is committed to the three key principles: 1) the study must be concerned with

examining ‘the thing itself’, the phenomenological experience of the participant, 2) an intense interpretative engagement with personal verbal material obtained from the participant and 3) each case is examined in detail as part of the process of analysis (Smith et al., 1999).

### **3.3.2 Ethical Consideration**

Lived experiences of the asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) are often sensitive and painful. Qualitative research which elicit rich descriptions from participants need to be mindful of “doing no harm” in the research process, however, there is always ethical challenges for researchers who seek to understand the experiences of ASRs, and they involve methodological implications; for example, during the process of negotiating access to participants, working with people of varying literacy levels, and the imbalance of power between researchers and participants. In this section, I will make use of the ethical guidelines for research on forced migration, provided by the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford (Refugee Studies Centre, 2007), to reflect on how I addressed the relevant concerns.

As ethical researchers, our relations with and responsibilities towards research participants need to be clearly laid out. Researchers have an obligation to protect their research participants and honouring their trust towards us. I was mindful throughout the whole research process to respect participants’ rights, interests, sensitivities and privacy. For example, I did not record or note down certain parts of interviews or information when participants asked that they not be included in research notes. Also, researchers should be sensitive to the possible consequences of their work and the potential harm it might inflict on participants. For the research

working with the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees, I came across two coordinators of the Falun Gong group, and some testimonies of the political persecutions some people faced in the Amnesty International meeting at the University of Edinburgh. I understood the ramifications for this particularly vulnerable group to be involved in research, and therefore, I respected participants' choice to refrain from the study even though they agreed to do so initially. Also, I am very mindful to uphold the rights to confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Quotes and comments from participants were presented with pseudonyms in the study. Measures were taken such as not putting participants' names on any forms or documents or mentioning their names in public places or within agency meetings for instance. No information obtained from the research would be identifiable as any particular participant.

Another important guideline is negotiating informed consent. Research involving human subjects should be based on the freely given informed consent of subjects. The principle of informed consent indicates the need for truthful and respectful exchanges between researchers and the participants under study. To address this point, participants were given detailed information, both verbal and written, regarding the purpose of the study, the researcher's identity and affiliation in the UK, the anticipated outcome of the research and uses of data, possible benefits of the study and possible harm or discomfort that might affect participants. I made sure that participants could be referred to a local general practitioner or case worker at the Chinese agency as needed if they experienced any distress during the research process. All participants understood that participation was voluntary, they could leave anytime, and were not obliged to talk about anything they did not want to.



Participants' views were respected at all times and they could choose not to be recorded any time in the interview process. Participants signed the consent form written in their language before the onset of the study.

### **3.4 Research Process**

To effectively address the research questions, this study utilised an exploratory phase followed by three phases. Qualitative methods are often regarded as providing rich data about real life people and situations to make sense of behaviour within its wider context (de Vaus, 2002). Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) have been scarcely researched in the academic arena. Qualitative approach was chosen to help explore the phenomenon at an in-depth level through a more personal connection between the researcher and the participants. This study involved an exploratory phase (setting up of advisory group and key informant interview) and three main sequential phases - Phase one (individual interview), Phase two (participatory exercises), and Phase three (in-depth family interview).

The research aims to reach 8 families and study the impact of social connections on family wellbeing in great depth. In the exploratory phase, I reached out to key informants in both Edinburgh and Glasgow and gained substantial understanding of the characteristics of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs). I got the impression from key informants that it would not be an easy journey to locate Chinese ASR families for research purposes. A lot of them are highly suspicious of authorities and people in power, and some key informants suggested meeting individuals, particularly women/mothers as a starting point to build trust and rapport. With such information in mind, Phase 1 was set up to identify Chinese ASRs and

understand their current living situation. More importantly, it is to find out what living a good life means to the Chinese ASRs in the host community. Throughout the nine-month process of reaching out to potential participants in phase 1, the first few months was a very frustrating process. I made phone calls to the potential participants referred by key informants, talked to people working in Chinese grocery stores and restaurants, and using snowball sampling to reach out to more potential participants. It was a long process with slow progress, and some people cancelled the interview or refused to participate due to different reasons, such as caring for young children, not feeling well or their husbands did not want them to participate. There was one participant, who had promised to connect me with other Chinese asylum seekers in the Glasgow area, could not be reached after the interview. She worked for a law firm which handles a large number of Chinese asylum seeking cases. She also belongs to the Chinese Falun Gong group, and she was very cautious about mentioning anything about the group in China.

I continued to follow up with key informants during Phase 1 to check if they met any new Chinese ASRs in their agencies. The Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) has been very helpful in referring individuals for interview, and I followed up with those who have done the interview to build rapport. After gaining trust over time, participants were more willing to introduce me to other ASRs and phase 1 has been a long process with a lot of ground work, such as phone calls, home visits and meetings in the community where the Chinese frequently go. I made great effort in keeping touch with those participants who showed interest in participating in phase 2 and phase 3 by home visits and meeting the families in places where they go often with their children, such as libraries, sports centres, community events and

CCDP activities. After almost a year, I interviewed 25 people and identified some individuals and families who were interested in participating in the social mapping exercise and family interview for phase 2 and 3 subsequently. Table 2 lays out the phases, purpose, data collection methods and participants of each phase.

**Table 2 Overview of the phases of the study**

Phases	Objectives	Data Collection Methods	Participants	Data Analysis Methods	Relationship between phases
Exploratory	To understand and explore the Chinese (ASRs) live in Glasgow and Edinburgh; establish a collaborative relationship with agencies and Chinese communities which have worked with the population	Contacting agencies that work with migrants, ASRs; setting up advisory group and key informant interview; observing the whereabouts of Chinese migrants in Asian/Chinese grocery stores, take away places and restaurants in both Glasgow and Edinburgh.	Staff members, Outreach workers, Case workers, Managers, Volunteers	Not Applicable	An exploratory stage to pave the way for phase 1
Phase 1	To understand what living a good life means to Chinese migrants/ASRs in Glasgow and Edinburgh; Getting to know Chinese ASRs and identifying potential participant families.	Individual interview was employed; semi-structured interviews	Chinese migrants and Chinese ASRs The interview was designed to verify the immigration status of individuals at the end of the interview. The researcher	Thematic Analysis was employed	Key informants from exploratory stage connected me to potential participants for individual interview; phase 1 is crucial in reaching out to more participants through snowball sampling. Participants were also invited to join phase 2 and phase 3 (if they live with a family in the host

Phases	Objectives	Data Collection Methods	Participants	Data Analysis Methods	Relationship between phases
			addressed participant as migrants in this phase.		community).
Phase 2	To understand the social connection patterns of participants: to evaluate participants' level of social bonds, bridges and links in the host community	Participatory research - Social mapping and card sorting exercise	Chinese ASRs: participants who self-identified as asylum seekers or refugees	Analysis & interpretation of social maps (social connection patterns, reciprocity) and trust scores (Strang & Quinn, 2019)	After knowing the participants from Phase 1 and trust and rapport was built, I started to recruit participants for phase 2, especially those who showed interest in doing so.
Phase 3	The ultimate objective of the research: to understand the constructs of wellbeing for families and the pathways to wellbeing through social connections	Home visits, mapping exercise and family interview	Chinese ASR families: Families who self-identified as asylum seekers or refugees.	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	I kept in close contact with participants from phase 1 and 2 who has a family in Glasgow and have expressed interest in participating in the family interview.

### **3.4.1 Setting up an advisory group**

At the beginning of the research project, the British Red Cross (BRC) and the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) were contacted to find out information about the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs). Furthermore, a local grass-root Chinese agency was identified, the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP), which serves the Chinese migrants in Glasgow, especially those who had recently arrived from China. A meeting took place with the manager of the organisation to gather more information about the targeted population. In this initial stage of the study, members of the BRC, the SRC and the CCDP were invited to be members of an advisory group for this research project. Expectations of the advisory group included sharing information about staff's experiences working with the Chinese ASRs and connecting them with the researcher if possible. Also, the advisory group gave advice about where to locate key informants in different agencies and provide office space for meeting key informants or participants if possible. My commitment to the advisory group included sharing findings of the project with group members in the form of a document or a report.

### **3.4.2 Key informants – recruitment criteria and process**

After setting up the advisory group and conducting initial meetings with group members to gather information about the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs), group members connected me with case workers who had worked with this population. It was decided to meet with these key informants to learn of their experiences in working with the Chinese ASRs as well as link me to this population in the host community. Staff members and case workers, for example, were

identified and interviewed. Key informants' recruitment continued utilising snowball sampling after initial names provided by the advisory group members and within a period of five to six months, I met with twenty key informants (table 3). The goals were to collect information about the recent Chinese migrants that the organisations or agencies have worked with, especially those who seek asylum, and the possibility of referral for potential participants for the first phase of the study. Emails were utilised to contact key informants, arrange meetings and discuss follow-up actions. In addition, telephone calls and texting were also used to facilitate communication. Key informants were helpful in providing information regarding the population, and introducing myself to other key informants and recent Chinese migrants in the area of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

It is important to highlight the point that this study aimed to target the Chinese who are working class migrants living in poverty, refugees or asylum seekers, and not those immigrants or international students who immigrated to the UK for work and studies. The reasons are that there has been research conducted with Chinese immigrants in different parts of the world. A second point is that most immigrants went abroad with a certain degree of resources including human, social and cultural capital. It is the aim of the present study to explore the life of the ASRs in the host community.

After talking to key informants and some recent migrants in both Edinburgh and Glasgow, and exploring potential places where recent Chinese migrants resettled, I decided to choose Glasgow as the research site. First, the three agencies of the advisory group are all located in Glasgow. The Chinese population these agencies

serve live in Glasgow. Second, key informants and initial exploration reveal that more young Chinese families have moved to Glasgow recently from China while the more well-established Chinese families in Edinburgh are mainly from Hong Kong. Third, Glasgow has been the major city for dispersal of asylum seekers in Scotland since the implementation of the immigration and asylum act in 1999. Glasgow was and remains the only sizeable dispersal area in Scotland, with more asylum seekers dispersed to Glasgow than any other regional site in the UK (ICAR 2007). From 2000 to 2010, more than 22,000 asylum seekers have been housed in Glasgow (Piacentini 2012).

**Table 3 Key informants and organisations**

Key informants (KI)	Gender	Ethnicity	Position, organisation
KI 1	M	White	Director, British Red Cross (BRC), Glasgow
KI 2	F	White	Case worker, BRC
KI 3	F	Chinese, China	Volunteer, BRC (no longer worked there)
KI 4	F	Chinese, China	Volunteer, BRC (no longer worked there)
KI 5	F	Chinese, China	Volunteer, (no longer worked there), Scottish Refugee Council, Glasgow
KI 6	F	White	Case worker, SRC
KI 7	F	Chinese, Hong Kong	Manager, Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP), Glasgow
KI 8	F	Chinese, Hong Kong	Case worker, CCDP
KI 9	F	Chinese, China	Case worker, CCDP
KI 10	F	White	Program officer, Community centre, Glasgow
KI 11	M	Chinese, Hong Kong	Housing officer, Community centre, Glasgow
KI 12	M	White	Case worker, Home Start, Glasgow



KI 13	F	Chinese, Hong Kong	Teacher, Chinese school, Glasgow
KI 14	F	Chinese, China	Teacher, Chinese school
KI 15	F	White	Case worker, Survival Trust, Glasgow
KI 16	F	Chinese, China	Family worker, Barnado's, Glasgow
KI 17	F	Chinese, China	Co-ordinator, Falun Gong, Glasgow
KI 18	F	White	Co-ordinator, Falun Gong, Edinburgh
KI 19	F	Chinese, China	Volunteer, Amnesty International, Edinburgh
KI 20	M	White	Staff, The Welcoming, Edinburgh

#### *3.4.2.1 Data collection method: Key informant interview*

Key informant interviews were conducted to gain local information about Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs). As Patton (2002, p.321) defines, “key informants are individuals who are particularly knowledgeable about the inquiry setting, and whose insights can prove useful in enabling the investigator to understand what is happening and why”.

The main questions that were asked of key informants include how long they worked for the agency, whether they have provided services to people from China, what types of services the population utilised, whether they have served the ASR population, details of this population, and if the case worker or staff could introduce me to any ASRs from China as potential participants for the study. Key informants have provided valuable information and insights regarding who could be contacted and how and where I should explore in order to meet potential participants. The key informant interviews were informal and they took place at different places such as the agency office or coffee shop according to the choice of key informants. It was

considered an informal interview and the objective was to find out if they had worked with any ASRs in Glasgow and Edinburgh and be able to connect myself to them (the interview form can be found in Appendix 1). Detailed notes were taken of the information informants provided, such as the number of ASRs they had worked with and what their lives were like in the host community. Since it was the first time I met the key informants and considering the sensitive issue of Chinese applying for asylum, I chose not to record the interviews to encourage participations from key informants.

### **3.4.3 Phase one: What does living a good life mean?**

This phase aimed to locate Chinese ASRs and recruit them as participants for an interview to find out what living a good life means to them in Glasgow. The key informants had provided some suggestions regarding where to locate targeted participants, and some connected me to participants directly, such as one case worker at CCDP, the co-ordinators of the Falun Gong group in both Glasgow and Edinburgh, and a family worker at Barnardo's. Since the Chinese ASR population is rather invisible and is considered a hard-to-reach group, snowball sampling was utilised to reach more potential participants. This population can be very suspicious of the intentions of strangers approaching them; being introduced by a friend or agency workers put potential participants at ease and more open to the idea of participating in the study.

#### *3.4.3.1 Participant selection criteria recruitment for Phase 1*

Participant inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Chinese migrants who are from China (People’s Republic of China)
- Age: 16 years old and above
- Have been living in the UK for less than ten years

Exclusion criteria:

- Person who is 15 and younger
- Have been living in the UK for more than ten years
- Chinese migrants whose place of origin is Hong Kong, Taiwan or Macau

#### 3.4.3.2 Recruiting participants

In the Chinese culture, it is hugely important to avoid losing “*mianzi*” (Face). Having hardship and difficulties is seen as shameful and thus labelling someone with difficulties is shameful. The term “*Nanmin*” (the term used to refer to refugees in Chinese literally means: people with difficulties) carries stigma in the community. Besides, the political connotations attached to some asylum seekers can have serious implications, and it is understandable that certain asylum seekers are reluctant to disclose their status. Thereby, the term migrants rather than “*Nanmin*” was used to reach potential participants in the research process. Since I was completely new to the Chinese communities in Glasgow, it took a lengthy time to build trust and rapport with concerned agencies, staff members, case workers and potential participants. Therefore, asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants from People’s Republic of China (PRC) were included in the target population. It was not entirely an exclusive process since Chinese migrants share the same culture as refugees and it would be relevant to find out what contributes to a good life for either migrants or asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in the resettlement process.

In planning for recruitment of participants prior to Phase one, the Chinese demographic data such as the percentage of age range for both genders was gathered

from the demographics of the Chinese population in Greater Glasgow (Census 2001). It was used to decide the percentage of male to female to be recruited for this phase of the study. Nonetheless, the figure represented only the overall Chinese population, but not specifically data pertaining to the ASR population. Twenty-five participants were target with ten males and fifteen females included in Phase one in accordance to the percentage of the ratio between men and women in the Census (table 4). However, I could only successfully interview five males after six months of attempting to recruit more male participants (table 5).

**Table 4 The targeted demographics of participants to be recruited (N=25)**

Age Range	Male (N=10)	Female (N=15)
16 – 25	2	3
26 – 45	5	8
46 – 65	2	3
66 above	1	1

**Table 5 The demographics of participants recruited (N=25)**

Age Range	Male (N=5)	Female (N=20)
16 – 25	0	3
26 – 45	4	14
46 – 65	1	2
66 above	0	1

The last question in the interview asked about the legal status of participants since it is one of the objectives of phase one to identify and confirm which participants were asylum seekers and refugees. They were also asked if they could recommend other friends, who were seeking asylum or have obtained ‘leave to remain’ status, to

participate in the study. In addition, they were invited to participate in phase two and phase three of the research study. For phase three, since it was a family study, only participants living with their family in the host community were recruited. In this way, a list of people was generated detailing who would be potential participants for the subsequent phases.

#### *3.4.3.3 Phase one: Data collection method*

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with twenty-five participants, which consisted of twenty women and five men. They self-identified as asylum seekers or refugees (ASRs) to explore the constructs of wellbeing. Participants' age ranged from sixteen to sixty years, and their length of residency in Scotland ranged from three to ten years. Data collection was carried out over a six month period. The interview included a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions which covered fairly specific topics. It started with more structured questions such as personal circumstances relating to when and why they came to Scotland, and it then proceeded to more open-ended questions like what makes life good in Scotland and their dream life in ten years. In the end, the researcher asked participants if they could recommend their friends, who were SARs, to participant in the research project. The goal of the interview was to confirm the status of the participant and to know them briefly, and what they consider as important constructs of living a good life in Glasgow. The goal and objectives of the research process were explained to each participant prior to the interview (Information sheet of the research project can be found in Appendix 2. Consent form in Appendix 3 and interview form for phase one in Appendix 4).

Participants chose where they would like to conduct the interview, and the researcher met participants at a mutually agreed date and time. Most participants preferred to meet at a local library and some preferred meeting in their homes especially those with young children. Prior to each interview, a considerable amount of time was spent with participants to build initial rapport using informal conversations. The research study and goals were explained to participants thoroughly before getting their consent on paper. The duration of the interview ranged from thirty minutes to an hour, depending on the responses and personality of the participants. Some were more talkative and open to sharing their stories than others. Detailed notes were taken on each question. There was no tape recording involved in this early phase of the study, and it was my choice not to do so. Recording no doubt would allow me to capture the exact words of the respondent, however, recording devices can put some people off and make them less willing to participate or share their experiences. Besides, it could create fear for some participants to disclose their legal status. With the potential participants' nature in mind - a hard-to-reach group on sensitive topics of asylum seeking and refugees, I chose not to record the interviews at phase one.

#### **3.4.4 Phase two: Mapping social connection**

Participatory exercises were conducted as a follow-up study of phase one. Phase two aimed to learn about the pattern of social connections of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) to inform service providers and community planning. After knowing the Chinese ASRs and how they define living a good life, the next step was to study how participants solve certain problems in their daily lives through their social support system, and their knowledge of the local service providers. Trust and reciprocity, opportunity to offer help to others in the host community, will be

measured as well. Phase two set out to answer the research question, “What pattern of social connections is displayed in the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASR) population?”

#### *3.4.4.1 Participant recruitment*

This part of the study was in collaboration with the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP). The manager of CCDP offered practical advice and office space for conducting the research activities. The purpose of the activities were to identify the social connection patterns, social network and the level of trust and reciprocity (opportunity to give) of the participants. Two staff members of CCDP were recruited in the process as helpers and a session was conducted with them to explain the objectives and procedures of the study.

At the end of the interviews at phase one, the last question asked if participants were interested in taking part in phases two and three (provided that they live with their family in the host community). Out of the twenty-five participants of phase one, seventeen showed interest in continuing with the next phase of the study. The plan was to form three participatory groups of about eight people in per group, therefore twenty-four participants needed to be recruited for phase two. CCDP had been very helpful in contacting me regarding potential participants in Glasgow as they have contact with this population regularly. The recruitment criteria of phase two was that people fulfilled the inclusion criteria of phase one or were participants of phase one (as mentioned earlier in this chapter). After I had contacted the twenty-four people who had agreed to participate in the participatory activities, by phone, I started working on the logistics of setting up the details for the participatory exercises.

In phase two, the twenty four people who had agreed to participate were group into three groups by drawing lot. On the dates of the research, the turnout was five, six and four participants for Groups one, two and three respectively. All participants were female, and their place of origin was China. The age range of participants was between twenty and forty-eight. All participants were either granted leave to remain status or asylum seekers residing in Glasgow for not more than ten years (table 6). Ten participants also participated in phase one of the study. The demographics of the participants can be found in table 4. The aim and objectives of the study were explained verbally on phone as well as face-to-face (on the day of the participatory exercises), and participants were given the information sheet of the research project (Appendix 2) for reference. Participants signed the consent form (Appendix 3), written in their language, prior to the start of the participatory exercise after the research process of phase two was explained.

**Table 6 Phase two participants**

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
No of people (female)	5	6	4
Age range	Between 22 and 40	Between 20 and 35	Between 27 and 48
Legal status	1 asylum seeker & 4 refugees	2 asylum seekers & 4 refugees	2 asylum seekers & 2 refugees
Years in Glasgow	From 2 to 10 years	From 4 to 9 years	From 3 to 10 years

*3.4.4.2 Data collection method (Phase two): Social mapping & card sorting exercise (participatory research)*

The experiences and impacts of forced migration present plenty of challenges in host communities that affect asylum seekers and refugees' (ASRs) wellbeing and mental health (Strang and O'Brien, 2017). Social isolation is a particular issue literature has



highlighted that can negatively impact migrants and refugees. Building social relationships becomes significant in a new country of settlement to living a good life. Understanding the social relationships of the ASRs and their knowledge of service providers is an important step toward offering help in the host community. The “Indicators of Integration” (IOI) framework offers a conceptual model of refugee integration (Diagram 1). This study aims to identify the social connections of the Chinese ASRs adopting the IOI framework as a reference point. Strang and Quinn (2019) contributed to a programme of research by developing a tool for mapping social connections (Strang and O'Brien, 2017; Strang and Quinn, 2019). The tool adopts participatory activities to establish understanding of potential connections grounded within a certain context. The advantage of using the tool is that it is designed to avoid imposing assumptions of the type of social resources that should be valued. In addition, it provides guidelines on measuring the level of connection, trust and reciprocity of individual participants, as well as capturing the social resources identified collectively with a group of participants, thus the tool serves the functions of answering the research question of this study regarding the social connection patterns of the Chinese ASRs.

Social mapping exercise was used by Strang & Quinn (2019) to study social connections among refugee men from Iran and Afghanistan in Glasgow. It is intended to find out the types of social resources of which the population in the study are aware of using the categories of ‘Bonds’, ‘Bridges’ and ‘Links’ (Ager & Strang, 2008). Building on the notions of social capital, the mapping exercise also measures ‘reciprocity’, which is the opportunity to give besides receiving, and ‘trust’ (Strang and Quinn, 2019; Strang and O’Brien, 2017). Both reciprocity and trust are essential

for emotional wellbeing and maintenance of positive relationships (Putnam, 2000). Phase two aims to explore the social connections that the Chinese ASRs identify as resources in achieving wellbeing in Glasgow.

This study employs sample real-life problems to explore connections associated with 'bonding', 'bridging' and 'linking' capital. The social connections produced in this method are relevant for participants as potential resources in their daily life context. It uses the connections generated to develop 'connectedness' scores for individual participants and also for the social resources that the group has identified. The three problems were chosen to explore their access to emotional support (bond), practical help (bridge) and access to rights (link). The three problem scenarios used are as follows:

- Who would you speak to about the problem or ask for help if your mobile phone was broken? (practical help)
- Who would you speak to about the problem or ask for help if you felt lonely? (emotional support)
- Who would you speak to about the problem or ask for help if you had issues with your housing? (access to rights)

Responses were plotted, on a large sheet of paper showing each answer either a person or an organisation mentioned in a circle with a line linking them to the problems for which they were accessed. This exercise was done with the help of two case workers from CCDP in their office building. I provided training and briefing to

the two workers regarding the objectives of the participatory exercises and the tasks (mentioned earlier) they were recruited to assist. It took about thirty to forty minutes to complete the exercise, depending on how much the participants spoke in each group. Within the same day of the exercise, the range of social connections mentioned for each group was plotted on diagrams according to the geographic proximity using categories, such as household, neighbourhood, Glasgow city, within the UK and overseas (Diagrams can be found in Ch. 5).

The two staff members of CCDP were recruited to help in the participatory exercise. They had received training and briefing prior to exercise. I reminded them not to ask leading questions in the research process. The fact that they have known some of the participants for over a few years and occasionally, staff asked participants if they have ever been to a certain agency for example during the social mapping exercise. That kind of episode was not frequent, still, it was the staff member who mentioned the places of help rather than from participants directly thus, I would ask participants to elaborate on the sort of help they obtained from these agencies, and what their experience was like to get more details.

The card sorting exercise aimed to explore individual connectedness, opportunities to give help and their levels of trust in the people and places they mentioned as support network. The researcher noted down the lists of social connections mentioned, both people and organisations, generated from the previous task – the social mapping exercise. The social mapping exercise was undertaken in order to generate a list of connections that were relevant to the targeted population. This way, the process was grounded in the experience of the participants. Each item on the list was given a

number and written on a small card which would be used for the card sorting tasks where participants were invited individually for discussion according to the following three questions:

- Have you spoken to or asked this person/organisation for help in the last six months? (Yes/No)
- How much do you trust this person/organisation to do their best to help you? (a lot/a little/not at all/not applicable)
- In the last six months, has this person/organisation asked you to help them, or talked to you about their problems? (Yes/No)

This exercise was done individually in the other conference room to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Responses were recorded manually by myself for each participant, while the staff members of CCDP were having a friendly chat with other participants in the main conference room. Data collected was calculated manually and results of the social connection and reciprocity were plotted on the same diagrams as the social mapping exercise in the respective group. The trust level was plotted on a separate chart (Diagrams and chart can be found in Chapter 5).

#### **3.4.5 Participant observation (between Phase one and Phase three)**

In order to better understand the families and build trust and rapport, I visited the families, who expressed interests in participating in phase three multiple times before the final phase of research. Depending on the availability of the families, I arranged home visits and meeting with mothers and children at places such as the local library

or the CCDP office when there were workshops or gatherings to better understand these potential participants. Participant observation is particularly useful in situations where little is known about the subject under study.

Mothers with young children were particularly interested in welcoming myself into the home. It might be due to reasons, such as they were isolated and bored at home, or the mothers saw this as an opportunity for the children to have some exposure to other people besides themselves. Observations in natural settings could provide rich and genuine data as it involved not only the participants, but also people that happened to visit, call, and knock on the door, as well as unexpected circumstances such as arguments between the husband and wife. It helps researchers to capture more of how family members treat one another, and the communication patterns between family members. Notes were made during and immediately after home visits or observation in community settings (Sample of observation notes can be found in Appendix 5).

#### **3.4.6 Phase three: Identifying pathways to wellbeing**

Participants from phase one were asked if they were interested in participating in the final phase of the study - a family interview in phase three. I started recruiting families at the end of phase one by calling the eight mothers, who had shown interest in participating, to schedule home visits. Two mothers, however, turned down the home visit stating that their husbands did not want to participate or they were too busy with taking care of their children. After the first couple of home visits, one family dropped out of the research, which left five families committed to participating in the family interview in the end. I kept in close touch through home

visits (as mentioned in the previous section of observation), phone calls and texting to build rapport and trust prior to the date of the interview. Interviews were recorded and transcribed in English within the same week of the interview. All females had participated in phase one and phase two of the study, while two men had participated in phase one (Family four and Family five).

All participants fulfilled the main criteria of this research- Chinese asylum seekers or refugees who came from China (excluding Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau). They live with their family members in Glasgow. In this phase, children who were five years old and above were invited to participate in the family interview and discussion, however, parents had to give their consent for their children to participate, and children had to be willing to do so. Those children who were under five were not included in the interview, but they were included in the process of observation. The five families' demographics can be found in table 7 below.

**Table 7 Family Demographics (Research participants)**

Family and years living in Glasgow	Legal Status	Father (F)	Mother (M)	Children *B – Boy, G - Girl
Family 1 4.5 years.	Refugee	40 years old, works at Chinese restaurant in town. (F1)	31 years old, has worked part-time in take-away places before, housewife. (M1)	Boy, 9 years old, born in China, came to Glasgow at 6, B1 (1). Girl, 2 years old, born in Glasgow G1 (1). (1) – Family 1
Family 2 3.5 years.	Asylum seeker	35 years old, works part- time at Chinese take-away in town. (F2)	28 years old, housewife. (M2)	Boy, 5 years old, B1 (2); Girl, 2 years old G1 (2); Boy, 1 year old, B2 (2). First one born in London, the rest born in Glasgow. (2) – Family 2
Family 3 7 years.	Refugee	45 years old, works full-time in Chinese restaurant out of town. (F3)	37 years old, housewife. (M3)	Boy, 12 years old, born in China, came to Glasgow at 8, B1 (3). Boy, 6 years old, B2 (3); Girl, 5 years old, G1 (3); Girl, 2 years old, G2 (3). Three youngest children were born in Glasgow. (3) – Family 3

Family 4 7 years.	Refugee	41 years old, works full-time in Chinese restaurant in town. (F4)	32 years old, housewife. (M4)	Boy, 10 years old, born in China, came to Glasgow at 6, B1 (4); Boy, 6 years old, born in Glasgow, B2 (4). (4) – Family 4
Family 5 3 years.	Asylum seekers	28 years old, works part-time in Chinese take-away in town. (F5)	23 years old, housewife. (M5)	Girl, 3 years old, G1 (5); Boy, 2 years old, B1 (5). Both were born in Glasgow. (5) – Family 5



#### *3.4.6.1 Phase three data collection method: family interview*

In the family interview of phase three, the goal was to gather in-depth information pertaining to how the whole family define wellbeing and their pathways to those constructs of living a good life. The focus was on the social connection pattern of bonds, bridges and links in the process. I have known the families for almost a year and continued to build a good rapport through frequent visits and phone calls. The interview was semi-structured and it allowed flexibility for family members to express and discuss the subject freely (the interview form can be found in Appendix 6).

The benefits of using semi-structured interviews include generating a substantial amount of detailed information pertaining to the research topic. Another advantage is that it provides researchers greater flexibility to adjust the questions to participants' sensitivities and even change the direction of the interview when unexpected concerns or topics of interests come up. However, the sequence of questions might have to be rearranged, and other unanticipated issues might emerge that seem important to both respondents and the study, thus, researchers need to cover those unexpected episodes and be flexible and decisive to include those in the agenda. Also, it can be more difficult to analyse open-ended questions. Overall, it allowed families to take control of the discussion and speak freely of their experiences and areas that concerned them the most. It also encouraged a rich, detailed and sometimes unexpected disclosure of experiences.

The research aims and process were explained clearly to families prior to the signing of the consent form (Appendix 3). Families understood that they could stop the

interview at any time if they chose not to continue with the process. Group discussion among family members and mapping exercise was utilised to gather information about the constructs of wellbeing and their ways of achieving those constructs respectively. Families were gathered around a table and their answers were written on a big piece of paper so that everyone could see it (Appendix 7). I facilitated the discussion of the constructs of wellbeing and how they, as a family, achieved those constructs. All the answers were put on the same piece of paper linking to particular construct. The interviews and discussion were tape-recorded. Five families were recruited for this phase of the study.

### **3.5 Data analysis methods**

Each phase of this study was distinct in nature and had specific research objective. In phase one, semi-structured individual interview was conducted and thematic analysis was used to extract themes conducive to living a good life in the host community. Phase two generated data pertaining to the patterns of social connections, patterns of trust as well as opportunities for reciprocity. The data analysis method was guided by the approach initiated by Strang and Quinn (2019) for analyzing social connection patterns and their implications on resettlement. In the final phase, in-depth family interviews and discussion were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The data analysis method and the details of the processes in each phase will be discussed in the following section.

#### **3.5.1 Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data. A theme captures something important about the data in relation

to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is generally concerned with experiences, meanings, and the reality of participants. It provides a detailed account of a particular theme or group of themes within the data. Thematic analysis captures the meanings within the data. It also provides a strategy for organising and interpreting the qualitative data to create a narrative understanding that brings together the similarities and differences in the individual and families' descriptions of the constructs of what living a good life means to them. This narrative is derived from the identification of the themes and categories within the data. Participants' quotes were used to illustrate throughout the findings and analysis of what makes a good life in the host community.

The objective of the first phase of the study was to understand what living a good life means to the Chinese migrants/ASRs in Glasgow. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants and detailed notes were taken during interview. All the answers to the questions 'what makes a good life?' and 'what do you want for your life in ten years?' were extracted from the interview and transcribed within 24 hours using Microsoft Word application. These interview transcripts were imported into the qualitative data analysis software NVIVO 10 and manually coded. Inductive/open coding was adopted to allow codes to be created based on the data itself. I did not code the interviews according to any pre-established or pre-defined code frames. I read and reread the responses to the two questions and apply a code to each answer that relates to what makes life good. In the process, I check carefully if the new response match any of the previously created codes, or a new code needs to be created. When all the responses were coded, I went back to study each one of them to

check if the codes match with the description of participants. The next step involved searching for themes and clustering them into ideas and categories that were related. To increase the vigour of the coding process, all the codes and themes were reviewed by an independent researcher, Dr Strang, who is my supervisor. Once the themes were identified, they were defined and named systematically. Finally, the relationship of the themes to each other was explored to help produce a fuller interpretation of the underlying meanings and themes that emerged in the process. This is when the data analysis process takes on a reflective and analytic roles. For example, some participants mentioned being able to express themselves truly in public is a good feeling. It is coded under the category of 'human rights' initially and later to 'feeling good about the rights to speech. (Sample of themes generated from phase one can be found in Appendix 8).

### **3.5.2 Participatory exercises and guided set of analysis**

The data of social connection patterns was used to compile a collective 'map' of social connections for each group. In each of the social map diagrams, the connections mentioned by participants were plotted according to geographic proximity starting from their household, neighbourhood and extend out to overseas. Individual responses from the card sorting tasks were then used to collect the levels of connection and reciprocity, opportunity to offer help, for each of the connections. All the information was plotted on the map of each group accordingly (The maps can be found in the findings of Phase two in Chapter 5).

For the trust aspect, participants were asked to indicate if they trusted the person or organisations 'a lot', 'a little' or 'not at all'. Responses were then given a weighting –

‘3’ for a lot, ‘2’ for a little and ‘1’ for not at all, and total scores for each potential social connection were calculated. As participants were also given the choice of not rating a particular person or organisation since they did not know them and thus could not comment on those categories, a total ‘trust’ score was calculated for each category as a percentage of responses to that category (The calculation of trust score can be found in Appendix 9). By this process, all the data from the three social mapping groups could be combined, and the persons and organisations mentioned could be ranked according to levels of trust (The chart can be found in the findings of phase two in Chapter 5).

### **3.5.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative approach aims to examine of personal lived experience. It provides evidence of the participants’ making sense of the phenomena under investigation. The key point for an IPA study is the meaning of particular experiences, emotions, and events holds for the participants (Smith and Osborn, 2007). The aim of the third phase of data collection was to understand the constructs of wellbeing for families and the pathways to those identified constructs. It entails a thorough understanding of participants’ lived experiences in the resettlement process. IPA was chosen as an appropriate methodology in phase 3 as it offers methodological guidance in analyzing and interpreting phenomena from the participants’ viewpoints without using any pre-defined theoretical or conceptual framework. IPA aims to explore the experiences in its own term rather than attempting to reduce it to a “predefined or overly abstract categories” (Smith et al. 2009, p. 1). It focuses on unique characteristics of individual participants as well as exploring the pattern of meaning across participants.

Therefore, adopting the methodology of IPA is deemed a good fit for data analysis of phase 3. In contrast, thematic analysis mainly focuses on the pattern of meaning across participants. The first phase of study helped to gain some understanding of participants' subjective experience about what wellbeing means to them, using thematic analysis in the process of extracting themes.

In phase 3, interviews were conducted with family as a unit where family members, including children (who are older than 5 with parental consent) to discuss what made life good for the family and their pathways to obtain such a life. All the interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. These interviews were conducted in either Mandarin or Cantonese as per the preference of the participants. I transcribed all these interviews directly into English (verbatim). I also took notes while working with family which I later produced detailed notes (see Annexure 5). The IPA analysis began with the close examination of one transcript by reading and re-reading the transcripts multiple times. While reading a transcript, I also listened to the audio recording to recall and understand the participants' experiences. During this process, I recorded my feeling, thoughts, and initial comments on the margin of the interview transcripts, which were further examined by exploring connection, similarity, causal-effect or deriving conceptual statements in the context. Later I introduced structure into the analysis by drawing emergent themes by identifying common links between similar themes, sub-ordinate themes and their relationships. This produced a number of subordinate themes with related emergent themes (See annexure 12). Further based on this analysis, I developed a summary of each interview pertaining to the themes and emergent themes that answer the last research question (case study).

Once I prepare the summary, then I moved to the next interview transcript and follow the same process and prepared the case summary as discussed above.

The process of finding the social connection patterns of the five families' pathways to achieve those constructs was facilitated by using IPA, where themes are categorised under super-ordinate and constitute themes (sub-themes). Participants' quotes were used to illustrate the way they achieved the constructs of wellbeing under the particular themes.

Data was analysed using the guidelines provided by Smith, Jarman, and Osborn (2007). Themes evolved with appropriate merging and reorganization as analysis continued. Superordinate themes and their sub-themes were identified by exploring the connections between various emergent themes, thus, a master list of themes was prepared for each case. Once all emergent themes were identified, a consolidated list of master themes was produced for the group (five families) by combining and reorganising themes of all cases. Finally, a narrative account of the participants' experiences (using their own words) along with my interpretation was produced. The overview of the analysis process can be found in table 8 below. In qualitative research, beliefs and assumptions of the researcher may influence the interpretation of data. As a result, it is important that I make statements about my own beliefs and assumptions associated to this study. Finally, the content of the analysis was shared with each family to check if they thought the summary was accurate according to what they generated in the process.

**Table 8 Overview of the analysis process of a case adopting the model from Smith et al. (2010)**

Step 1- Transcription	This involves transcription of the semantic content of each family interview in English
Step 2 – Reading and re-reading of the transcript	This involves making notes of any thoughts, observations, and reflections that occur during reading the transcript. Initial notes and free associations formed while reading can be put in one margin of the transcript. (Sample can be found in Appendix 10)
Step 3 – Developing emergent themes	While reading the transcript with detailed comments, notes and thoughts on the margins, identify themes from within each section of the transcript.
Step 4 – Searching for connections across emergent themes	Look for possibility or connection themes that appear to relate to each other such as sequence or cause and effect.
Step 5 – Grouping themes together as clusters	The aim is to arrive at a group of themes and to identify super-ordinate categories that suggest a hierarchical relationship between them.
Step 6 – Putting themes in a summary	Develop a summary of the case that identifies the main features (Sample can be found in Appendix 11).
Step 7 – Checking accuracy of the summary	Share the summary with the family to check with accuracy of the summary.
Step 8 – Moving to the next case	Repeat the steps from 1 to 7.
Step 9 – Looking for patterns across cases	Look for connections between cases, identify individual and shared meanings of cases (Sample can be found in Appendix 12).

### 3.6 Reflexivity

#### 3.6.1 Position of the researcher

The position of the researcher refers to the influence of the researcher's personal history such as gender, culture, age, social status, values and power in the



relationship between the researcher and participants. This includes the extent to which researchers project themselves onto the participants' position while they interpret the voices of the participants. Being the sole researcher of this project, I am a Hong Kong citizen and a permanent resident of the United States, with full access to employment, health care and education. I have never been forced to migrate for political or other involuntary reasons. My migration journey to the United States is totally voluntary to search for higher education. The event has given me some insights into what it means to be separated from family members, relatives and friends, however, I was in no position to compare my experiences with those of the targeted population of this study, who migrated from China with very limited English language skills, under adverse circumstances including possibly political persecution. Thus, I considered myself as an outsider, who experiences nothing of that sort compared to the asylum seekers and refugees in this study.

It is possible that my position as a researcher from University creates the representation of power, privilege and elitism, which affected recruitment of participants. However, sharing similar cultural background with participants enabled me to be considered as part of the 'in-group' by some Chinese. For example, participants sent me greetings during festivals, and some invited me to dinner at their home. Building rapport and trust was extremely crucial to the success of this research project. Phase one provided me the opportunity to get to know the participants, understand what living a good life means to them, and more importantly, their legal status in the UK since that made them eligible as potential participants for further study. I kept in touch regularly, through home visits, phone calls and texting, with

those participants, who expressed interest in participating in Phase three of the study, to further build rapport and trust prior to conducting the family interview.

### **3.6.2 Values and biases**

Values and biases refer to the influence of the researcher's subjectivity on the research process and outcomes. Growing up in Hong Kong and receiving education under the British system, people in People's Republic of China (PRC) and their life were always seem to be very different and inferior, under the portrait of media at the time. My education in the field of social work in the United States has transformed me in many positive ways. One important quality I had acquired was being reflective especially in regard to racism and discrimination at all levels in society. I resorted to tools such as keeping a journal and frequent supervision with supervisors to keep my own biases in check.

I began the research with some background knowledge of refugee wellbeing in resettlement in the United States, where I worked as a volunteer coordinator at a local refugee non-governmental organization (NGO) in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The primary ethnic groups of refugees I worked with were from Bhutan, Somalia and Iraq. My duties were to recruit volunteers and match them according to the needs of the refugees they identified in the assessment form when they first arrived in the host community. These provided me with some first-hand experiences of the needs of the refugee. The information we collected in the survey was basic and far from adequate in understanding the issues and obstacles refugees face. On another occasion while I was a social work intern in a local senior centre, I carried out a project, which lasted for six months, to reach out to the senior refugees in Grand Forks, ND. This gave me

the space and time to understand what their needs were in an in-depth manner. Simply put, I understood what the most valuable thing to them was at that point of time, which could make them happy, such as the reunification of family and the availability of a temple for them to worship and gather. This important piece of information would have been lost if participants were just asked to check a few boxes to indicate if they had their basic needs met in the host community.

### **3.6.3 Researcher's role**

I considered my role to be both the observer and participant, and I engage in understanding, discovering and interpreting experiences of participants. I saw myself as an interpreter of participants' stories and narratives. In the process, I differentiated and unfolded meaning to generate new knowledge, and to potentially inspire new ways of understanding to provide insights in refugee settlement's values and customs for the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs).

During the early stage of the research process, particularly in the beginning, I was a newcomer and stranger to the Chinese community in Glasgow. After forming the advisory group to inform and guide my initial understanding and contact with the Chinese migrants, I was approached by the manager of CCDP to volunteer in various events and tasks. Being a Chinese, I am aware of the importance of maintaining a 'Guanxi' relationship, especially I was perceived as seeking help from the agency. At the same time, they saw my skills as valuable to them, such as language skills (English, Cantonese, Mandarin) and my knowledge and practice in social work. Thus, I agreed to work as a volunteer in the agency.

Over the two years in Glasgow, I have helped with variety of things, such as writing a grant for the agency, volunteered in the Chinese New Year celebration events, and family cycling trip.. During home visits of potential participants for family interview (phase 3), I was asked to help with translation of mail, speaking on behalf of the mothers on the phone with others, such as staff members in stores, companies and doctor's office, explaining to children about their school assignments, and writing letters in English, and so on. At times, I have experienced difficulties in drawing boundaries when I was asked to help in participants' homes, particularly when I was put on the spot to help without any notice. For example, the phone rang and the mother picked up the phone, and she had problems understanding what the person on the line was trying to say. She passed the phone to me immediately and asked me to speak with the person and find out what it was about. In circumstances like this, it was very hard for me to refuse to help. However, when participants asked for help in advance, I had more time to think about if the help was appropriate and ethical before I agreed to help. One example was that a father asked me to write a letter to the court outlining the details of his character. I told the father that I was not able to do so because of my relationship with him as a researcher, not a close friend of his.

It is very clear to myself, the participants and the agency (CCDP) that our relationships were reciprocal. I depended on key informants, especially during the early stages of the research, for referral of potential participants, and their support was very helpful for me in terms of securing the first point of contact with participants. They have built a trusting relationship with the agency and my affiliation with the agency tear down some initial barriers between myself and participants. Between participants and myself, they saw me as superior to them,

having power, knowledge and skills which they lack. After building rapport and trust with the families, some of them tapped into the resources and connections I have to assist them in challenging situations. I sometimes saw it as ‘guanxi’ and felt that, to a certain extent, I might lose their trust if I refused to help with something like translation or locating information. As a trained social worker, I am aware of the ethics and roles of helping families. I do not want to make them dependent on me but empowering them to do it will be a better and more sustainable option. For example, rather than helping them with translation, I showed them how to install the google translate app on their phone so that they can try doing simple translation by themselves. Taking up the role of an educator while working with vulnerable population in the research process is deemed ethical.

### **3.7 Language Issues**

Even though all participants come from the same place – People’s Republic of China, the language they speak can vary largely depending on which province they are from. All participants speak Mandarin (the official language of China), and some speak Cantonese (a major dialect of the southern part of China) and other native dialects. In phase 1, participants speak Mandarin and some speak both Mandarin and Cantonese. Interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the participants. There are advantages of conducting interviews in the language participants choose as they feel more comfortable during the process. All participants have very limited English skills, and it is not an option for them to conduct the interview in the English language even though it is the language the research was planned out and would be written in. The fact that I could communicate effectively in their native language

helped participants feel more relaxed. It also promotes the likelihood of their disclosure of personal thoughts, emotions and beliefs as we share the same ethnicity, and interviewers were able to communicate in the participant's first language (Chiu, 2009).

After the interview was conducted, I translated the response to the interview questions of phase 1 pertaining to 'what living a good life means to you' and 'what is your dream life like in 10 years' into English. In phase 2, the social mapping exercise was conducted in Mandarin since all participants in the three groups speak the language and only a small number of them is fluent in Cantonese. In each group, I facilitated the participatory exercise while the two case workers of CCDP took notes during the process. I translated all the notes from Chinese to English on the same day and shared the translation with the case workers to cross check the accuracy of the translation. In phase 3, family interview was conducted in the language the family preferred. 3 families chose to conduct the interview in Mandarin while 2 families preferred Cantonese. I translated the interview, which was audio recorded, to English within the same week of the interview. I have discussed about the translation process with my supervisory team, and we decided to translate the interviews from Chinese into English directly, rather than conducting transcription in Chinese first, due to time and financial constraints.

Often, researchers have to be mindful of possible issues that come up when data is translated from one language into another. In this study, the researcher and the participants have the same non-English native language. In handling non-English data, translation is involved and since it is an interpretive act, meaning might get lost

in the translation process, and validity might be threatened as well. For this I resorted to consulting Yue, whom I recruited at the beginning of the research study to help with the language issue. Yue, a native Chinese whose mother tongue is Mandarin and a retired English teacher in Glasgow, was recruited to help with verification of the meaning in the translation process involving the Mandarin native speakers.

This study adopted a qualitative approach to study meanings in subjective experiences, which is closely related to language as most people use language to communicate their ideas. Nonetheless, using words to describe experiences can be a complicated process since the meaning of experiences is often not entirely accessible for subject areas which are difficult to express. People commonly use narratives and metaphors to express richness and depth of their experiences in language (Polkinghorne 2005). For example, participants (the ones who spoke the dialect of Cantonese) described idling with no job as '*eating wind*'. Being a native Cantonese speaker, I would understand the meaning of that however, I might not be able to capture the meaning when participants (the ones who spoke Mandarin) use very colloquial metaphors. Therefore, Yue, the same person described earlier in this section, was recruited to cross check the meaning of the translation to make sure they are accurate. In the translation process, I was the main person who translated all the family interviews, Yue helped with verifying the accuracy of the interviews conducted in Mandarin in the process. The limitation of this could be the translator's biases or misinterpretation involved in the translation process if one does not fully grasp the narratives or metaphors of participants.

### **3.8 Validity/Trustworthiness of research**

Qualitative research is considered valid when the distance between the meanings as experienced by the participants and the meanings as interpreted in the data analysis process is as close as possible (Polkinghorne 2007). During the most intense data collection and analysis of phase three, I followed closely the procedures of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which involves researcher's interpretation in the analysis. To minimise misinterpretation, I shared the content of the analysis with each family within a month after the family interview to check if they think the data analysis summary was accurate according to what they provided me in the process.

Scripts were randomly selected to go through back translation process to check if the meaning of the translation done in the first place was accurate. Due to time and financial constraints, I could only select some texts randomly to go through the back translation process. The result was satisfactory as most of the translated scripts were very close to the meaning to the original ones. The same person, Yue, was recruited to help in the process. This can greatly improve the trustworthiness of the data and minimise errors occurred in the translation process.

### **3.9 Limitation of the study**

Due to the fact that the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) are a hard-to-reach group, I was not able to recruit a certain target of participants in each phase of the study, therefore, findings from a small sample size was not generalisable to represent other Chinese ASRs. One participant in Phase one, who showed enthusiasm to participate in the research project and volunteer to provide information



of Chinese ASRs in Glasgow, could not be reached afterward through phone call or email. She had been working as a clerk in an attorney office and reported that there had been a large number of Chinese applying for asylum in Glasgow. I tried to contact her multiple times and there was no response. Once, while trying to reach her I used another number which she answered, however immediately, she said that she was busy and could not talk. From this I made the assumption she was deliberately not answering my call since she picked up the phone when I called from another number. She belongs to the meditation group, Falun Gong, and she received 'leave to remain' refugee status under the category of political asylum. It is possible that she might worry that the information disclosed could be potentially harmful to her and her family, who escaped the Chinese regime. Some participants, who have initially showed interest in participating in phase two, were unable to do so stating that their husbands did not approve of their participation. It is also possible that they did not want to get into any trouble potentially by disclosing their legal status. Trust is a key factor in this population; some potential participants changed their mind if they have the slightest doubt that the study might jeopardise their situation in any way. Some participants have mentioned others did not want to be identified as illegal immigrants or being destitute, and they asked not to disclose their legal status in reports or research papers.

The other limitation was the lack of participation of males in phases one and two. Participants were mainly female in this study except five men in phase one and the five men (two of which had participated in phase one) in phase three. The perspectives gathered from the male participants could be narrow and shallow, particularly if they were only interviewed with the whole family not individually in

phase three. The quieter men spoke much less than their wives in the process. In addition, it was not easy to see men in the house during home visits since they were mostly working. It would have been more ideal if more men could have participated in the individual interviews of phase one to find out what makes a good life for them and, a group of men formed for the participatory exercise in phase two to understand their social connection patterns.

For observations, there can be disadvantages associated with this method of obtaining data. It is a time-consuming method and it can be subjective as observers might spend their time observing only those aspects they paid attention to or found interest in rather than looking into the picture as a whole. Consequently, it can result in a biased observation. In addition, researchers, like myself, who has never be able to become a full part of the community under study, may end up relying heavily on key informants, whose interpretation of events may not be an accurate representation of other research participants' views. Lastly, there could be disadvantages when both the researcher and the participants share the same ethnic and cultural background. Participants could be more cautious when disclosing anything that might be considered 'shameful' and lead to 'losing face' within the Chinese community.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explained the epistemology and ontology of the study and provide details about the data collection methods, analytical approach and research process. The research approach suited to answer the research questions in the study of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees' (ASR) subjective wellbeing. It has not been an easy journey to access research participants due to the nature of this population as

“invisible” in the host community. My own experience working with refugees has been insightful and, to some extent, guided the method of enquiry of this project. Last but not least, the connection with local charities, agencies and organisations working with the Chinese ASR population were very helpful in every step of the research process such as making connections and providing physical meeting places.

## Chapter 4

### **What does ‘Living a good life’ mean to the Chinese Asylum Seekers and Refugees (ASRs) in Glasgow?**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This study set out to examine constructs of wellbeing, and the term ‘good life’, an equivalent to ‘hao shenghuo’ in Chinese was used in the interview. Wellbeing in Chinese, as in English, covers a broad spectrum and conveys a wide variety of meanings. Adopting a specific and familiar term with a practical connotation helped participants to understand the concept of wellbeing. Living a good life (hao shenghuo) and how participants envisage what it looks like in the future were captured in this phase 1 interviews. This chapter displays and examines the constructs of wellbeing from the participants’ own perspectives.

#### **4.2 Living a good life from the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees’ perspective**

The term ‘good life’ is employed to investigate the constructs of wellbeing. When asked what makes life good in the interview, the 25 participants envisioned plenty of scenarios such as staying healthy, having great and supportive friends, seeing their children receive a good quality of education and succeed in their future careers, and having a good stable job. They described their current situations, which were far from what they dreamed of as living a good life. For instance, limited English skills have been mentioned as obstacles of getting a better job or helping their children’s homework. The presentation of the findings, therefore, focused on the themes of a good life emerged from the data and barriers that participants mentioned to reflect

their current situations in the host community. Overall, social connection plays a key role for living a good life as it mitigates some of the struggles in the resettlement process. The constructs of wellbeing from the interview can be categorised into the following themes:

- Children's education
- Social relationship: Support from friends
- Employment and financial independence
- Health: Staying healthy and access to health care
- Human Rights in the UK
- Living environment (location, neighbourhood, quality of the place and the people, food, and transportation)
- Legal Status
- Personal Growth

#### **4.2.1 Children's Education**

Chinese mothers involved in the study put great focus on education. Many mentioned the importance of children attending good schools, having more learning opportunities, such as tutorials after school and learning Chinese on Saturdays, and taking part in extra-curricular activities. Most Chinese families see education as the only and most efficient way to get out of poverty. Academic achievement and success in extra-curricular activities are seen as stepping stones for the next generation to move up the social ladder. One female participant whose children are two years old and eight months said in the interview,

*“I have been trying to find a good nursery for my older child to give him a head start. I hope my children can receive the best education so they can be more competitive when they grow up.”* (Female refugee, 25)

Success in schools and having professionally secured jobs later in life are considered a valuable social capital. Parents put the interests of their children before their own. It was not uncommon to hear Chinese parents say that they would be happy if their children study hard, graduate from a good university and secure a professional job. Some parents welcomed extra academic support and help in the community so that their children could learn more outside school hours. A female participant emphasised the importance of a supportive environment in the community and said,

*“Children’s after-school activities are very helpful such as those organised by the Queen Cross Chinese community. Our area doesn’t have any Chinese community centre like that. They provide a lot of practical classes such as after school tuition program for children after school and other fun and healthy activities like badminton. I wish we could have a centre in our area since we couldn’t move easily to that area.”* (Female refugee, 32)

The quality of their children’s education, such as getting into a good school and receiving fair and decent treatment from teachers and staff, was also mentioned as important. Some participants worried about discriminatory treatment toward their children at school. One participant said,

*“I heard from my sister-in-law that some Chinese children are discriminated in school. I hope my kid will go to a good school and learn happily there. It hurts the*

*child's feelings to see the teacher gives something better to other children but not them, even just a snack, they might question why.” (Female asylum seeker, 29)*

Overall, participants ranked their children's education, learning opportunities as among the top factors contributing to their own happiness. Many thought little of their own education except attending ESOL classes to improve their English language skills. In addition, some participants become more informed of the education systems and opportunities for their children's learning from good friends. Having a good relationship with friends was considered precious especially for information sharing.

#### **4.2.2 Social relationships (Connections with families and friends)**

Participants think being close to their immediate family and also to their family of origin in China is important for their wellbeing. Living far away from their parents, relatives and close friends in China is often difficult for those who have a close relationship with their family and friends. One participant said,

*“The most important is being with family together. I enjoy being close to my son's family here in Glasgow and spending time care for my two grand-children. I hope my other son's family will come to live here so I don't have to worry about them.”*  
(Female refugee, 62)

Culturally, Chinese people maintain a close knit with their extended family. Some participants have not seen their family in China for a long time, and thus, are hoping

to go home for a visit soon. Participants have described the hope of reunion with their family members,

*“Being close to family makes me feel safe.”*(Female asylum seeker, 23)

*“I am hoping to go back to China to visit with my parents; that will be a very happy day for me.”* (Female refugee, 28)

*“It is very important for me to keep in touch with my family, especially my parents in China. But it is difficult for them to get a visa to come to visit us. I have applied on their behalf for a few times but they were all turned down by the UK government. I have a 3-year-old daughter and a job here, and my parents want to see us badly especially their grand-daughter, whom they have never met.”*

(Female refugee, 25)

The situation is challenging for the family who lived apart and have no means to visit one another due to immigration and visa rules. Some participants mentioned they have to wait for a long time before they can get a UK passport so they can travel back home to visit family and friends.

Many female participants mentioned having close Chinese friends for support has been very helpful for them, especially those who rely on friends who know English well for help with translation. People like to live close to their ethnic group so they can reach out to each other for help more easily.



*“Having Chinese friends nearby helps a lot. It is important for me to share my ups and downs, and our children can play together and have their own fun.”* (Female refugee, 30)

*“I talk to my Chinese friends on the phone often. We support each other and help one another in times of difficulties.”* (Female asylum seeker, 27)

Chinese families who are from the same province, such as Fujian, stick together for support and social gathering. They speak the same dialect, and often, people who have mastered the English language well and have more social networks in the group help those who are in need.

A few participants have mentioned the issue with asking for or receiving help from their ethnic group because of the reciprocity of ‘*Guanxi*’, which literally means social relationship. Because of the need for reciprocity, one feels obligated to return favours if he or she receives help. Much writing about social connections ignores the potentially negative side such as feeling burdened of receiving help. One participant reported that making friends with other non-Chinese refugee group gives her equal footing.

*“My friend is from Sudan. We are in the same boat and she does not expect anything from me, unlike some Chinese friends. Also, it is sometimes easier to make friends from other countries other than the local Scottish people. I feel inferior to the local people, and don't know how they think of me and my way of doing things.”* (Female asylum seeker, 28)

Important insight can be drawn from the above quote such as potential for non-Chinese refugee friendships; comparison of making friends with Scottish people; and perceptions of local people and their attitudes. Participants who are more open to making friends with other refugee group other than their own could make good use of the opportunity to practice their English. Most of them mentioned they did not use the language in the local community as they feel inferior to the local people. They also were afraid that the local people would not understand them as they perceived their English is poor. It might be a possibility for the Chinese ASRs to cultivate friendship with other non-Chinese refugee groups.

Social connections are considered a crucial indicator of living a good life according to the findings. However, some participants expressed the struggles and challenges in staying close with their family or friends, and thus, feel isolated and helpless at times:

*“Everyone is busy with their lives; I don’t want to disturb others all the time. With a few young children at home, I sometimes stay home days and nights without going out. I feel isolated and just not good, I guess.”* (Female asylum seeker, 25).

#### **4.2.3 Employment and financial stability**

Men, being the breadwinner of the family, reported having a stable job as very important. They hoped to keep their jobs and saved up enough money to start their own small business like a take-away shop one day. A male participant said,

*“Well, as long as I can provide for the family, put food on the table, and have a roof over our heads, I am content and, that’s my priority. Hopefully, I can have my own business like a friend of mine, it will help improve our lives when we have more money. (Male refugee, 41)*

Having a better job is mentioned as an important aspect of a good life for a few female participants. They have expressed the desire of finding a more fulfilling job once the children are older.

*“I hope to find a job in the hotel industry where I can meet more different people rather than working in the Chinese take-away or grocery store.” (Female refugee, 31)*

Ninety percent of the mothers interviewed, however, have not thought of working while their children are young. They mentioned children whose mothers have to work in catering/take away places as being very poor and pitiful. These women, as interviewees thought, are unable to take good care of their children and even worse, some children have to wander around the catering shop or on the street.

*“I often have to take care of a boy for my friend, who works during weekends. I don’t know what will happen to him if I can’t take him with me. It’s not a good situation for her son or the family.” (Female refugee, 30)*

For the husbands, most women hoped that they kept their employment in catering and restaurants, and that they could save up enough money to start a takeaway shop or small-scale restaurant someday, very similar to what the men themselves hope to

achieve. Men talked about other successful owners of takeaway shops and the profit they made:

*“We have very low education level, and have got no skills, starting a small business and being your own boss is a big deal.”* (Male refugee, 40)

Some participants mentioned having their own house would improve their economic situation, and thus their family wellbeing. Having one’s own house is often mentioned when asked what their dream life is like in the interview. Participants believe that they will never own their home if they just put money for renting unlike putting money in a mortgage toward their own home. One participant described her dream:

*“We dream about having a house with a small garden where the children have enough space to run around and play. That will be our dream come true.”*  
(Female refugee, 28)

Other participants also mentioned similar desire of owning their own houses:

*“We have been renting from the government and it would be helpful if we get some information on how to purchase a home someday.”*(Male refugee, 36)

*“Having one’s own house is important since the rent is very expensive here. However, it is difficult for refugees to get a mortgage.”* (Female refugee, 37)

Having one’s own home brings prestige and status to individuals. The tradition of *“having fields and land”* in Chinese symbolises prosperity and wealth. It belongs to

the class of landlord. Owning your place is far more desirable and practical than renting according to participants.

#### **4.2.4 Health: Staying healthy and access to health care**

Most participants mentioned staying healthy as very important for family wellbeing.

As participants said,

*“Nothing is more important than staying healthy; health is wealth in our Chinese saying.”* (Female refugee, 42)

*“It is very important to be healthy so I can take care of my family.”* (Female refugee, 29)

*“My children’s overall health is an important aspect. I want to see my children growing in a supportive environment. Knowing my children are healthy (physically and psychologically) and happy makes me happy here in the UK.”*  
(Female refugee, 31)

Participants understand money cannot help them buy a healthy body. Mothers stress the importance of keeping the family healthy. On the other hand, free access to health care is deemed extremely important when they are ill. Participants have reported some barriers to health care in the process.

##### *4.2.4.1 Barriers to health care*

Some discussed the challenges going to the local GP such as the language barrier, long wait time, and unavailability of an interpreter. The communication problem between participants and medical professionals is one of the biggest obstacles to

accessing care, and it affects the perceived quality of health care. In addition, the attitude of medical staff affects the perception of the services received. Some participants mentioned,

*"It is difficult to arrange interpreter at the GP office, and I have no choice but ask my friend to take me since she can speak English well. If my friend is busy, I have to take my teenage daughter to translate for me,"* (Female refugee, 32)

*"Health is very important and there is often at least a few days wait before I can see my GP. The staff at some clinics have a terrible attitude towards us once they know of our legal status. It is upsetting for us."* (Female asylum seeker, 28)

One participant mentioned he did not trust the medical staff or facilities in Glasgow. He said that his friend had a very bad experience with the doctors and the medical system, and it affected his perception of the quality of health care. He said,

*"Even though medical care is free here, the service is slow, and the quality is poor. I have a friend who was diagnosed with cancer too late, and he had to go back to China for surgery since the wait was too long here for him to get treatment."* (Male refugee, 36)

#### **4.2.5 Human Rights in the UK**

Some participants mentioned being free to choose what they like to believe, to say and do, and pursue their interests as an important construct of wellbeing. Two participants shared their thoughts:

*“I enjoy the freedom here, unlike China, you cannot say anything bad about the government or you will be dead! Here, people treat you fairly and you can openly express your view on the Scottish Government or any political parties.”* (Female refugee, 32)

*"Human rights are important; I am free to choose what I like to pursue here, like I practice the spiritual exercise of the Falun Gong, which has been persecuted by the Chinese government. I am glad I can keep up with the exercise since it keeps me healthy and relaxed.”*(Female refugee, 58)

Some participants treasure the freedom of speech and gathering and freedom to choose what they believe in the UK. However, some participants are very careful not to disclose personal information or comment on how life in Scotland differs from China. Even though they are living in the UK now, some are hesitant to comment lives in China to the researcher. Participants might worry about the repercussion for themselves and their families if they disclosed their treatments from the Chinese government.

There are five interviewees, who belong to the spiritual exercise group (Falun Dafa), participated in the interview. They have mentioned the importance of being able to gather with the Dafa group members to study Fa (a book written by the founder) and practice the spiritual exercise together with other practitioners. The Chinese government has been persecuting the Falun Dafa group since 1999 and putting group members in detention and brainwashing centres. Freedom to speak the truth about their belief in public and gather with other Dafa members are deemed very important

for their wellbeing. The trauma of refugees who experienced persecution and torture was discussed in Chapter 2 Literature Review.

The asylum phase is a difficult period experienced by those who have received refugee status and those who are waiting in limbo. In the interviews, some participants, particularly the men, reported that the right to work is very important for them during the asylum phase. The money provided by the government is not sufficient for them to provide for their family. Also, all men preferred to work, rather than sitting at home waiting for the welfare money to be given to them. They feel helpless; and some have broken the rules and work illegally. Two participants expressed their concerns:

*“Having legal status is crucial at the moment; I am willing to work and want to do it legally. I can’t just wait endlessly and I have a family to feed.”* (Male asylum seeker, 28)

*“I want to work legally, not to worry about being caught by the Home Office working as an asylum seeker.”* (Male refugee, 32)

Male participants mentioned not being able to work legally as one of the greatest struggles financially and emotionally during the asylum phase. They were afraid of being caught working but they need the money to support their families.

*“I couldn’t sit at home and wait for the welfare money for my family. We have three kids and it makes me feel helpless and useless to sit at home all day and do*



*nothing when I was seeking asylum. Now, I feel much better having a job and provide for my family.” (Male refugee, 36)*

#### *4.2.5.1 Barriers to rights*

Experiences of discriminatory treatment can be a barrier to living a just and free life.

These experiences also affect both adults and children on the perception of the local community, the formal and voluntary agencies, people in authority, and also the local people in the host country. It definitely creates significant challenges for those who experienced discrimination for pursuing different aspects of the ‘good life’. Some participants talked about their experiences:

*“Once, a student in school poured ketchup on my shirt during lunch, and I was really upset and went to tell the teacher, but she told me it was an accident.”*

*(Female refugee, 16)*

*“My friend’s kid was discriminated at school and the teacher doesn’t pay much attention to her. The child is very upset telling her mother that the teacher seldom talks to her, only to the local students.” (Female asylum seeker, 28)*

*“The attitude of some staff in the clinic was very hostile and rude once they found out we are asylum seekers. It was very upsetting, and it made me angry.” (Female asylum seeker, 23)*

Overall, participants treasure the freedom of speech and association, and acknowledge the importance of being able to pursue one’s interests and express one’s opinion as crucial to pursuing a good life in Glasgow. Some mentioned that

they could not enjoy those rights if they were still living in China. In addition, the lack of the right to work during the asylum phase have put families in financial hardship and men in a helpless situation. They not only lose the opportunity to earn for the family and maintain the breadwinner role, but also feel helpless waiting endlessly with nothing to do. It is common to hear participants say, *“We are just surviving here in Glasgow.”*

#### **4.2.6 The physical environment**

When asked what they deemed essential for living a good life, most participants mentioned their living environment, such as the location, the quality of air and water, cleanliness of the streets, the quality of the neighbours and the community, and the availability of affordable and efficient transportation. Participants enjoy the fresh air and the clean water in Scotland especially when they compare the air and water quality in China.

*“We certainly love the fresh air and the parks Scotland provide for us to enjoy. We take the children out to the parks when we are free.”* (Female refugee, 26)

There are challenges and concerns under this theme as well. The participant commented:

*“Fresh air and a clean living environment is important. I love the air quality here but the streets are quite dirty, like I often see a lot of rubbish on the street in my neighbourhood. And the dog’s poop are everywhere, we have to walk with great care.”* (Female asylum seeker, 28)

*“It is a bit dirty in the neighbourhood, and there are often broken glasses from beer bottles I believe on the sidewalk very often. Worse still when I took the kids out in the stroller, the broken glass on the ground punctured the wheels a couple times.”* (Female refugee, 24)

Participants also hope to see not only a clean and friendly community but also a well-planned community with sports facilities cater to the needs for families with children, grocery stores with fresh produce, malls, parks and playgrounds for children to play and run around, etc. Another important aspect people mentioned is transportation. Good, affordable, efficient and easy-to-use transport facilities are deemed very important for a good quality of life.

*“Transport cost is very expensive here, and it will be good if the government gives us some help especially for children so we can go out more often.”* (Female refugee, 25)

*“Affordability is important, also, more frequent bus and train services too. Now, it takes more than an hour one way to go to work. The fare is expensive too.”* (Male refugee, 32)

A senior participant was very grateful for the senior benefits in Scotland and mentioned the advantage of free transportation for seniors improved her life:

*“I don’t have to pay for my transport cost in Scotland because of the senior benefit here. It helps me to get to places and see friends, or I just hop on a bus*

*and stay till the last stop, walk around there and come back on the same bus. In that case, I won't get lost.*" (Female refugee, 62)

Overall, people find the living environment in Glasgow pleasant. They enjoy the beauty of the countryside and parks in the urban areas. Some found the local people helpful. One thing that almost all participants mentioned was the cold windy weather, which is harsh and difficult for them to get used to.

#### **4.2.7 Personal Growth**

Among all the participants, a few have expressed wellbeing in terms of personal growth in different areas such as learning new skills like driving, pursuing their interests, and achieving spiritual growth and inner peace. One participant mentioned building her confidence:

*"I want to build up confidence in myself and learn to have my own opinions, and that's what I am gradually working on. I believe they are important to contribute to a better life for me."* (Female refugee, 21)

A Falun Gong practitioner mentioned the importance of spirituality and continuing with her practice of the meditation and physical exercise with the group to lead a peaceful and spiritual life.

*"My overall wellbeing such as psychological health and spirituality is very important to me, I want to focus on a spiritual life- to be in peace with myself and the world."* (Female asylum seeker, 28)

*“I think being able to afford the time and expenses in pursuing my interests will give life meaning and make me happy.” (Female refugee, 42)*

Among the participants, there was a high school student, who came to Scotland just a year ago to reunite with her mother, who was granted refugee status. For her, being able to continue her hobbies is an important factor in adjusting to a new life in Scotland.

*“A peace of mind is important, I need to be able to allow myself to feel and see things in a new way; running alone outside helps me feel better since it clears my mind. I hope I can continue to learn and excel in playing the piano, I makes me happy when I play the piano.” (Female refugee, 16)*

Participants who are parents took a more collective approach to seeing what a good life means to them. Children’s education and success in life and their wellbeing became priorities above their personal wellbeing for mothers, and the financial situation of the family for fathers for example. Personal growth and personal satisfaction are things that people might start to ponder on after their basic needs are met.

#### **4.3 The English Language—A facilitating role**

Most participants said that they have tried to learn the English language but did not master it. Two female participants wanted to look for jobs in the hotel sector, but they had concerns over their English language skills. On the whole, participants acknowledged the importance of the English language in their daily lives. Most mothers expressed a desire to know English well enough to understand the

paperwork from school and the letters in the mail. They were concerned about not being able to figure out what was required of them from their children's school and the Scottish Government.

*“I hardly understand anything my children bring home from school. How can I help if I don't know what they are supposed to do? It is very frustrating. It will help me a lot if the community or school provides classes after school for my children so they get help to finish their homework or projects. Since all the communication like their projects and worksheet are in English, I have no way to help them if they have any questions.”* (Female refugee, 24)

Older children, who arrived the U.K. a few years ago, also have difficulties with the English language in the beginning. Most have been able to catch up with the curriculum at school but the parents think it would be helpful if the school could offer more support to them such as extra English classes.

*“Supplementary English classes for those children who just arrived the UK will be very helpful. My oldest one is 11, and he finds it difficult to catch up in classes since he only started learning English last year. He's a good student and he is very good at Mathematics. It is just the language that is holding him back.”*

(Female refugee, 32)

Facing those challenges, participants reported that they do not know how to communicate with the school and the wider community. Some have tried to find ways to learn the language. They could not make friends with the local people or get a desirable job that requires a certain level of the English proficiency. In addition,

some female participants complained about the long waiting list for ESOL classes. Some expressed difficulties in attending classes with small children at home. Consequently, participants relied on their Chinese friends who know English well or case workers at CCDP to help with translating letters and making phone calls for an inquiry.

*“I have been waiting to get enrolled in the ESOL class a couple blocks from my home for two years, and they haven’t contacted me yet.”* (Female refugee, 31)

Many participants feel that the English language is their barrier to a good life. They reported that the lack of English language skill has been a huge obstacle in many aspects of lives. Some have been learning the language but still many participants do not think they possess basic reading and writing skills.

*“I wish there were more English classes for me to choose from near where I live. I have been waiting to secure a seat in the class but the waiting list is long. One of my friends waited for 2 years before she got in a class.”* (Female refugee, 23)

*“The location they give me was far from my house and it would be helpful to have a place close to where I live as my children are young, it will save lots of time and it will be more convenient for me to care for the children.”* (Female asylum seeker, 28)

To sum up, the frustrations of not able to enroll in ESOL classes close to home, the long wait before participants can start learning the language in classes, limited

childcare or transportation support for those in need, and supplementary English classes for their children are mentioned as the main obstacles for acquiring the English language skill. It is one of the major barriers that prevent participants from achieving a good life as mentioned in the interviews.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

There are concerns and challenges participants mentioned during the interview that prevent them from optimising their wellbeing and achieving what they see as important at the time of the interview. Having limited English skills was one of the greatest barriers mentioned. Many cannot communicate their needs and concerns to government agencies, housing office, schools and neighbours. Also, some have experienced discrimination or heard about others' experiencing it. Those incidents could be upsetting and made them worried about their own situation in Glasgow. While owning one's house or sending their children to extra-curricular activities were important to participants, living in poverty made their dreams look too far to be reached.

Throughout phase 1 of the study, participants mentioned not only the importance of having supportive close friends from their ethnic group, but also friendly neighbours, teachers, doctors and staff in clinics as constructs of a good life. Social relationships provide many benefits particularly practical and emotional support. Most participants have experienced both friendly and not so friendly situations, and these experiences impact how they perceive lives in Glasgow. To conclude, social relationships were mentioned as one of the factors in living a good life by participants. It has a crucial role in impacting all the other factors. For instance, having a good friend who takes



participants to the clinic or share information of a better school facilitate access to health care and possibly a good education for their children. Overall, this population has not actively sought formal support in their host community, as key informants reported. How they are supported by their friends and family and the ethnic community becomes a key factor, especially in times of needs and crisis, in whether they live a good life. This research aims to study in great depth how social connection patterns enable and foster the wellbeing of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees, which was explored in phase two.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Impact of social connections on the resettlement experiences of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the constructs of subjective wellbeing of participants were laid out. The key constructs that emerged were children's education, social relationships, employment and financial independence, health care, human rights, the living environment, legal status, and personal growth. In the interview, participants also reported they were struggling with issues such as language barriers, social isolation, emotional and mental health, and lack of information and access to services. The findings revealed that English language proficiency is a significant facilitator, which participants lack, in the resettlement process. All these barriers and concerns engender a sense of powerlessness and exclusion and negatively affect participants' overall wellbeing. It can be argued that the negative impact of social isolation on mental health and wellbeing is likely cumulative, as each deprivation provokes others (Strang & Ager, 2010). Therefore, understanding social connections and their roles in people's lives is crucial.

In phase two, the study aims to look at the support participants have for practical and emotional needs, and their awareness of agencies, services and resources available to them in the host community. In the research process, participants' social connection patterns and trust level of others and of agencies were mapped out. The objective was to find out what resources and support people have and from where they receive the

support. The challenges and issues emerged; together with the implications; recommendations were presented subsequently.

Research on Chinese asylum seekers and refugees is rarely seen in the literature. This population seldom seek help from mainstream service providers or engage in workshops to learn about the resources in host communities. The help of the caseworkers at the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) has eased the process of this participatory exercise since some participants have known the agency and the workers for some time, and thus, have built a trusting relationship with the agency. Also, 12 participants took part in phase 1 and had some understanding of the research project. I have built some rapport with participants since phase one. Overall, these 15 participants showed limited awareness of support services available in their host communities. All participants are female, and they are asylum seekers or refugees living in Glasgow (Participants' demographics can be found in Chapter 3 Methodology).

Previously, I tried to recruit men to take part in this phase of the study, however none of them responded to the invitation. When discussing with the caseworkers at CCDP the possibility of forming a group for men in phase two, they reported that it would be very challenging since Chinese men are not willing to share their problems or their feelings with family members or close friends, not to mention strangers in a group. Also, most Chinese men work in takeaway or Chinese restaurants from 11 in the morning to 11 at night. They catch up with their sleep during their one day off, often on Mondays. They have little time to spend with their family, especially children, who wake up to a father who is sleeping in the morning and go to bed when

the father is still at work. This is a group of men "*who could experience isolation or depression in silence*" as reported by staff.

## **5.2 Social mapping and card sorting exercises**

In this section, I will discuss the findings from the participatory exercises, including observations from the research process. Social mapping and card sorting exercises were utilized to understand the patterns of bonds, bridges and links (details about how these were carried out can be found in Ch. 3, section 3.4.4).

### **5.2.1 Mapping Social Connections of Chinese asylum seekers and refugees**

The social mapping exercise helped to create a collective ‘map’ of social connection patterns for each group detailing the names of individuals and places where participants obtained help and support. Participants talked about their family members, neighbours, friends, agencies, and organisations as contacts of support, all of which were plotted on the map according to the geographic proximity to their household location, and it was done with the help of participants in locating where people and organisations are situated; these contacts ranged from current UK neighbourhoods to overseas persons and organizations. Three maps representing the three different groups of participants are noted below (Figures 6, 7 & 8).

The data from the participatory exercise shows the actual people and organisations that the Chinese ASRs perceive as a resource for the particular problems discussed in those exercise. The three problems were selected as familiar experiences for this group (see section 3.4.4.2 p.115 for a list of the three problems). They were also deliberately constructed to represent the three main kinds of relationships essential to

wellbeing according to social capital theory, namely ‘bonds’, for people who are like us such as from our own ethnic group, or any other identity that we share (age, income, neighbourhood, similar interests). ; ‘Bridges’, - for people who are different to us because of some aspect of identity we don’t share. Bridges offer connection between people and society, through access to services or participation in society through for example, voting. Finally, ‘links’ – resources and networks derived from relationships of particular communities that link to the State or other institutions of power and influence. Consequently, the range of social connections generated by the exercise can be understood as providing a representation of the range of connections to which the Chinese ASRs have access. I have then collated the individual data gathered from the card sorting tasks to superimpose findings about the levels of connection and ‘reciprocity’ (opportunities for giving help and support), as well as trust, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The three figures derived from the social mapping exercise share a lot of similarities in terms of the availability of help and support, the knowledge of wider services and organisations, and access to services and rights. The data for all the 3 groups suggests some close bonding relationships. Participants reported living with their husbands and children in Glasgow, and the figures show that they are closely connected with their husbands and children (It is measured by whether participants contacted the individuals/organisations in the past six months as shown in Chapter 3, Methodology). Also, all groups reported high levels of connections with Chinese close friends as well as other Chinese friends, who know English well in Glasgow. Another similarities in social connections pattern are that all groups are closely connected with their families or parents in China and two groups are closely

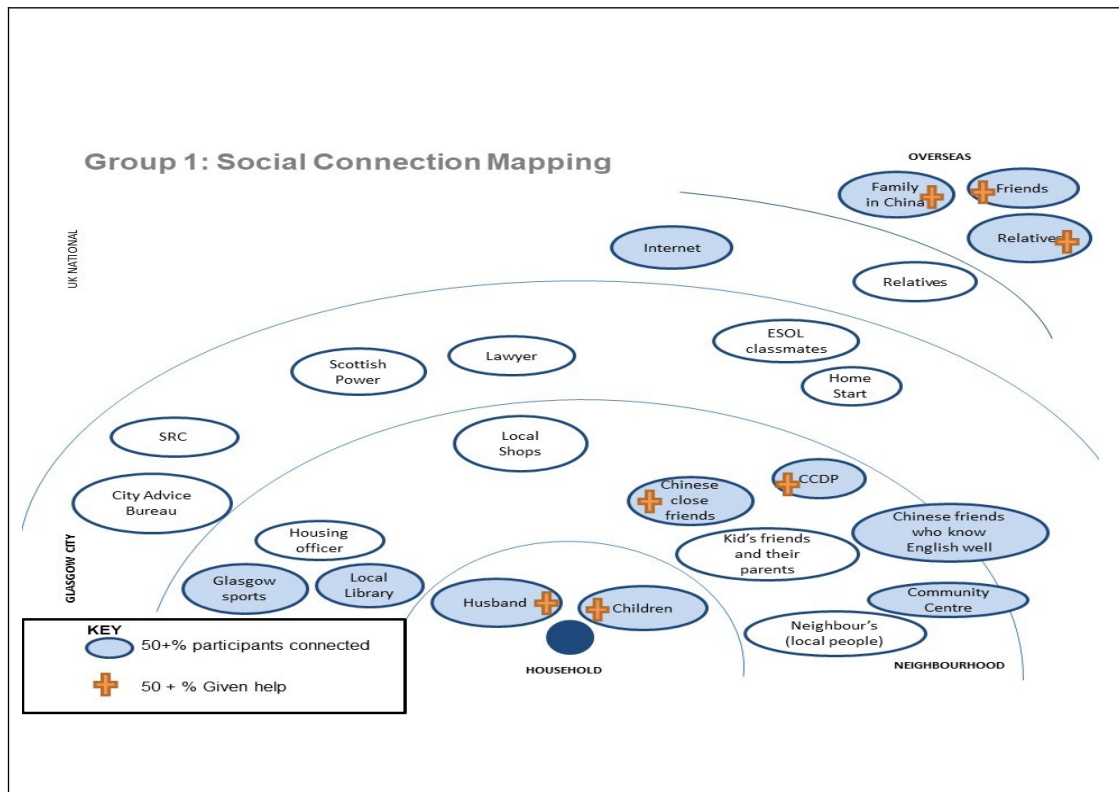
connected with their friends in China. All of them rely on the internet to access for information or search for answers to their problems. In the community, CCDP is the agency that all groups turn to for help and support.

As we can see in the 3 figures, participants mentioned that local library (located in Springburn, Hillhead and Maryhill areas) serves as a common gathering place for women and children. The figures indicate that participants are closely connected with their local library. Participants' levels of social connections as shown in the 3 figures will be discussed in detail from the mapping data, field notes, and interview data in the following section. There are some differences shown in the data for the 3 groups. First, one participant (group 2) mentioned friends at a Chinese church and two participants mentioned seeking help from the local police (group 2). Second, participants in group 3 have not heard of Glasgow Sports while some participants in the other groups had utilized activities there for their children, such as swimming and martial arts. Third, only participants in group 1 mentioned ESOL classmates and parents of their children's friends as support in the mapping data. The field notes in phase 2 indicated that group 2 (which has 6 participants, who are slightly younger than the other two groups), shared more information during the mapping exercises, compared to the other two groups. It could be possible that the younger and more outspoken ones are more likely to contact the local police for help. Group 3 has the least participants and there are 2 asylum seekers in the group, and they have relatively fewer people or organisations available to them as shown on the figure.

The findings from the social mapping exercises resemble some similarities with the findings conducted by Strang and Quinn (2019) with single refugee men from

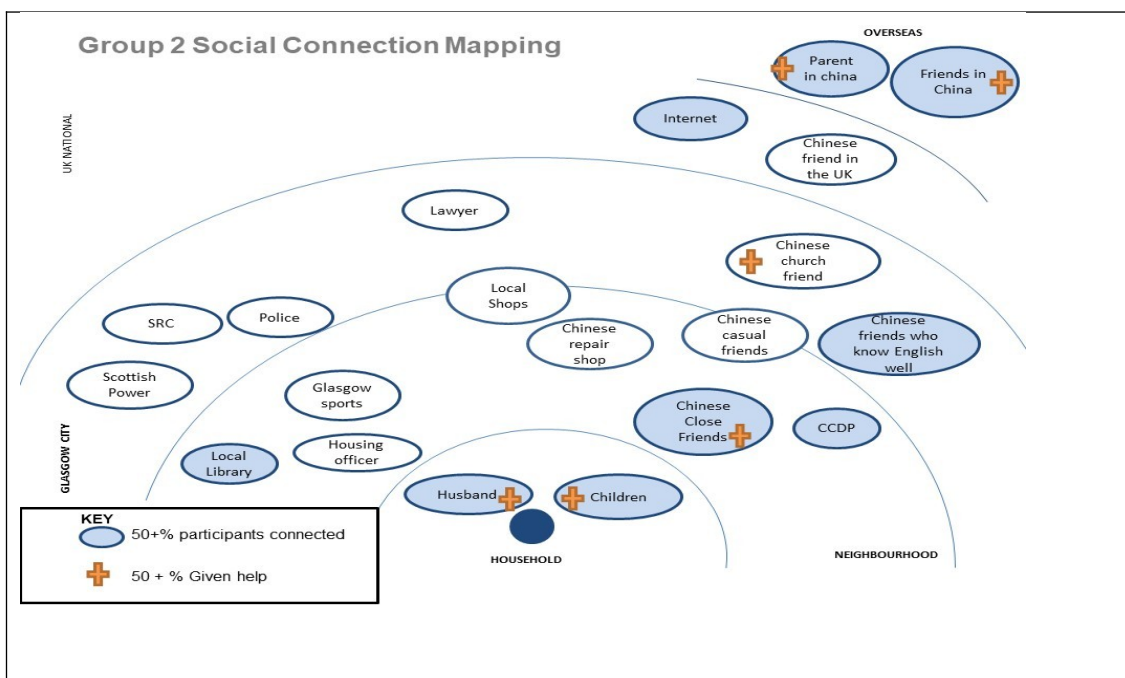
Afghanistan and Iran. Researchers in both exercises found it difficult to locate participants and almost half of the people who agreed to participate did not attend the workshop to which they have been invited. All groups in the two studies found that the range of support that participants mentioned was limited and did not include many of the agencies that do offer support to asylum seekers and refugees (e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau or Colleges). Also, most participants were not aware of any national agencies that might be helpful for legal issues, asylum claims or access to housing or financial needs. Participants from both studies rely heavily on the internet to keep in touch with friends and family, as well as finding out information and resources. The main difference in findings of these two studies is the close bonding relationship for the Chinese women with their family whereas the lack of this relationship for the men from both Afghanistan and Iran as fewer than half of the men were in contact with family or close friends in Glasgow. One can attribute this phenomenon to gender differences as one group was entirely female while the other male. Besides, the average age of the men is younger and all of them are single at the time of the study. On the other hand, most women are married, have children and live with their families in Glasgow. Their role is mainly related to caregiving and housekeeping, and most of them do not hold a job as their husbands are the breadwinner of the family. This might explain the reason why they are more inclined to connect to other women and children, as well as their extended family and friends for emotional support, compared to the single men in the other study.

Figure 6 Group 1 Social connection mapping (N=5)

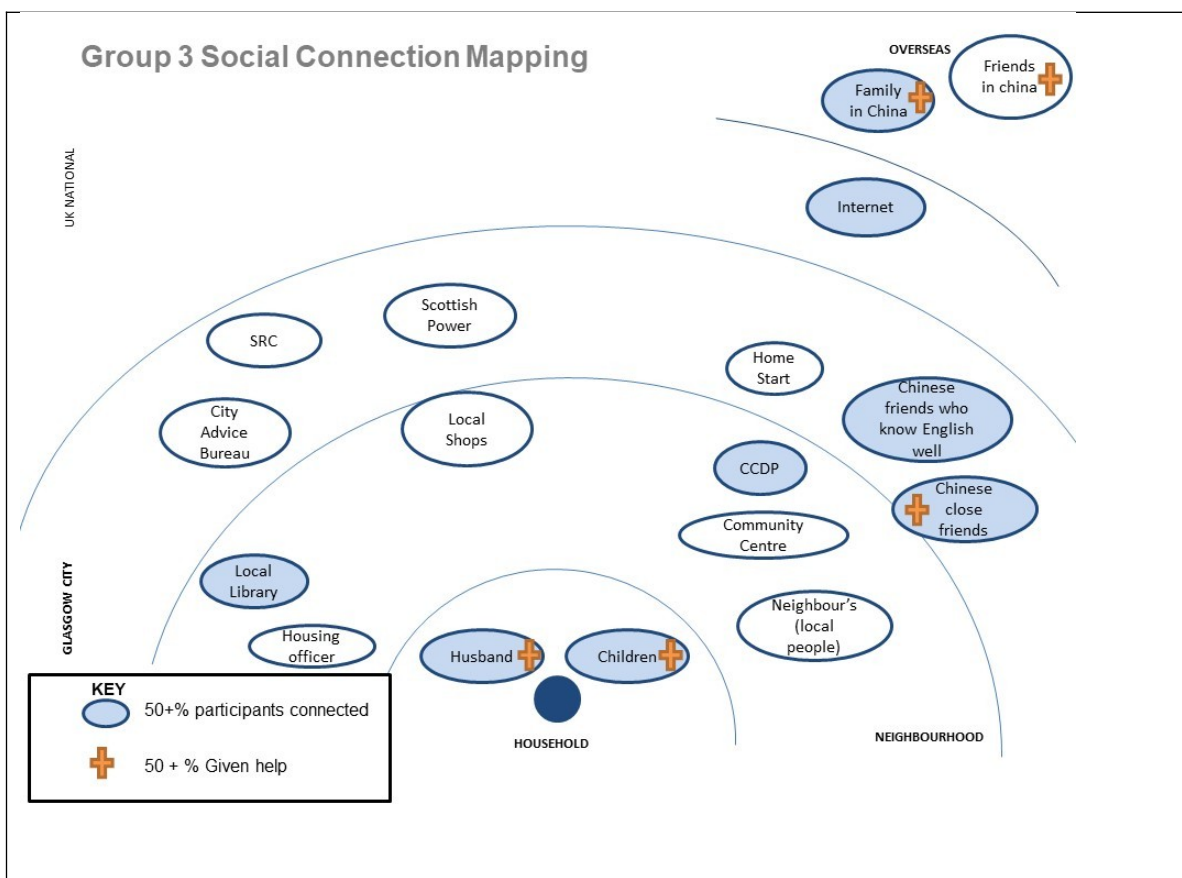




**Figure 7 Group 2 Social connection mapping (N=6)**



**Figure 8 Group 3 Social connection mapping (N=4)**



The three maps above (Figures 6, 7 and 8) represent the three different groups of participants (group 1, 2 and 3). Each group carried out the participatory exercises once.

### **5.2.2 Measuring connectedness, opportunities to help and levels of trust**

The card sorting tasks, followed by the mapping exercises, helped to explore individual connectedness, opportunities to give help and levels of trust (details of the method can be found in Chapter 3). Findings regarding social connectedness and reciprocity (opportunities to give help) were recorded in the same set of maps (Figure 6, 7 and 8). The level of trust was illustrated on a separate chart shown in Fig. 9. Findings reveal fair to strong connections with family, friends from the same ethnic group for some participants, limited utilisation of local services, lack of trust and engagement with local service providers, and lack of opportunities to give and contribute to the host community.

## **5.3 Awareness and levels of social connections**

### **5.3.1 Connection with their family**

The data suggest that the participants have access to bonding capital with their family members. Most participants live with their husband and children in Glasgow and mentioned their husband as the person who they would call for help if their cell phone was not working or if they had issues such as electricity problems in the house. A participant said,

*“My husband asked me to call the Chinese caseworker to inquire about a particular Chinese guy who might know where to fix broken cell phone in town.”* (Female refugee, Group 2)

Many participants discussed the types of support they would request from their husbands. Tasks related to technical advice, such as broken pipes or machines, are likely to be dealt with by the husbands. When discussing problems around the house, particularly children's issues or emotional support, most participants reported they would not talk to their husbands as those are not their duties. Some said that taking care of children, especially young children, and cooking for the family are the responsibility of females. They also did not trust that their husbands would be careful enough to care for young children. A participant said,

*“I would never ask my husband to change the baby’s diapers or watch little kids. I don’t think I can rely on him to do a good job. Plus that’s really not something he’s good at doing, so why bother him? That’s not men’s job.”*

(Female refugee, Group 3)

The mentality of *“men take care of things from outside the home while women stay home to look after things inside,”* was mentioned by participants. Some, however, said that they have no choice but ask their husbands to watch the young children when they have a doctor's appointment, for example.

Besides, they also mentioned their older children as an important source of support. Older children, particularly those 11 years old and older often take on the role of little helpers for their mothers. They help with problems in the house and technical

issues, for example when the mothers have problems figuring out how to download certain applications on their cell phone. Parents also turn to older children for help with getting information on the internet and asking them to make phone calls to relevant departments or agencies in order to resolve issues because of their limited English language skills.

*“I always turn to my son for help, you know, I have nobody to rely on in the house and I’m very glad that he can help me with things such as taking care of his younger brother and making a phone call to the housing office.”*

(Female refugee, Group 2)

On the whole, as suggested by the findings and shown in the figures, the female participants are well-connected with their husbands and children. Participants reported they would first approach family for help if they are available.

### **5.3.2 Connections with Chinese friends in Glasgow**

During the mapping exercises, participants talked about how they were linked with other Chinese people and agencies in Glasgow. Some participants talked about meeting other Chinese people on the bus, in the trains, in libraries and parks, in the local schools and particularly the Chinese school that children attend on Saturdays. Some mentioned they made friends in the ESOL classes, Chinese community centres and agencies, such as CCDP. Even though participants know of quite a number of Chinese people in Glasgow, they disclosed that they have a small number of close friends they could turn to when they need help and support. It is very clear that the social connections they have are limited in both numbers and resources, as they do

not get much assistance out of those connections. Thus, the very few close friends each one possess have become very precious.

Participants mentioned they often turn to close friends from the same ethnic group for help and support, especially if they feel bored or frustrated.

*“I call my friend when I feel bored and we both have young children. Sometimes she will suggest going to the library or park near her house together. If she’s not free, at least we can chat on the phone for a little while and that cheers me up too.”* (Female asylum seeker, Group 1)

Participants also mentioned that friends who know English well are very ‘valuable’. They can often provide practical help and information for the participants.

*“Even if Mable is busy, she sometimes directs me to the right person and place to get help; it’s so good that I have a friend who speaks the English language.”* (Female asylum seeker, Group 1)

A few participants mentioned they do not want to overload their friends for help with translation, particularly when they have a limited capacity to offer any favours in return.

*“I only have one or two friends who know English well enough to help me. I will not bother them unless it’s something very urgent or important. I feel like I owe them favours, and I don’t know what I can do to repay them.”* (Female refugee, Group 1)

Many participants rely on their close Chinese friends for support, most often when they feel isolated. Some of them, however, have been in Glasgow for several years and have not been able to make good friends. For many, the few close friends they have in their lives are deemed precious. Several mentioned they know a lot of Chinese people, but they have only a few close friends they would turn to for practical and emotional support.

*“I have been here for three years now and I would say I have only one close friend. When she is busy, I just don’t have anyone I can think of to call for help. That’s not a good feeling!”* (Female refugee, Group 3)

During the participatory exercise, participants gave a number of reasons for not seeking help from others. Some participants mentioned they sometimes choose not to seek help from family or friends because of ‘face’ (the concept of face/mian zi can be found in Chapter 2 under the heading of Chinese cultural beliefs). They do not want to be perceived as weak or poor, or looked down upon by others. Some participants mentioned they would only seek support from a few close friends who they trust. Gossip in the Chinese community can be upsetting, as one participant shared.

*“I would try to avoid sharing my problems with friends who I am not sure if they can keep a secret. It was very embarrassing once I found out others in the community knew of my health problems.”* (Female refugee, Group 3)

Trust is an important element in the decision making process of seeking help or sharing their problems with friends. Some participants talked about not utilising

formal services such as translating at doctor's appointment if they did not trust the translator assigned to them by NHS for example.

### **5.3.3 Connection with extended family in China**

Several women have maintained close relationships with their families, especially their mothers in China, and talk to them frequently on the phone. They utilize video chats with their families to foster and maintain close relationship between their children and the grandparents, who have not physically seen the children since some of them were born in Glasgow. One participant shared the following.

*“My mother calls often and I understand she wants to see the children. She has seen none of my three children, and I don't know when she can meet them. We just keep in touch by calling each other on video chat and at least she can see the children this way.”* (Female refugee, Group 2)

Participants also call their mothers, relatives and friends in China when they are bored. Most of them take care of young children at home, and reported feeling lonely and isolated since they remain indoors most of the time. Some developed the habit of calling their families and friends in China for emotional support. However, participants do not share some of their problems with families at home since they do not want their elderly parents to worry about them, and they are too far away and have no resources to help. A participant quoted a Chinese saying,

*“When you are home, you rely on parents; when you are outside home, you rely on your friends. That's what we believe in. It's no point telling family*

*back home my problems, what can they do for me except worry about me?"*

(Female asylum seeker, Group 1)

As shown in the three figures, participants were well connected to their family members in China. In the discussion, many of them mentioned sharing how their children were doing with their elderly parents at home. Some mentioned asking their mothers questions on how to take care of infants, such as the choice of food to feed them. The close bonds between some participants and their mothers were evident.

#### **5.3.4 Connection with the local people**

Very few mentioned local people as a resource because of the language barrier, a lack of opportunity to connect in the local community and simply having no local friends. A few participants talked about seeking help from their neighbours who are local Scottish people, parents of their children's friends from school or play groups. One participant shared her experience meeting a friend from attending a play group at a local library near her home.

*"I met some local parents through attending playgroup activities in the library and sometimes at the community centre not far away. I am a bit shy and due to my poor English, I seldom talked to others. Once I had to ask a mother to watch my baby in the playgroup since I got an important phone call. I guess she understood me when I said 'watch baby' as I started walking away with my phone."* (Female asylum seeker, group 2)

Those who mentioned having encounters with the local people are often parents who have children.



*“When we both are mothers and our children are playing together, it is easier to connect. I would not say the mothers I met in play group or school of my children are my “real” friends, but we recognise each other I guess.”* (Female asylum seeker, group 3)

Participants agreed that what they needed most was practical help and support to resolve issues. The people they turn to are often their own family members and close friends; however, a few participants mentioned there were circumstances in which they had asked local people, such as their neighbours and other parents, for help. Here is what a participant noted about the support of a neighbour,

*“Once I had a water leaking problem in my flat, and I didn’t know what to do since my husband and son were not home. I went over and knocked on the door of my neighbour and showed her the problem inside my flat, and she helped me call for help immediately. I was glad I made her understand what I was trying to tell her, using my broken English words and my body language. That was quite a relief.”* (Female refugee, Group 3)

These mothers had limited English skills, and they were happy to share that a local person or neighbours understood them when they were asking for help. The fact that the mother was in the play group with other mothers and infants for some time helped her build a connection with people there. This idea will be further discussed later in the chapter.

#### **5.4 Key informants' perspective on the Chinese ASRs in Glasgow**

In the beginning of the study, I have interviewed key informants, such as a volunteer worker at the BRC, two caseworkers at the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP), two Chinese teachers, an officer at a Chinese community centre, and a staff member working at an immigration law firm to gather information of the Chinese ASRs in Glasgow. The number of people applying for asylum in the UK has increased since the late 1990s, and it was at its peak around 2005 according to these informants. More asylum seekers came to the UK from China than any other country in 2000 based on the Home Office figures (2000).

##### **5.4.1 The characteristics of the Chinese ASRs**

Overall, the key informants view this population as very reserved and unwilling to disclose their private lives. For example, CCDP has over 700 members and over two-thirds of them left the question of their status (immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, student/work visa) in the UK blank in a survey the agency conducted in 2017. Each key informant gave his or her view on the lives of the Chinese migrants they worked with in the past. Some agency workers have an ongoing working relationship with the population. Several staff members referred the migrants as a hidden population group while others said that the Chinese do not want to mingle with other migrant groups. According to a volunteer working with the BRC, this population is difficult to locate. She said,

*“Chinese people are not attending our workshop much, unlike other refugee groups. And from my observation, they avoid mingling with other ethnic groups and maybe they don't feel comfortable with others.”(Volunteer, BRC)*

Another case worker at SRC highlighted the norm of this population and said,

*“The number of Chinese migrants are increasing but they are mostly reserved and they are not willing to disclose their private lives.”* (Case worker, SRC)

On the other hand, a case worker from the BRC mentioned that their program which aimed to provide support of pregnancy drew the most clients from the pregnant Chinese women. Most of the women did not continue the post-natal service for mothers and infants once they had given birth. The worker said,

*“I tried to contact them and offer post-natal home visit and recommend other services they might find useful. However, most of them refused the services and I couldn’t even reach some of them since their phone numbers were not working.”* (Case worker, BRC)

#### **5.4.2 The immigration status of the Chinese ASRs**

Agency workers from CCDP reported that the Chinese do not readily disclose their identity and legal status to anyone as stated in the example in the previous section. A worker commented,

*“I think in my experience working with them, they only disclose their legal status if there is no other option for them to get the help they needed.”* (Case worker, CCDP)

A few workers from other agencies such as the BRC have mentioned the fact that some Chinese workers came to the UK illegally with the help of “Snakehead”, a person who often works in a criminal gang to help smuggle people out of the country of origin. In return, they have to return money to the “Snakehead”. Also, some Chinese ASRs they worked with had applied for asylum on the grounds of persecution, such as the Falun Gong practitioners, a group of people who practice a mindful meditation exercise, political activists, and those suffering from the one-child policy and religious persecution.

Some case workers at CCDP explained that there are rumours in the Chinese community that the more children they have, the higher the chance they will be given refugee status in the UK such as through amnesty once the child, who was born in the UK, reaches the age of seven on the grounds of the human rights of the child.

### **5.4.3 The main concerns of the Chinese ASRs**

#### *5.4.3.1 Life in limbo*

A staff member from a Chinese community centre in Glasgow mentioned numerous people applied for asylum over five years ago, but they have not heard from the Home Office yet. In a conversation with this officer, he commented,

*“This is extremely frustrating not only for the people who haven’t heard from the Home Office, for people like us who are trying to support them and understand what went wrong in the process. Sometimes, believe it or not, the Home Office could not even locate their case number!”* (Staff, Chinese community centre)

The asylum period can be long; a female participant said that her family had filed for asylum almost ten years ago and had not heard from the Home Office. A Chinese cultural officer at one housing association also raised this concern as many Chinese asylum seekers seek help with enquiring into their pending cases. He observed that people are very frustrated and angry when their cases are pending for over ten years. Their lives are ‘in limbo’, and they do not know if they will get refugee status, not to mention plan their future here. They cannot go back to China to see their families without a valid passport. Also, it is not easy for them to apply for a visitor visa for their family to come to the UK for visits.

#### *5.4.3.2 Mental Health Concerns*

Informants reported that mothers primarily stay at home to take care of three to four young children and manage all the household chores while fathers work long hours in take away shops or restaurants. Worse still some fathers work out of town and only return home once a week or every other week. According to the staff working with these families, they live in poverty, have very low English proficiency, and live in isolation, most with very few support systems. Several Chinese teachers and caseworkers have raised the concern of the mental health of this population. For example, Chinese teachers have observed children with emotional problems –

*“Some students, I am sure, are dealing with emotional and/or social problems, and they hardly talk to me or anyone. Our class is 3.5 hours long with a 15-minute break. You don’t have to be a psychologist to notice that kids are dealing with all sorts of issues like behavioural and emotional ones*

*such as hyper-activity, anxiety, extreme introvert or aggression.*” (Female teacher, Chinese school)

Case workers at CCDP mentioned men lead a very isolated life and women trying to handle everything all by themselves. Fathers also feel helpless, working long hours and catching up on sleep only on their days off. Men especially those who work out-of-town lead a very isolated life, and they rarely talk about their concerns or share their feelings with others. One case worker said,

*“Chinese men seldom take part in any activities organised by our agency, and they don’t talk much about their own feelings. I know of some men who turned to gambling or drinking to deal with their problems. Maybe because of the traditional way of thinking, men don’t show their weaknesses or emotions even if they feel low.”* (Case worker, CCDP)

When further asked about what ‘traditional way of thinking’ means to the men, the case worker used the Chinese idiom phrase to sum it up. It literally means, “Men being the great husband would rather shed blood but not tears”. It highlights the significance of men’s image in the Chinese tradition and shedding tears or showing emotional distress are seen as weaknesses they do not desire others to notice. In addition, mental health issues remain a highly sensitive topic for the Chinese community and are treated as taboo.

#### *5.4.3.3 Poverty*

Case workers of CCDP reported that some families often struggle to balance their income and expenses. They may try to cut down on transportation costs by going out

only once a week, get discounted groceries when they are almost expired, and minimize the heating bills in the winter months. CCDP has been helping some Chinese families to apply for help with paying energy bills in the wintertime. According to a caseworker of CCDP and a volunteer worker of BRC, some families borrowed an enormous amount of money from extended families or even worse, from organized gangs for illegal smuggling to get them out of China. They have to work very hard to repay their loans. Some asylum seeking families are facing significant financial hardship living with only 147.80 pounds or 180 US dollars of weekly family allowance by the government. There are often 2 to 4 children in a family, as reported by case workers. For example, the cost of infant formula, which is often an important part of families' budgets, ranges from 6.44 pounds per week to up to 32.20 pounds per week for a three-month-old baby as reported by a worker.

*“It is not that easy to manage a family with a few young children relying on the Home Office allowance; knowing their condition, the men have to find ways to earn extra to supplement the expenses of the household.”* (Female case worker, CCDP)

Overall, key informants consistently reported that there were many asylum seekers of Chinese heritage in Glasgow, therefore caseworkers could connect me to potential participants for Phase 1 of this study. Thematic analysis was used to capture the meanings within the data and provide an interpretation of those meanings. The findings of phase one will be discussed below.

## **5.5 Services and support utilised by participants**

This section reported local support services utilized by the participants in the city of Glasgow. Overall, services provided to families with children were the most fully utilized ones. However, only a few participants mentioned national services, such as the Home Office in the participatory exercises.

### **5.5.1 Local support services**

Participants mentioned some support agencies in the neighbourhood or Glasgow wide that they utilized. Most of the participants, in particular mothers, are aware of the services and resources provided by local libraries, community centres, and Glasgow Sports, which is run by the Glasgow city council to provide sport facilities such as gyms and swimming pools. Mothers talked about enrolling their children in classes, such as swimming and martial arts. When asked about who participants called and what they did when they were bored, besides talking to a friend or relative, the mothers mentioned taking their young children outside. Many were enthusiastic when mentioning taking their children to a library where they could spend an afternoon.

*“I love taking my kids there to the library; they love running around in the children section, and there are plenty of colourful books for my two-year-old to turn the pages even though she cannot read yet. And I often run into other Chinese parents and children there, and it is great for both adults and children.”* (Female refugee, Group 1).



For practical help, participants mentioned calling agencies and places such as the housing office, CCDP and Chinese mobile repair shops. A few mentioned Scottish Power and very few suggested the Citizens Advice Bureau (provides free, impartial and confidential advice and information for people to sort out any issues or problems), Home Start (voluntary organisation set up to provide family support services for those families with at least one child under 5 years old who are experiencing difficulties) and the Scottish Refugee Council (provides information and resources for asylum seekers and refugees). The majority of the participants had not heard of the Citizens Advice Bureau or Home Start, and during the social mapping exercise they were curious to find out the kinds of services they provided.

*“My friend told me about the Home Start, where a staff member came to their building to provide some information and resources for the young children. She told me we could seek help there if we need to.”* (Female refugee, Group 1)

None of the participants mentioned talking to their GP or mental health professionals for any emotional support for themselves or their family members. Only one participant mentioned getting support from a local community church:

*“I go to a local Chinese church often, and I have quite a lot of friends there. We support each other and they all like my home cooking. That helps me a lot to adjust to life in a totally foreign place. When I feel kind of down, I will make some food to share with my church friends, they love my famous hometown dishes and that makes me happy.”* (Female refugee, Group 2)

### 5.5.2 National agencies

UK national agencies such as the Home Office, members of Scottish Parliament, local councillors, Samaritans and Helpline provide practical support and information ranging from legal issues, asylum claims or access to housing or financial support. However, none of the participants mentioned seeking help from these agencies. They are not aware of the functioning of the wider Scottish and UK society. During the conversations with caseworkers at CCDP after the first participatory exercise, one caseworker mentioned that Chinese asylum seekers and refugees have limited awareness and knowledge of service providers in Glasgow.

*“With the clients’ limited English skills, they have basically no access to national agencies unless we help connect them and do all the talking and enquiring for them. Otherwise, they will not think of or approach those agencies on their own for information or support.” (Caseworker, CCDP)*

### 5.6 Utilizing Internet for connection and information

In the previous section, it is mentioned that participants utilize mobile applications such as ‘Wechat’ to stay connected with friends and family. Access to reliable internet service can be crucial. Participants also rely heavily on the internet to locate information and find answers to their questions. For example, a mother mentioned asking her oldest son to look for information on the internet about places to repair a desktop computer and to find things such as a used bed.

*“Finding things online is convenient if you know how to do it. I rely on my older boy to help. Once the desktop was not working and he found a Chinese*

*guy to fix it on the internet. Another time he helped me get a folding bed. Our flat is very small and I have mattresses laying in the living room for the young kids to sleep on. Sometimes I was tired during the day, and it would be convenient if I have a folding bed I can lay on while watching them.”*(Female asylum seeker, Group 3).

Another mother located activities for her children in the neighbourhood on the internet.

*“Knowing where to look for information online has helped a lot. I can search for activities for my two young children, especially for those free activities in the neighbourhood, such as arts and crafts in the library.”* (Female refugee, Group 2)

### **5.7 Pattern of bonding, bridging and linking capital**

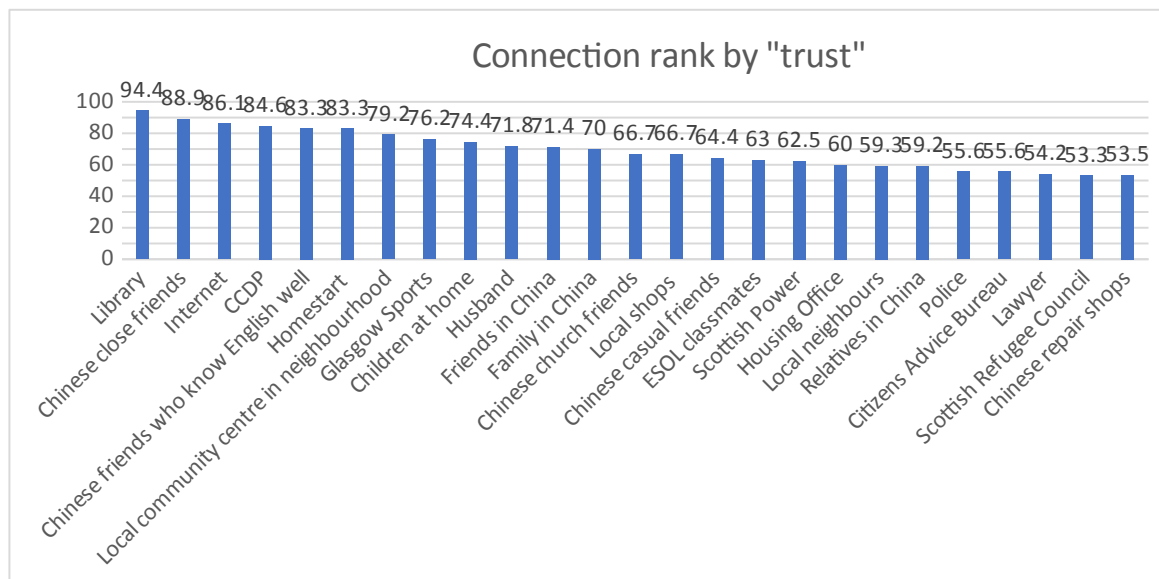
One of the main objectives of phase two was to learn about the bonds, bridges and links of the participants. On the whole, some participants demonstrated strong bonding within the Chinese ethnic network. They received not only emotional support, but also practical help from family members and close Chinese friends, (who were often other Chinese people who share similar economic and social status). Bonding capital refers to homogenous groups where people share the same identity, such as family members, Chinese friends and agencies. According to Putnam, the stronger the bond, the higher the chance of growing one’s bridging capital, which is more outward looking and includes people from different social classes. Friends who initially met in religious groups or play groups in the community centre can be

classified as bridges, using Putnam's definitions. Strong bonds within the same ethnic group, as findings reveal, rarely lead to bridging and linking capital for the participants. The participatory exercise suggested weak bridging capital, as the findings suggest limited capital of that sort. A participant mentioned meeting a Scottish mother through attending a play group for young children, and the other participant made a friend who originated from Sudan. Another mother talked about help she got from staff in the nursery while she attended the ESOL class. Apart from these few examples, all support and help were provided by people within their bonding circle.

All participants mentioned family members, Chinese friends (close friends and those who know English well) or the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) as the first point of contact if they have a practical issue to resolve. They did not have the knowledge or access to persons or places where they could get the help they needed directly. For some participants, the bonds they have are strong enough to serve as bridges and links. For example, a participant received a letter in the mail and called a Chinese friend for help. She translated the letter and recommended that the participant talk to a caseworker at CCDP, where she was linked with staff at the Home Office. Having the knowledge and access to Chinese agencies such as the CCDP is important in terms of providing practical support, and it can serve as a bridge and link to the broader community. This pattern of connection is fairly common, but for those families who have weak bonding capital, there are limited ways to obtain bridging capital. Thus, it is very likely they might experience more hardship and isolation. The relationship between bonds and bridges will be discussed and analysed in Chapter 7 Discussion in detail.

### **5.8 Patterns of trust, social connections and subjective wellbeing**

Individual responses from the card sorting tasks previously discussed in this chapter were used to collect information on the level of connection and opportunity to give (reciprocity) for each of the connections. Findings were plotted on the map of each group accordingly (Figs. 6, 7 and 8). The trust score was measured by asking participants to indicate if they trusted the person or organisation referenced (Refer to Chapter 3, Methodology for details), and they were ranked according to the level of trust (from highest to the lowest) represented in Figure 9. Trust and social connections, such as social relationships and networks often impact wellbeing positively. Good social relationships built upon trust could help avert stress and psychological deprivation (Biswas-Diener and Diener, 2006). Social support in particular contributes to living well, and trust is an important facilitator in the process of building relationships. Exploring the interplay among trust, social connections and wellbeing could help shed lights on integration process and life satisfaction in resettlement.

**Figure 9 Trust score**

We can see from the chart (Fig 9) that participants ranked the library, Chinese close friends, friends who know English well, and the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) with the highest trust scores. When we look back at the data drawn from the social maps in section 5.2.1, participants had had contact with all those categories in the last 6 months, and they also talked about them positively during the mapping exercise and individual interview. Overall, the more participants are connected with a certain person or agency/organization, the more they seem to trust them. Nonetheless, it is interesting to investigate why the trust score for immediate family members are not as high as close friends or library. Such discussion and its implications will be discussed later in Chapter 7 (section 7.6.4 and 7.8.3.4)

Participants seem to have a very high opinion of the local libraries. They mentioned the availability of resources, the flexibility of the staff members in letting mothers

and young children use the facilities, and the classes they attended (play group for mothers and infants/toddlers) in the libraries. Thus, they saw the libraries as a place where they are welcome and resourceful. At the same time, it provides a place for the young children to run around and play freely while mothers could talk to their friends and have a relaxing afternoon without any extra cost. Most participants are mothers of school-age children, and they use the libraries as a resource, such as checking out books and games for their children. Some mentioned it would be excellent if the library could provide more local information in the Chinese language so they could be more informed about what resources and services are available. The library is the most trusted on the chart because of the positive experiences participants have had; they see it as very helpful. One participant commented,

*“It is a great place for us mothers to bring the children for gathering. The library staff are often nice and they don’t mind the children making noises. There are often areas for kids to play and plenty of books for them to flip around. My friends and I can sit there and talk as well while children play on their own. Kids can eat and drink inside too.” (Female asylum seeker, Group 1)*

Close Chinese friends also earned high trust scores. It could be the fact that participants are closely connected with their good friends and the availability of them when one needs help gives rise to a trusting relationship. During the card sorting exercise, most of the participants talked about the significance of friends to them. These group of Chinese women shared a lot in common, such as legal status and socio-economic status, and they faced similar obstacles in the host community.

Having that one or two best friends in a foreign land is valuable. This kind of friendship was formed once trust was built. As it was mentioned in Chapter 2 regarding the Chinese cultures and values, a true friend of someone is the one that is trustworthy. Friends who have a good command of English are ranked high on the chart mainly because participants have a certain level of trust built with these friends prior to asking for help with things like translation. Letters from the Home Office, the hospital or school can contain very personal information. Being a small and close knit community in Glasgow, participants would not want others to know of any of their situations, such as illnesses or legal status. Thus, there was already trust built into their relationship with these few friends. There is a lady, Mrs Wang (name changed to protect the person's identity), who has been living in Glasgow for over 30 years was mentioned in phase 2 as such great support to others. She has earned a lot of trust in the community.

Home Start, Glasgow Sports and the local community centres also were ranked high on the chart. The high trust score can be explained by the fact that very few participants mentioned those places and they had had positive experiences with those places, such as helpful staff and supportive services. They were perceived as trustworthy by that small number of participants, and it does not represent the opinion of all participants. On the other hand, very few participants appeared to know of the Scottish Refugee Council or Citizen Advice Bureau, so, most of them could not comment on how much they trusted these organisations. The trust score generated, therefore, was only from a few participants (who know of the agencies but have limited contact with them in this case). Therefore, the trust score calculated,



like the ones just mentioned earlier, depends greatly on how those who have utilized the services think of the agency, and how often they have contact with them.

A study conducted in China (Churchill & Mishra, 2017) found that social capital, social networks and trust are all positively associated with subjective wellbeing. Trust in family appears to be the strongest determinant of wellbeing, followed by trust in neighbours and then trust in people that respondents know. Memberships in groups, such as self-help groups and sports groups is significantly associated with wellbeing. However, trust exhibits more consistent, positive correlations with wellbeing than social networks. This indicates the significance of trust as a facilitator for living a good life; once a trusting relationship has been built, it promotes developing new social relationship at a personal level and in group membership. Thus, it could positively impact wellbeing. Participants, in the present study, joining playgroups or English classes in their local libraries have reported positive feelings in those groups. Library is ranked high in trust by participants, and it could be related to the positive association of the groups that participants benefitted from. Therefore, promoting participation in group membership and building trust in the process could facilitate the exchange of support and enhance social relationships, which in turn, promote wellbeing.

Also, participants tended not to see the police as a resource, and had little understanding of the role of police. One participant talked about calling the police because of some problems with the neighbour:

*“Once, the neighbour who lived above us kept stomping on the ground and disturbed everyone's sleep at night. My husband called the police, and the situation was better for a week, but the noise came back. We did not think the police could do much to help us. Luckily, they moved out after a while. What a relief!”* (Female refugee, Group 3)

One interesting fact was that participants did not have a very high trust score for their family members (husbands and children in Glasgow, family members and relatives in China). It could have negative impact of wellbeing for participants, particularly emotional wellbeing. Trust has been an important facilitator in wellbeing in a host community. Men working far away from home, children spending most of the time in school and with peers, and friends occupying with their own family and responsibilities could put participants (female and mostly mothers) in isolation, loneliness and fear. Some participants shared with their group that all the responsibilities were put on their shoulders, and they have very few people to turn to for emotional support. There are situations that mothers might not want the older children to worry about and therefore, did not share certain information with them, such as financial and legal status concerns. Participants also reported not trusting their husbands in caring for young children and infants, citing that they would not know what to do if they encounter problems during babysitting.

Nonetheless, there are several possible reasons why participants gave their close friends, library or CCDP a higher trust score than their family members. The fact that participants could not always reach their husbands or older children for help could be a reason why participants gave them a lower trust score, simply because they are not

available when needed. Second, the Chinese practice of being humble means that boasting about one's children is not the norm in the Chinese culture. With that said, participants might underrate how helpful and trustworthy their children are even though they are closely connected with them, as indicated in the social connection maps. In the Chinese tradition, parents were not encouraged to praise their children as they believed that praising them would make them feel arrogant and therefore, their children might become slack in their studies. As the Chinese phrase goes, "praises spoil situation", the older generations often remind their adult children not to praise their children often, particularly in front of others and their own children.

Another interesting point is that participants tend to trust Chinese friends but not Chinese shops, which had the lowest trust score. Some participants mentioned that Chinese business people are not very honest. A participant said,

*"For doing business, the Chinese are not very honest or reliable. They think of their profit the most and not our interests. That's my experience with the Chinese business people." (Female refugee, Group 3)*

Nonetheless, they would still go and utilize services from Chinese shops or purchase their products. The main reason is probably because of the familiarity of faces and the environment of the shops. Most participants talked about running into friends in Chinese stores, and they could communicate with the people in the stores using their native language, which made them feel comfortable.

Smith (2016) finds that religion was a very important dimension of social life for the majority of Africans in Scotland, and the local church is a place to connect with other

Africans. The Chinese in this study, however, seldom utilize religious organizations to connect with other Chinese. There was only one participant in group 2 mentioned the Chinese church as a resource and support for her. People from China have not been exposed to any religious education and many religious gatherings were in fact banned or prosecuted by the government. The group of participants that belong to the Falun Gong group did not proceed to phase 2 or phase 3. Religious groups and the support from these gatherings, unlike Smith's study (2016) are not found in the study.

Almost all participants resort to the internet often for solutions and advice, and many of them trust the information they find online on Google. Some participants talked about searching for information regarding activities for children, medical advice on how to treat illnesses, such as fever or stomach upset for children, and other day-to-day matters.

*“When my first baby had a fever here, I didn't know what to do. It was in the middle of the night and my husband was working out of town. I just went online to check if my baby's condition was serious and tried to decide if I should take her to the emergency. Google is very helpful, in my opinion.”*

*(Female refugee, Group 1)*

It becomes important for this population to learn how to differentiate accurate information from all of the information that are available on the internet, such as medical advice in home treatment. Over-relying on the internet or trusting that those information they retrieved is accurate could do more harm than good.

There is certainly evidence that the more participants are connected to the individual or an agency, there is a higher trust score on that category, with a few exceptions in the findings such as husbands and children (which have been discussed in earlier section). Trust is important for developing relationships, particularly new relationship for asylum seekers and refugees in the host country. A lot of them might have lost trust in the country of origin or during transit to a safe place. Rebuilding trust with government agencies and local authorities in resettlement will no doubt help with integration in host communities. Social connections play a crucial role in facilitating trust in the relationship building process, and it is very clear that participants are looking for trustworthy friends and agency staff in the process of resettlement. As one key informant (BRC) mentioned in the exploratory stage that there were a number of Chinese asylum seekers and refugees receiving services from their agency when there was a Chinese case worker on site to assist them. Once the Chinese staff left the agency, fewer Chinese people came seek help in the agency. This could be attributed to the power of social bonds and a trusting relationship, which people in vulnerable position, such as the ASR population gravitate toward. That is the reason why participants are closely connected with the Chinese agency, CCDP. On the other hand, participants also value practical support from the host community. They develop a trusting connection with their local libraries, and they feel respected and welcomed in the environment. This kind of positive relationship could be cultivated in other agencies in the near future to help the Chinese ASRs to explore the services other organisations can offer in Glasgow.

### 5.9 Opportunities for reciprocity

The last question was about whether participants had been asked for help by others, or if others had talked with them about their problems. The researcher asked for a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to determine participants' opportunities for helping those in their network from whom they have to seek help (Figure 2, 3 and 4). Most participants reported that their husbands and children asked for help, often ranging from making certain kinds of food to homework. In addition, participants mentioned their close Chinese friends often asked them for help with caring for young children. One participant mentioned her Chinese friends at church would sometimes ask her to make food for them, since they liked her food very much. She was very proud and showed the pictures of the food she made from her phone. Two participants considered a request from the caseworker at the Chinese Community Development Partnership to fill out a survey as a request for help. They were happy when talking about this with the researcher,

*“Does that count when CCDP asks us to help with a survey? We are happy when the agency asks for our help and we are willing to support the agency which has been a great resource and gathering point for us - the mothers and children.” (Female refugee, Group 2)*

Participants were often asked by family and friends in China for practical help and support, such as financial help and material goods.

*“My brother was out of a job once and asked for some financial help for his family with two young children. I sent some money home to help him, it's not*

*much but still, he's very grateful for my help. I was happy I could help the children too.*" (Female refugee, Group 1)

Another participant said that her friend asked her to purchase some baby formula and send them to China.

*"My friend asked me to buy some baby formula here, made in the UK, since she does not trust those sold in China."* (Female refugee, Group 3)

However, there were very limited opportunities for them to help in the neighbourhood or the wider host community.

## **5.10 Concerns of participants**

Concerns of participants are plenty fold. They include insolation and mental health issues; lack of local knowledge and access to rights; limited awareness of where to locate information, resources and services; lack of trust and engagement as well as opportunity for a reciprocal relationship in the host community.

### **5.10.1 Isolation and mental health**

During the participatory exercises, I tried to recruit male participants and sought help from case workers at CCDP. They reported that Chinese male refugee and asylum seekers are very isolated in Glasgow. They work very long hours and some work far away from home. It is illegal for asylum seekers to engage in employment in the UK. Those asylum seekers who work illegally are in fear of being caught, thus negatively impacting their overall wellbeing.

Some women also expressed isolation and reported having very few friends for emotional support. None of the participants have any extended family support in the UK, and the Chinese tradition of relying on family for all types of support is not an option. Mental health is still treated as taboo in China, and together with the notion of 'mianzi' (face), people are reluctant to talk about or disclose their mental health concern to others, not even to their extended family members.

### **5.10.2 Lack of knowledge of access to rights**

Participants have shown very little awareness of institutions in the wider UK society. A few participants mentioned deplorable living conditions in the flats provided by the Home Office for asylum seekers, but they do not know how to improve their housing situation. Access to rights depends on the person's confidence and knowledge of rights in the place they live. Some participants lack both of these and, as a result, their wellbeing is compromised. As suggested by the caseworkers at CCDP and participants, the lack of cultural capital, such as language skills and educational qualification, could be a major factor contributing to the lack of knowledge about their rights.

### **5.10.3 Limited awareness of information, services, and resources**

Participants have limited knowledge of where to locate resources and services, such as translating services and legal advice. None of the participants mentioned broader support services offered by the British Red Cross or the Home Office. Participants, particularly those who have been in Glasgow for a shorter period of time, noted they were not aware of services available to them and pointed to obstacles in accessing formal support services. As one participant put it,



*“There was limited information for me when I first arrived here. Worse still, the information is mostly in English and, as Chinese, we often cannot understand the language. We just ask other Chinese for advice or we inform each other if we find out any new information, such as an activity for children or discounts in stores. That’s it, and we know very little about anything unless someone finds out the information and shares with us.”* (Female refugee, Group 1)

All participants mentioned that their limited English skills are a significant barrier to communicating with host communities and the local agencies that provide resources and services to asylum seekers and refugees. It is a very common concern for all the participants, and they report they would be in a much better situation if they knew the language well. One mother said,

*“Sometimes I wonder how the others, especially the local parents, find out about a particular activity for their children and I don’t have ways to find out the information. If my English were better, I might be able to get more information here where almost all flyers and notices are in English.”* (Female refugee, Group 2)

#### **5.10.4 Lack of trust and engagement**

The Chinese population, on the whole, was portrayed as invisible and living in isolation in the host community by service providers. On reviewing the data in the mapping exercise, it is clear that participants have very few engagements with local or other ethnic communities. This separation might be because most participants do

not speak English and they fear being around others who they deem '*not safe or clean*' such as the African population. On the whole, some participants tend not to trust authority figures or people in power, such as the police and lawyers, and are suspicious of them. Shared socio-cultural factors such as common histories, memories, language, customs, traditions and values are significant for explaining strong bonding within groups (Zhou 2005). They feel comfortable around those who look like them and fear those who are different.

#### **5.10.5 Lack of opportunity for reciprocity**

Opportunities for reciprocal relationships are very limited for the participants. Their children and husbands often, and a few friends occasionally, ask participants for help. They have limited contact with the local community, and most of their social life remains within their ethnic group. Some participants were very excited to talk about being asked for help by others, particularly the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) and their friends. Putnam has argued that the exercise of reciprocal help-giving and receiving is fundamental to the development and maintenance of social capital and in turn, creation of a community where resources are shared by all (Putnam 2000). This study reveals that most participants do not have the opportunity and capability to help except within their own families and close friend circle. They will consider if they can return favours before asking others for a favour. The data support Putnam's theory that the opportunity for reciprocity is the key to building strong social connections. This will be further elaborated upon in the Discussion Chapter.

### 5.10.6 Perceptions about the African population

During the discussion, some participants mentioned they tried to avoid contact with African people since they do not feel safe around them. Two participants mentioned that they are rude and dirty. One participant said,

*“I am very scared of the African people, who live in my building. I don’t feel safe around them and my friends feel the same way.”* (Female refugee, Group 1)

Another participant agreed with the comment and reported that she did not feel comfortable being around African people. Interestingly, another participant said that she had made a friend from Sudan, and they help each other with childcare at times. She reported having a good experience making a friend who was not from her own culture. She said,

*“I enjoy my friend from Sudan, and we met in the playground. We have been friends since then and it gives me an opportunity to speak the English language, which I seldom use in my daily life. We help each other out and our kids enjoy playing together as well.”* (Female asylum seeker, Group 2)

### 5.11 Chinese ASR’s resettlement experiences compared to other ASR groups

To some extent, the Chinese ASR experienced similar challenges compared to other ASR groups in the UK in terms of financial hardship and employment (Lindsay et al. 2010), language barriers and cultural alienation (Strang & Quinn, 2019; Duke, 1996, Roshan, 2005), social isolation and mental health concern (Strang & Quinn, 2019;

Smith, 2016; Roshan, 2005), limited awareness of services and resources (Strang & Quinn, 2019; Roshan, 2005) and discrimination and racism in Glasgow that not only instils fear and anxiety, but also hinder utilization of services (Roshan, 2005; Lindsay et al. 2010).

For most of the ASR populations, such as those who come from Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea, including the Chinese, English is not their first language and it creates a great barrier in communicating with the local people and service providers. With a lack of sufficient interpretation services provided in the host community, compounded by a lack of trust of local providers and government agencies, it further hinders the ASRs from seeking help and support in times of needs. Besides, personal experiences of service delivery and attitudes of staff impact the decision of using certain services, such as health care services (Smith, 2016) and findings of phase 2 also resonates with this statement.

The differences of the Chinese ASRs in phase 2 compared to other groups lie in the extent of their limited knowledge and/or utilisation of service providers in the host community. They rely mainly on their family members and their close friends rather than local agencies in the host community, such as refugee community organisations (Lindsay et al. 2010), charities, drop-in centres and other sympathetic organisations (Smith, 2006) which other groups utilize in Glasgow. Besides, finding employment in host communities is challenging particularly for those who are looking for jobs that match their qualifications. The lack of recognition for accreditation together with discrimination make it hard for refugees to get a job that he/she desires or qualifies (Duke, 1996; Roshan, 2005; Lindsay et al. 2010). The Chinese ASRs in this study,

however, do not come across that issue mainly because they are all employed in Chinese catering and restaurant businesses, where labour is in high demand in the field. The work conditions could be harsh, like long hours standing in a hot kitchen, but they could find jobs easily since such businesses are constantly looking for people to work. Overall, those are qualitative studies that involve a small number of participants; it does not represent all the Chinese or other ASR groups in Scotland or the UK.

### **5.12 Conclusion**

The findings of this phase of the study have significant implications for host communities and agencies working with the Chinese refugee and asylum population. Their lack of extended family support and changes in their living environment and culture is overwhelming and stressful. This study provides information on the types of networks this population have, and explains why they are limited in some ways and strong in others. The integration into the mainstream local community was very minimal, as expected, since this population possess limited bridges and cultural capital, that is, language skills. Chinese asylum seekers and refugees are a 'hard-to-reach' group, but the host country can certainly invest in agencies, such as the CCDP and other non-profit organisations that serve the Chinese in the area. Findings will be shared with the advisory group, and it is hoped that agencies will develop practical strategies to assist this population through trusted people and organisations to build engagement with more local and extensive resources and services.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Social Connections and Family Wellbeing: The Experiences of Chinese Families of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (ASRs)**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I presented findings from phase two demonstrating participants' social connection patterns and where they obtained support and resources in times of need. Some participants have developed strong social relationships within their ethnic circle and possess fairly strong bonding capital. Bonds did not necessarily bring forth bridging capital for this population, but they at times serve as a bridge to facilitate the needs of participants. The findings have revealed concerns ranging from isolation, lack of trust, and opportunity to give, to lack of knowledge about access to rights and engagement in their host community.

This chapter aims to determine how families, as a collective unit, perceive wellbeing and their pathways to achieve those constructs facilitated by bonding and bridging capital. Further, engaging the work of Putnam, Coleman and Bourdieu on the topic of social capital, the patterns of social connections and the relationship between bonding and bridging capital manifested in the everyday lives of the Chinese ASR families are explored. Five families were successfully recruited to participate in this final phase of study. By examining the different types and levels of support derived through social connections, this chapter contributes to the understanding of social connections and their implications for the Chinese ASR families; thematic analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) were employed as part of this

process (Details of participants' demographics, methodology and research methods can be found in Chapter 3).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the individual interview was set up to explore the Chinese migrant population in the hope of identifying asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in the process. As some key informants had successfully linked me to potential participants, phase 1 was crucial to identify Chinese ASRs, get to know them initially, to learn about their lives in the host community and gradually build trust and rapport. Phase 3 provided insights into how these 5 families pursue their own wellbeing priorities. The roles that social connections play in achieving wellbeing, and the impact of the apparent gaps in their social networks will be discussed throughout this chapter.

The mothers in the study had all participated in phase one and phase two, while two fathers had participated in phase one of the study. Semi-structured interviews were developed utilizing open-ended questions. Prompts were used to elicit additional details from participants and validate the researcher's understanding of the participants' responses. Interviews were recorded and transcribed in English within the same week of the interview. This chapter aims to explore what living a good life means to the whole family, understand the roles social connections play, and examine the interactions between bonds and bridges displayed within these families to achieve a good life they identified.

## 6.2 Constructs of Wellbeing

The five families identified the five most important constructs of living a good life in Glasgow. Five of five families mentioned U.K. legal status, social relationships especially with Chinese friends and health of family as important constructs. Four of five families thought that children's education and having financial stability for the family are important. All families reported that English skills was a crucial facilitating factor in acquiring resources and information in host community. All these constructs of wellbeing were mentioned in the individual interview in phase 1, and the discussion on the similarities and differences of these two phases can be found in Chapter 7 (sections 7.3.2 and 7.3.3).

### 6.2.1 Legal Status

All families thought having permanent legal status in the U.K. is extremely important for their families, especially for the children. Being asylum seekers or refugees having leave to remain (LTR) status for a short period, such as two years, creates a significant amount of stress and uncertainty for families. From the data, 'life in limbo' has been frustrating, depressing, and stressful for parents and their older children. This situation has an impact on a sense of control, choice, and autonomy. Researchers have identified factors such as poverty, time taken for immigration decisions, and isolation and instability as risk factors for the asylum population (Ehnholt & Yule, 2006; Fazel & Stein, 2002). The families feel that their lives are at the hands of others, particularly the Home Office.

*“We have applied for asylum over three years and haven't heard back from the Home Office...but I have a friend who has applied over eight*



*years, believe it or not, and they are not called in yet; it was very unreasonable. Hope that someday things work out fine and my family can go back to China to see my parents and family there. It will be a dream come true.” (Mother, F2)*

The majority of families talked about the Home Office’s rules such as only two and a half years ‘leave to remain’ being granted rather than five years and the expensive fees for renewing their status. The families thought of these challenges as unreasonable.

*“I don’t know how to plan our life here while worrying, saving every cent to prepare for applying to stay here again in two years’ time. It costs £2,500 per person to renew the visa. It’s very stressful for me as I’m the only one who works and earns money in the family.” (Father, F4)*

While the father (F4) expressed his worries concerning the family’s legal status and financial burden to obtain those status, other participants, who were asylum seekers, were extremely worried about not being able to stay in the UK and being sent back to China. They talked about the possibility of a difficult adjustment for their children in terms of the way of life and education system. Several of the adults did not want to disappoint their elderly parents, who had sacrificed quite a lot for them to come to the UK for a better life.

*“How am I going to go back to my parents and tell them I got kicked out of school, have no stable jobs and earning extremely low wages illegally in*

*the UK? It will break their heart to see me return home as a failure.”*

(Father, F5)

Father 5 talked about his deep concerns about returning home with nothing, and noted that would not only upset his parents and their dreams of him becoming a successful and rich young man in the UK, but also bring shame on his entire family in the village.

On the whole, men expressed many concerns about not being able to work legally while seeking asylum. These concerns were a major problem not only for the fathers currently seeking asylum (F2 and F5), but the other fathers reported they had also experienced these fears when they were in the asylum phase. Idling all day waiting for a call to work for a few hours has had a negative impact on their self-esteem and emotional health.

*“My family has applied for asylum and honestly, I can’t just sit at home and not work with three young children at home.”* (Father 2)

Having legal status in the UK and obtaining citizenship eventually is seen as significant for families to *“drop this heavy bag of worries off their chest”*, and as the parents say, they would *“heave a sigh of relief and be able to breathe.”*

### **6.2.2 Social relationships and support**

All mothers mentioned having close friends and a good relationship with friends as being a key factor to a good life. Fathers work long hours; working far away from home means that mothers must deal with most of the family business, from taking

care of children to handling letters in the mail. Having close friends to spend time with, talk to, and share their ups and downs makes a huge difference in their lives.

*“My friends and I do social gatherings in each other’s homes sometimes; mothers talk and make some yummy Chinese hometown snacks while children play with each other. Everybody’s relaxed and happy.”* (Mother, F2)

*“Having good friends is very important for me in order to have a good life here. Social life I think is especially important for me and the kids. Otherwise, it will be very boring here.”* (Mother, F5)

Some men also think that their wives are happier when they have friends to talk to and spend time together in one another’s homes.

*“I’m glad my wife and children seem to be doing well here socialising with other Chinese families and getting out of the house in the weekend like going to the park or library. They are happy when friends come to our home too.”*  
(Father, F3)

Children also mentioned friendship as important to them as they play, have fun together and help each other when they are having problems.

*“I have some good friends in school, and they were helpful to me when I first arrived Glasgow. It was nice to have friends to play with at school.”* (Boy 1, F4)

Besides emotional support and companionship, close friends also provide practical help. Every family mentioned practical help from friends makes life easier and happier. The mother of family 5 asked a very fundamental question, *“Where can I turn to if I have no reliable and trustworthy friends here when I have a problem?”* Most people turn to their friends, especially close friends, who they trust and with whom they have a good relationship. Practical help includes things like sharing information, helping with translations, taking care of children, and school related issues. On the other hand, participants, particularly mothers, talked about dealing with loneliness and isolation even though they mentioned having close friends and the social gatherings they enjoyed with them. The findings indicated that some mothers tended to keep their feelings to themselves and did not seek or receive adequate emotional support at times.

*“My husband was working in a friend’s take away shop where they need help; I worried he might get caught working illegally. I sometimes fight with him about this and I never talk about my worries with anyone or my family in China. I don’t want to make my parents worried and they cannot do anything to help anyway.”* (Mother, F5)

*“My husband is not home most of the time, and I am with the 3 kids all by myself...feeling like a single mother a lot. I seldom talk about how I feel with others.”* (Mother, F2)

Men did not mention much about emotional support, but they focused on practical help they received from friends and colleagues in times of need, such as finding jobs and getting information about immigration laws.

*“I was desperate when I could not continue in the college and almost running out of money. Luckily, my friend asked me to stay with him and found me a part time job.”* (Father, F5)

Overall, the families emphasised the importance of social connections and support in the host community, concurring the findings of the two previous phases.

### **6.2.3 The education of children and their future**

Similar to the findings of phase one when individuals ranked the education of their children as important construct of living a good life, both parents and older children in phase three have a clear sense of purpose when they talk about education and a promising career it would bring to the children. Mothers especially play a crucial role in encouraging the children to study hard, taking them to attend Chinese classes on Saturdays, and finding extra resources to facilitate more learning opportunities for their children. Having a good life means seeing their children study hard, get good results, and be successful in life, which for these families, would mean having a professional job with a good, stable income.

*“I supervise the children’s studies and homework, and I take them to library to read, knowing that they study hard and get good results at school make me happy”* (Mother, F4).

*“I worked hard to earn money and for what, for the children so that they can have a good education and find good jobs when they grow up. We didn’t have a chance to study and have no ability to teach the children. I hope the school can provide more support such as after school tuition for the children”*

(Father, F4).

Families talked about the importance of having a good education for the children, and they saw that as a first step towards a bright future for their children. Parents hoped their children understood the values of education and the opportunities it would bring when they grew up.

*“My parents just want me to study hard, and I go to Chinese school on Saturdays as well to keep up with learning Chinese. It’s a lot of work, the homework, tests and examinations...it is important to know Chinese well, like for jobs later maybe.”* (Boy 1, F4)

Some parents hoped that the government would provide more resources and help, such as tuition after school hours or during holidays, to help the children to learn more. They had high hopes that the next generation would be much better off, in terms of employment and education, than they themselves; these hopes brought a sense of joy to the parents. On the other hand, some parents raised concerns about the standard of school and behaviours of students in poor neighbourhoods.

*“That’s why my friends moved away for better high schools for the children since the area they were living was not a good neighbourhood. Children go to the school in the district they live in, and I have been thinking about that*

*now as my older one will be in high school soon. I don't want him to study in the school near us as I saw students doing all kinds of crazy things in their uniforms during lunch time or after school hours like smoking, drinking and yelling at each other.” (Mother, F1)*

#### **6.2.4 Family's health**

Participants mentioned having good physical and emotional health as another main goal in achieving a good life, regardless of where they were. As the Chinese saying goes, “Health is wealth”, and several reported striving to maintain good health by eating fresh vegetables and fruits. Mothers reported trying to prepare nutritious and healthy meals for the children when they got home from school.

*“I always prepare a big meal for the children at 4:30pm when they are hungry coming home from school. I don't want them to eat snacks like cookies, so, I make dinner early and they eat vegetables, some meat or fish, rice and sometimes soup when they come home.” (Mother, F3)*

Staying healthy and getting access to health care were intertwined with other constructs such as having financial stability, ability to communicate, and a good social relationship with others. For example, one mother talked about trying to save money by buying vegetables and food that were close to the date of expiry.

*“It's hard to always buy fresh vegetables and fruits here, and I have been going to Tesco around 6pm whenever I can to stay in line for the discounted produce which expires on the same day. They are cheaper to buy, and I often just cook them the same day or the next” (Mother, F3).*

Also, some parents mentioned that not being able to communicate with health care professional created misunderstandings. The help of a close friend during emergencies when family members were ill was also considered extremely important.

*“I was grateful for my friend Mrs Chan, who gave me advice when I was hospitalised, and offered to speak with the doctor on my behalf.”* (Father, F5)

Father (F5) felt very lucky to have the support of Mrs Chan to help him when he needed to access medical services. When family talked about staying healthy, it definitely entails a much larger picture than just having access to health care in the UK, but factors such as the means of getting to the clinic or hospital, the communication between them and the health professionals, and the ability to purchase healthy food were taken into consideration.

Besides physical health, families mentioned the importance of emotional health. Feelings of isolation, frustration, helplessness, and anger at times prevented families from optimising their overall wellbeing.

*“I am very worried about my son and he doesn’t play with others much; very quiet...just stays in the flat and watches TV when he’s home. My husband cannot help much. He wakes up late, goes to work around 11:00am and comes back at mid-night. When it is his day off on Mondays, he catches up with his sleep and plays electronic games on his cell phone...it makes me angry sometimes.”* (Mother, F1)



Fathers working long hours also have their own issues and hardships especially for the fathers who work out of town.

*“I work in a restaurant outside town, and I can only see my family once a week. Life like this is very tough and you have nobody to talk to...when I get home, I just want to spend some time with the kids...there is no life in the kitchen of a restaurant except non-stop work. At least I provide for my family.”* (Father, F3)

Staying healthy physically and emotionally is very important if participants want to lead a good life. For men, having a sense of pride and fulfilling their duties of providing for the family is deep rooted in the Chinese culture. *“At least I can provide...”* is a powerful statement that father of family 3 made to signify he is a responsible man, and he wants to provide more for his family if he could.

### **6.2.5 Financial stability and the living conditions**

*“Living the family dream in poverty is easier said than done”* was the response from participants when asked how they could achieve their dreams of living a good life. Families try to balance their income and expenses, and hope that they can save some money for higher education for their children. Not being able to afford fresh produce, for example Chinese vegetables, and searching for discounted food at grocery stores was mentioned.

*“Staying healthy depends on many factors and it’s hard to stay healthy if we can’t afford healthy food options. We always eat fresh green leafy vegetables and fresh meat in China, and it’s very expensive here in Glasgow. It costs like*

*four pounds for a bunch of 'Choi sum' and we can't afford that in the meantime."* (Mother, F2)

Families struggle to achieve financial stability and consider it essential for living well. Financial difficulties adversely impact participants' health, particularly their food choices and living conditions. Refugee families described inadequate housing to choose from, while asylum seekers have few choices since they are allocated a place to stay by the Home Office. All the families live in small flats. Refugee families' conditions are overall better than those of asylum seeking families in terms of locations and the conditions of where they live. It is common to see children doing homework in the living room while the television is on for the younger children for entertainment.

*"Living conditions are poor as you can see, and you have been here a few times too...it is not safe for young children such as damaged flooring and broken wires on the walls."* (Mother, F5)

Some mothers complained of not having enough money for children to attend extra-curricular activities, such as sports, music, and tuition. To have a good life, having enough money to keep a certain standard of living and provide for the children were seen as important. Most mothers hoped that they could save enough money to buy their own house eventually. Again, constructs were closely related, and it was necessary to address poverty before parents could think of moving to an area where schools are better or afford to put their children in extra-curricular activities for example.

### **6.2.6 The facilitator: The English language skills**

All families expressed the importance of knowing the English language well to some degree as they experienced frustrations and difficulties for not being able to communicate to the people they need to talk to, such as doctors and local school teachers. Parents, particularly the mothers, felt the inconvenience of not knowing English, and reported they had to resort to seeking help from friends and older children to understand letters and notices from school. Also, they reported that knowing English would allow them to be better informed about available resources and support in the community, and it would enable them to obtain information from the internet as well. All mothers have taken elementary level English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes to pick up some basic vocabularies, and some continue going to the classes. Only two fathers have attended ESOL classes briefly and they have very limited, or close to zero, English proficiency. The families relied on their older children and close family friends, who knew English better than they do, to assist with any issues that involved understanding the language.

However, it has not always been easy to obtain help. Mothers 1, 3, and 4 reportedly spend a significant amount of time every day trying to figure out what the letters in the mail are about. Sometimes, they have no choice but to ask their older children or Chinese friends for help if they are unable to understand the content of the letters. They stated they wanted to learn more vocabularies related to their daily lives, such as how to register for a bank account and ask for help about transportation. All the information provided by the government to the family is in English. Going to the doctor requires a translator, and it has not been a good experience for some of the families.

*“It’s also a hassle to wait for interpreter. I have an issue with confidentiality as the Cantonese-speaking circle in Glasgow is much smaller than the Mandarin group. I felt very bad when my private medical matter was discussed in the Chinese community, and I lost trust in the interpreting system. The phone translation process is not very reliable either. Health information provided is not in the language that we can understand.”*

(Mother 1)

Overall, participants understood the importance of English language skills and the inconvenience of not knowing it enough means to them in their daily lives. With that said, families’ social connections with others become particularly crucial in terms of obtaining information, getting practical help and emotional support.

### **6.3 Pathways to Wellbeing**

Social mapping exercises in phase two identified the roles and patterns of bonds and bridges in resolving issues. Participants had a limited knowledge of where they could obtain help and resources, and they were not aware of the availability of local agencies that support refugees or asylum seekers. It is evident that families in Phase 3, working on the social support for their respective family as a group, brought in more inputs as each family discussed what and how they could achieve the constructs they chose in order to live a good life. Four super-ordinate themes (using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) pertaining to support and help emerged, and they are categorised into (i) Family roles, (ii) Social connections, (iii) Rationalization, and (iv) Technology.

### 6.3.1 Family Roles

The roles of each family member, such as the father, the mother, and the children will be discussed in this section. The themes emerged include division of labour, the self-reliance qualities of the mother, and the impact of the missing father.

#### 6.3.1.1. *Division of labour*

Division of labour within the household was a key theme that emerged in all the interviews: The fathers keep a job and provide for the family, working legally or illegally. They occasionally helped with watching the children to allow mothers the opportunity to attend other activities outside of home, such as getting groceries or meeting a friend. The older children helped their mothers, to compensate for their lack of English language skills, to translate letters and during teacher-parent meetings. The mothers also reported that their older children helped take care of younger siblings, and some also helped with household chores. The mothers' roles generally involved holding everything together and ensuring things were running smoothly in the house; these tasks included bringing children to school, watching younger ones at home, and cleaning and cooking for family. The way in which families divided work responsibilities were mentioned in the interviews.

*“My wife has never worked, and she stays home and takes care of the children and the household stuff.” (Father, F4)*

*“I go to work from morning till night, for what? For bringing money home for them so that we have food and shelter. The mother has to take care of the rest of the stuff.” (Father 1)*

Fathers believed that their main duty in the family was to ‘*earn money*’, while the mothers, their wives, should be taking care of the rest of the tasks in the house, such as caring for the children and chores.

*“My husband works around the clock, and I am the warrior of the house with the kids. They are small and need lots of attention.”* (Mother, F2)

*“We need to share the work here, my husband works long hours and I know it’s not easy for him. The kitchen environment is not good, very tough I guess. I try to take care of the household things and all the kids by myself. Glad my oldest son is helpful sometimes.”* (Mother, F3)

Mothers see themselves as the centre of the family. They understand the difficulty of the jobs men have outside the home, and they take on the caregiving and parenting roles of the children and manage all the family business by themselves.

Older children also play a crucial role in the family as language brokers, helping their mother navigate the host communities, and assisting with taking care of younger siblings and household chores.

*“My father works out of town and I help my mother whenever she needs help, like taking care of my younger siblings.”* (Boy 1, F3)

*“I help my mother to read the letters in the mail sometimes, I don’t understand everything but she struggles reading them and sometimes she*

*doesn't know if the letters are important or not, and it's upsetting for her."*

(Boy 1, F1)

*"I try to help around the house like cleaning and playing with my younger brother. I help my mother with things like reading mail, if I can; some words are difficult."* (Boy 1, F4)

#### 6.3.1.2. Mothers: Self Reliance Qualities

All the mothers reported a sense of reliance on themselves to make things work for the family. Two fathers work out of town and the rest in town, and they all work long hours in restaurant kitchens. Thus, these mothers take care of everything from the needs of children and, supervising homework, cooking, shopping for grocery to cleaning. They manage the tasks with little help from the fathers. Both the physical and emotional health of the children and their education are deemed very important for the families and are at the top of the priority list for these families. Mothers take on these responsibilities and try to locate the best resources and opportunities for their children.

*"I have been here for 3 years, and I'm trying my best to understand the education system and which school offers the best resources for my children.*

*My husband cannot help in any way and it all falls on my shoulder."*

(Mother, F1)

*"It's me alone who supervise the children on their studies...that's no help for me, I rely on myself"* (Mother, F4)

*“I try to learn the English language for my family, also for myself so that I can talk to other parents in the playgroup, and get access to information relating to children’s stuff” (Mother, F2)*

Mothers having to rely on themselves emerged as a repeated theme in the family discussions. For example, when talking about how to handle emotional stress, Mother of family 1 said that she was an adult and she could take care of her frustrations. She also tried to find ways to help with the older child’s emotional distress when they first arrived in Glasgow.

*“I have tried to help my son to overcome his anxiety in the new environment; my husband cannot help in those situations and I have to handle things in the house by myself always. I am a grown up and I can take care of my emotional issues, but my son is just a child, and he needs my help” (Mother, F1).*

However, the mothers admitted to utilising their social connections to support their children and themselves as needed. In both phase one and phase two, bonding with other Chinese mothers was one of the most mentioned ways to cope with isolation, get information, and most of all, for finding a second family away from home.

### *6.3.1.3 The impact of the missing father*

The father’s role as the breadwinner of the family is obvious from the earlier section of division labour (6.3.1.1). Mothers and the children understand that it was challenging for the husband/father, who work long hours or some work out of town, to be home much for them. The reality of having a missing husband/father at home is not only witnessed by myself, who had been visiting the families for roughly a year



during the research process, but also by the narratives of the wives and children in earlier quotes. On one hand, family members seemed to understand the important role of the father in taking care of the financial aspect of the household; on the other hand, they experienced the negative implications of the missing husband/father in their daily lives. Wives talked about taking on both the father and mother role and they have no choice but to stay strong for their children. Even though there was very little sharing of disappointment of the missing husband at home, the wives at times showed their frustration as being the ‘only’ one there in the house, or feeling like a single mother in a foreign land. It can be seen as paradoxical when men did fulfil the wellbeing construct of ‘financial independent’ and ‘having extra income for children’s education fund and extra-curricular activities’, but there are unintended consequences for both the women and children, as well as men themselves. The feeling of isolation, helplessness and loneliness from both husbands and wives, and a missing father figure in the children’s lives have impacted family wellbeing negatively.

#### *6.3.1.4 The role of children*

For the older children, they take on the father figure in the household in the sense that they help with household chores, help with the mother when she needs assistance with caring for younger siblings, making phone calls or translating letters. They step up the plate and understand their role when their father is absent from home. Even though some mothers and children expressed the fact that they are used to the absence of the father at home, some children did show signs of disappointment of a missing father in the house, particularly for special occasions, such as festivals

and school holidays, when they could enjoy and celebrate with other Chinese families in the community.

Children mentioned their fathers worked far away and they did not remember when they participated in family events the last time. Older children, compared to their younger siblings, especially those who do not attend schools, have less time to spend with their fathers. It is because they are usually sleeping when their fathers come home from work, and they leave home for school before their fathers wake up in the morning. This can be frustrating for the older children. They mostly take up the responsibilities of the house in the absence of the father, but they have very few opportunities to communicate with the fathers. During home visits, some fathers wake up at ten in the morning, and they enjoy holding the younger children in their arms and playing with them for a while before they take off for work. Mothers also noticed that the younger children tend to respond well with the fathers, and are happy to see the fathers. On the other hand, the older children can only spend time with the fathers on Mondays after school since some fathers have Mondays off in the restaurant. The older children overall have taken up a very crucial role in the pathway to living a good life for the whole family. In a way, these children living up to the expectations of their parents, which is one of the most important constructs for family wellbeing. Nonetheless, the psychological impact of the missing fathers and the heavy burden on these children's shoulders could put them in severe stress at home. The detailed discussion of the role of children and how this impacts their overall wellbeing can be found in Chapter 7, section 7.4.1.

### 6.3.2 Social Connections

One key theme that guide this study was how the patterns of social connections as pathways to wellbeing. The five families are reliant on not only their family members, but also their ethnic Chinese networks and friends for both practical and emotional needs, as indicated in earlier section on the importance of social relationships (6.2.2). This proved to be effective for some at difficult times when help are sought, but certainly not for all or always. These strong ties are common among new immigrants and are often considered to be important support when individuals reach a new destination. The presence of family and close ethnic friends provided emotional, informational, and practical support, for example, in the case of the Polish migrants in Glasgow (Pietka, 2011).

These five Chinese families in phase 3 have their respective small close circle of Chinese friends, and they are perceived as close bonds for the families. Family members from the country of origin also are found to be important emotional support, particularly for the mothers and children. Another key finding in terms of social connections was that strong bonds could serve as bridges for some families, where they were linked to the host communities or organisations for support and services. For example, a friend made a phone call to the hospital to follow up on a doctor's appointment for a participant. This will be further elaborated in the later sections.

The small informal group of connections these families have was reported to be supportive in times of need. However, families did mention the limitations of those bonding connections, such as having a small number of close friends, being hesitant

to seek help from the one or two close bonds, and the unavailability of those bonds at critical times when they have no one to turn to. For those families with older children, parents might seek help from them depending on the issues, as discussed in the role of children earlier (Section 6.3.1.4). The Chinese agency, CCDP is often considered as the last resort for some participants when bonding connections are sparse or not available. As staff members of CCDP mentioned about some desperate Chinese migrants calling for help regarding running out of medication or heating system not working in the winter. Families also disclose asking CCDP for help with translation when their only friend who knows English well is not available. Some of the implications of a lack of bonds for these families can be far-reaching, ranging from isolation to depression. The more in-depth discussion of the lack of social connections will be discussed in Chapter 7 section 7.5.3.2.

*6.3.2.1. Bonding capital: Family members, close friends, and family in China*

Family members and close friends who are Chinese in both host community and China are considered to be important means of social support by these families. They serve as the main bonding capital for these families and serve multiple functions, such as providing emotional support and companionship. Emotional support to combat homesickness and loneliness is provided by close friends in the host community as well as family members and relatives in China via video chat. People who play this supportive role, which is usually built over time, often have a trusting relationship with the families. All mothers described how they met their friends in Glasgow.

*“I met one of my best friends in the ESOL class and she is from China. I met another couple of good friends from attending a playgroup; I felt at home right away seeing the Chinese faces and hearing the same language. When you pass by someone that look like one of your own group, those moments are hard to describe...like you feel excited and nervous at the same time, guessing if she speaks my language or dialect. And I think it made me feel at home.” (Mother, F2)*

*“Believe it or not, I met my first friend on the bus, we both came from the same place and have young children, and we started talking immediately. I also met my other friends in the mother and toddlers’ class and in ESOL classes too... Of course, it takes time to know a friend and time will tell if we will become close friends. It is give and take, you are hoping your friends can help you when you are in need, but at the same time, I have to contribute to other’s needs as well. ” (Mother, F5)*

The mothers talked about the few close friends in their friendship circle, and how they support each other emotionally. Sharing the same language, types of food, festivals, coming from the same geographical location in China, as well as legal, social, and economic status were key components mentioned as reasons of bonds for the family. Having children of similar age was another key factor in their bonding. Among these families, trust was built through spending time together, helping each other, and sharing the ups and downs of their daily lives. The kind of intimate social support was viewed as having a ‘second family’ for some participants.

*“I like to go out with friends together with the children, say to the park and especially during festival times. My friends here are important companions when my home town and family is so far away.”* (Mother, F5)

*“When I am so far away from home, my best friend Mei San is like my own biological sister. She tries to help me as much as she can when I need support, and I am so lucky to have her living close by.”* (Mother, F3).

*“I was happy to meet other Chinese people when I came here, especially those who share the same culture and dialect, as the saying goes, sharing the same voice and same breath feels good for me!”* (Mother, F4)

One way in which participants make sense of the resettlement process is by differentiating between their close circle of Chinese friends and the wider community. Families 1 and 4 are from the Guangdong area and they speak the dialect of Cantonese. Families 2, 3 and 5 are from the province of Fujian, and they speak a different dialect. Families talked about having close friends who came from the same province as they shared more in common.

Children usually made friends at their local school, from Chinese school, and with family friends as well. They reported having support from their friends:

*“Siu Chong and Chi Tao are my best friends, and they help me at school too. We play when we get a chance, like before our mothers pick us up after school.”* (Son 1, F1)

Putnam (2007) defines social capital as social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness. The concepts of reciprocity and trustworthiness are central in bonding capital and also crucial to how the participants develop their bonds with others. As one mother puts it:

*“I think twice before I seek help from my friends to see if I have the capacity to return a favour in the near future; however, I don't have that worry when I am interacting with my friend from Sudan.”* (Mother, F2).

Participants mentioned trust as important in their relationship with friends, and it is clearly an important element in the development of a bonding relationship for the families. Reciprocity and trust will be discussed in details in the discussion chapter.

Besides close friends in Glasgow, grandparents in country of origin often provide emotional support for the families, particularly when mothers were frustrated as a result of caring for children. All mothers made use of video chat to keep in close touch with family members in China, and since the grandparents had not met the grandchildren who were born in the U.K., the mothers reported grandparents were glad to interact with the children. It also helps the older children, who have a close relationship with their grandparents and are old enough to have meaningful conversations, to continue having a close relationship with their grandparents. In Families 1, 3 and 4, the oldest child was born in China, and raised by the grandparents for a considerable amount of time (2-4 years) while the parents were in the UK. Mothers and children mentioned the importance of keeping a close relationship with families in China.

*“I call my family in China especially my Mom on ‘Wechat’ often; it helps relieve my stress and also boosts my son’s mood when he talks to the relatives especially his grandparent. We have no one here, and my son misses the grandparents and other relatives. Also, it helps him open up a bit and talks to others, otherwise, he remains quiet most of the time at home.”*

(Mother, F1)

*“I love talking to my grandparents on my mom’s phone and I can see their faces too. My grandmother is always happy to see me and we talk often. It makes me happy.”* (Son 1, F3)

*“My mother calls us very often and she wants to see the children in the video chat. She is a great support for me when I stay home a lot with the three little kids. It’s good to talk to someone who understand what I am going through.”*

(Mother, F2)

The close bonds that the families continue to keep with their families and relatives in country of origin, especially for the mothers and children, provides a channel of living a good life.

#### *6.3.2.2. Bonding capital serves practical functions*

Bonding capital these families have, as findings indicate, provide informational support, such as how and where to locate schools, the community centre, doctors, and Chinese groceries. Within the family’s friendship networks, mothers and children often gather to keep up with their friends and exchange information.



*“I have to prepare my younger one for school when she reaches 3. I just learned that I have to put in the application form a year ahead to secure a place for her. Luckily, one of my friends told me about it or I would not even know about that. For my older son entering high school, I don’t know how to find out information about which high school he can apply, and right now, I am just asking my friends who have children in high school and try to gather more information from them.”* (Mother, F1)

*“Students from Hong Kong, who work part time in take away places, are helpful to me since we speak the same dialect. They are educated and have been in Scotland longer; they often share what they know when I ask them for some help. I used to work there part time there as well before my daughter was born, and there’s why I knew some of the students there. I am glad they have been helpful in sharing information, such as restaurant hiring or any new Chinese businesses open in town.”* (Mother, F1)

Sometimes, gossip or small talk also promote accessing social capital and offers people a channel to share information about jobs, health care, daily life, housing, changes in immigration policy and community programs (Sanders & Nee, 1996).

Based on the interviews, gossip is seen as a vehicle for the Chinese mothers and even fathers to obtain information.

*“I share information with my Chinese friends such as where to get cheaper vegetables, food items and children’s stuff like community events for kids.”* (Mother, F3).

*“My colleagues at work at times tell me information about job market and immigration status. We also share information regarding some local knowledge such as where to find a phone or computer repair shop for our wives and kids at home”.* (Father, F1)

To a certain extent, participants felt that they benefitted from the information through these ‘gossip talks,’ which has helped them economize, avoid hassle, or save ‘face’.

*“I was told by my friend that it is illegal here to beat your own child. I was shocked and how am I going to teach my children what is right from wrong. When they are young and don’t understand what I am saying to them, tapping them on the hand or buttock will send the message. Anyway, it’s good that my friend warned me of that or I might get into trouble.”* (Mother, F5)

*“My friend told me not to register with the Springburn health centre since the staff has treated her impolitely after learning of her legal status as asylum seeker.”* (Mother, F3)

Participants talked about isolation and lack of information and resources in phase one and two, and these five families share similar issues. Having the right kind of support from close friends were just important for not only preventing trouble or hassle, but also a step forward toward adjusting lives in a new place. Families were grateful for their friends, who share useful information such as schools and free community events for families.

6.3.2.3. *Bonding capital helps maintain the Chinese culture (language, food, customs, festivals and traditions)*

Social events, festival gatherings, and celebrations play an important role in women's lives, promoting interaction, shared time, and a sense of wellbeing. These events support the continuance of the Chinese culture, community life and hospitality, and provide shared spaces and enhance community life for these families especially in the mothers' lives. Food also holds strong social value and symbolic meaning and is one means by which people communicate with each other (Manderson, 1986).

Women maintain social networks through the preparation, consumption, and exchange of food. Sharing common traditional dishes from their hometown, that is a reminder of the tastes and smells of home, also brings back recollections of social gathering in China. When family members and close friends eat and share a meal together, this action symbolises unity and harmony in the Chinese culture.

*“All my close friends are from the same province. We share the same dialect, food habit and ways of doing things. We love to make the same kind of food together, and eating together with children make us feel like a family.”*

(Mother, F5)

Truly, the continuation of traditional food making, sharing, and eating together cultivates a sense of belonging and community for these women and their children.

The Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) has also served as a hub and point of contact for the families to maintain Chinese ties in the community, make new friends, and celebrate Chinese festivals together.

*“The Chinese agency, CCDP is another resource for the Chinese families, especially for those who came recently and speak very limited English. It organises gatherings such as family outings and New Year celebration events. This helps us come together and see each other in the community. They sponsor not only food, but games for children and cultural performances such as Chinese dancing...” (Mother, F3)*

Children being able to speak and write Chinese and understand their culture are considered very important to parents and some of the older children. Most parents and grandparents can only communicate in their native language and, therefore, children must keep up with the language for communication reasons. All mothers send their children (6 years old and up) to Chinese school on Saturdays to learn Mandarin or Cantonese.

*“The Chinese school in Glasgow is very good. Even if the children go once a week, like three hours or so, they learn how to read and write. The teacher gives them homework, and there are often tests and examinations so that the children have to do their revision at home. And it is very important for my children to continue learning their own language.” (Mother, F3)*

Learning Chinese formally is also deemed essential for the future of their children as well. Parents recognise that knowing two languages fluently, English and Chinese, will be an advantage for their children.

*“Knowing written and spoken Chinese is very important for my children to communicate with family and for their future as well in looking for jobs.”*

(Mother, F4)

*“It is very important for my son’s education and he will be in a much better position when he grows up if he is fluent in both English and Chinese.*

*Mandarin is very useful since everyone has to learn it in China, and my son will be put in a disadvantageous position if he doesn’t know the language. We speak Cantonese to him at home, and he won’t learn Mandarin if he doesn’t attend classes.”* (Mother 1)

Parents tried their best to ensure that their children know the Chinese language, customs and traditions through socialising with other Chinese families and participating Chinese community events especially during festivals. Close bonding, thus, serve this purpose well for these families. In addition, children knowing not only their dialect, but also Mandarin is seen as an asset for children in the future. Parents were aware of ways to build up children’s social capital so they could compete well in their future work place.

#### *6.3.2.4. Developing bridging capital*

Putnam makes the important distinction between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ forms of social capital (Putnam 2000: 22-24). Bonding social capital, as discussed in the previous section, occurs as a result of strong ties to people who have similar demographic characteristics, such as close family members and friends. On the other hand, bridging social capital occurs as a result of relationships that exist between more distant acquaintances from other social classes or groups. As such, it helps to

achieve broader identities and wider reciprocity, and according to Putnam, is crucial for ‘getting ahead’, while bonding capital is good enough for ‘getting by’.

Based on the findings of this final phase of the research study, there was very limited bridging capital that participants secured directly as a result of interacting with people from a different ethnic or social group. Participants reported feeling comfortable maintaining close ties among their friends who share the same ethnic background. In the interviews, they pointed out reasons such as a lack of English language skills, different cultural backgrounds from the local population, and the need to make friends with Chinese people for staying within the in-group.

*“I have Chinese friends or the staff at the CCDP to turn to if I need help, and my older child too can help with translation occasionally or talking to teachers/others in the community.”* (Mother, F4)

*“I have enough friends to hang out with and we all speak the same language, I don’t need to make friends with the local people.”* (Mother, F3)

*“What can I say to the other local parents besides ‘hi’ and ‘bye’?”* (Father, F4)

#### *6.3.2.5 The English language- a pre-requisite for bridging social capital*

Would participants make more friends with the local people and other migrant groups if they have the capacity to do so? The lack of the cultural capital, the English language, has been cited as one of the main reasons of having limited opportunities to know of someone from other groups. The ESOL teacher was noted as helpful by

almost all participants, particularly the mothers, in providing general information about different levels of English classes and enrolment for higher level tests and procedures. Parents in this study have attended English classes for some time, which has helped build a foundation of the language and an understanding of simple conversations in English. Families obtained information on ESOL classes through their case workers as well as friends who studied English in different locations in Glasgow. Obstacles, such as the long wait for ESOL class enrolment, lack of consistency in attendance, and poor memory are mentioned by participants for not being able to learn the language well.

*“I have waited for some time before I was given a place in the ESOL class, which was far away from home. I learned some useful things but it is very simple English. I stopped going when I was pregnant with my second child since I was tired often. I have put in an application in an ESOL centre close to my home but I haven’t heard back from the school yet. It’s been a long time though since I applied there. I don’t know why I haven’t heard back from them.” (Mother 1)*

The lack of continuity and perseverance in pursuing the language explained why participants were not able to keep up with the language learning. Participants talked about their very limited English skills and the fact that it would be shameful for them to try to communicate with local people when they might not be understood. Even when their friends tried to communicate in broken English, the women reported a feeling of ‘losing face’ (diu lian).

*“One time, we were invited to go to an event with Mary, (the case worker of CCDP), and everyone speaks English there. My two friends and I just tried to stay close to Mary so that she could translate for us. One friend kept trying to talk to a local woman in uniform, like the navy of some sort, in her broken English. I felt so ashamed standing next to her but she didn’t listen to me. It is just embarrassing for me.” (Mother, F4)*

The feelings of shame and the importance of not losing face was explored in the Discussion Chapter.

#### *6.3.2.6 Agents of bridges*

Using bonds as bridges capital for the families is evident in the findings. Older children, and family friends whose English language skills are perceived as good, serve in the role of bridges and links for these families. They became the ‘liaison’ for the family with the wider community, including housing officers, teachers and doctors. The host community provides support and services, while the CCDP provides bridging capital and possibly linking capital for the families.

#### **a) Older children and Chinese friends who know English well:**

Children who have mastered a certain level of the English language in schools take on the role of ‘middle man’ between parents and host community members such as neighbours and school teachers.



*“I help my mother when she has a question about the swimming pool facilities in the gym, I talked to the receptionist in the gym for her.” (Boy 1, F3)*

In addition, participants rely heavily on one or two of their close Chinese friends who know English well enough to communicate with the wider community.

*“Once we complained about a crazy neighbour who used to live above us. He was drunk often and kept making so much noise past mid-night...like dancing or stomping on the ground. We contacted the housing office worker, and with the help of my wife’s friend, who knows English well, we finally moved out of that apartment.” (Father, F3)*

Friends who have higher proficiency in English act as a bridge between participants and the host community. They share information about local resources, including libraries, sports facilities, and community centres, so that mothers and children will know about swimming classes, play groups or other events organised by the community. All five families have utilised the library, as it provides information about activities, books for borrowing, and toddler classes. These activities have opened up opportunities for mothers to start participate in the host community.

*“I attended the toddler group in the local library and my daughter loves singing along with others. It’s a fun thing to do with her, and I can meet other parents. The group leader was very nice and meeting with other*

*parents with young children in the play group is a good way to know others, besides the Chinese families.” (Mother, F5)*

*“Community centres provide classes and gatherings for residents free of charge. It offers a place for me and the children to hang out when they have gatherings or activities. There were performances, games for children, and food in the last event, and my friends and I, and the children had a great time. I am glad my friend told me about it, and we went together with the children. One Chinese school teacher was leading a group of students in the performance of a traditional Chinese dance. It was very enjoyable.” (Mother 1)*

**b) Roles of Organisations and Institutions in host community:**

All families mentioned the Chinese Community and Development Partnership (CCDP) as a great resource for their families. The agency provides free services for under-privileged Chinese, mainly recent migrants, asylum seekers, and those with ‘leave to remain’ status, as well as for the older population whose children have left Glasgow for other places.

*“CCDP provides a telephone hotline to answer questions. The staff also organise interest groups such as the Chinese Tai-chi exercise, sewing, Mandarin & English class, computer class, and activities for Chinese families... Oh occasionally the agency organises a short day trip to some beautiful places. We are lucky to have them around and families get to know each other through the activities.” (Mother, F4)*

These activities are very empowering, since newcomers can learn new skills and meet other Chinese people. Families have obtained a range of different type of assistance from CCDP, such as getting linked to other agencies for services. CCDP does not provide legal services but staff could potentially link families to the right agency, such as the Home Office or Scottish Refugee Council, to enquire about their issues.

CCDP is not the only channel for bridging and connecting families to services as mentioned by these families. There are also other organisations in the host community, such as the local schools and case workers from the Scottish Refugee Council. For example, participants mentioned local schools provide free education for their children.

*“The local school teachers and classmates are helpful to my son’s emotional health as they are caring to him. It is good for his social life as well. I’m very grateful to the teachers there, it was very difficult for my son when he first came to Scotland...like he was so quiet for a very long time and did not want to go to school at times. We are lucky to have the kind teachers and they tried their best to accommodate the needs of my son.” (Mother, F1)*

*“We are grateful for the government to provide free education for the children, it is crucial and it will help them to become successful when they grow up.” (Mother, F3)*

The three oldest children of Families 1, 3 and 4 were born in China and came to the UK when they were at elementary school age. They never studied English before

they moved to Glasgow. The local school in the neighbourhood offered extra support, such as English remedial classes, for these children to get adjusted to this completely new environment. To assist further, several teachers asked a few Chinese children who had been in Scotland for a longer time, to assist the newly arrived students.

*“I remembered the first day when I dropped him off at school here in Glasgow, and the teacher called me back in 20 minutes to pick him up since he couldn’t stop screaming and crying. Luckily, there are two other Chinese children in his class, and the teacher has asked the two students to sit by him to help him during class. The school also arranged a teacher, who is Chinese, to be in the class to help him for a while to adjust, and it was a long process of adjustment for him.”* (Mother, F1)

National health services (NHS) was mentioned by all families as means to health care, which is crucial for them in living a good life. It provides free medical care and nurses provide pre and post-natal care for mothers and infants.

*“I went to the General Practitioner (GP) office a few times when the children were sick; I think I had good experiences, and they went well and the doctors were helpful.”* (Mother, F2)

*“The nurses from NHS are helpful and they visited me a few times at home after my daughter was born. It was great and they gave me advice about caring for the new born baby.”* (Mother, F1)

*“NHS provides interpreter too, that is very important so that we can communicate with the doctors and nurses. Otherwise, I have to ask a friend to go with me, and it’s not always that easy to find someone, and I might not feel very comfortable letting others know of my medical issues.”* (Mother, F3)

Families appreciate the free of cost consultation and medicine, which have lifted the financial burden of the parents. Case workers from the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and the British Red Cross (BRC) have served as bridges to places such as the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA), which helps with housing and issues concerning the flats and neighbourhood. All mothers and two fathers have benefitted from ESOL classes at various periods of time; this service is very much appreciated by the families.

*“I am glad that the government provides me with free childcare like nursery when I go to ESOL classes. I also attended the play group in the local library and my daughter loves going there. It may be because of the atmosphere, she loves music and singing, and being around other children similar age of hers is good for her. She made friends there in the group.”* (Mother, F5)

#### *6.3.2.7 Bridging capital: local people and other migrants*

Besides agencies and organisations, other ethnic group and the local people were also found to be useful bridging capital for a few participants (two mothers and five children). Mothers of Families 2 and 5 mentioned local people and neighbours from other ethnic groups, who have been helpful to them. In the finding, two of the ten participants had made a friend outside the Chinese ethnic group. Mother of F2 talked about making friend with a Sudanese woman in the neighbourhood. She said,

*“I ran into her in the playground, and she has three children like me. She was very cheerful and I think we have something in common – we are both mothers and we have three young children. Also, we kind of share the same status, you know, and speak limited English. We started talking when the children were all playing together in the park.” (Mother, F2)*

Another mother (F5) has tried her best to attend the ESOL classes regularly to improve her English skills and talked about a friend she made there.

*“I attend at least 3-4 times ESOL classes every week to keep up with my learning of the language, and I enjoy the classes and my children love staying in the day care while I am in class. I would say I am a friend of an older lady, who works in the day care...my daughter loves her and she is so kind to us and would share information about kids’ activities in the community with me. I didn’t understand her all the time, but I can figure out the meaning most of the time! I guess I consider her as a friend, and she is excellent with the children in the day care. I am fortunate to have free child care service provided by the government; otherwise, I don’t know how I can attend classes with a toddler.” (Mother, F5)*

These two mothers (family 2 and family 5) have begun to establish new friendships outside the Chinese community and have made a bridge with non-Chinese friends.

Mother (F2) also commented on the advantages of having a friend outside the Chinese circle, because of the practice of reciprocity.

*“The Chinese ‘Guanxi’ is complicated and I always think of ways to repay some of my friends’ help because this is what we Chinese think in our heads. With my Sudanese friend, I don’t have that mentality in my head, and I don’t think she wants something in return from me after she helped me. It’s a good feeling!” (Mother, F2)*

However, bridging, as Bourdieu (1986) points out, depends on a horizontal or vertical bridge. The mother of Family 2 made a friend, with refugee status similar to hers—an asylum seeker. The resources such bridges may potentially provide are limited, and social ties may be the most effective when migrants can get access to those who have more resources and knowledge. For example, mother (F5) talked about useful and relevant information she obtained from a staff (a local person) in the nursery, and how she made use of those information to obtain relevant resources and learning opportunities for her young children. As discussed in the earlier section, bonds serve as bridges, and it could, though not always, work for some families to access the support and services they need.

#### *6.3.2.8 Social capital as power*

Social capital is concerned with power. A person’s social capital may provide them with networks of advantage, linking them to skills, ideas and knowledge which they can then use to their own advantage. People with the largest networks may be expected to have more access to information (Field 2005). Participants understand the concept and have tried to utilise the researcher’s skills and knowledge to their advantage. For example, Mother (F1) has asked for information about mental health care for her older son and the quality of high schools in Glasgow.

*“I don’t know where to get help for my son. He’s been quiet and shy and has limited friends here. Now I recalled those times, it was very difficult and I was worried all the time and didn’t know who to turn to. He has improved after some time, guess he adjusted to the new place a bit, but I am still worried at times when he becomes quiet for a long time. He might not answer me when I ask him questions like how was school going. I felt desperate sometimes and do you know of any place I can seek help for him?”* (Mother, F1)

Besides, Mother (F3), Father (F5) and Father (F4) have approached the researcher for help due to her education level, English skills, and connections with others in the city.

*“Would you mind having a look at those notices from school for me? Mei Lan, take out those paper you got from school today, the one you don’t understand and let Caroline have a look. She can tell us what they are about, and hurry up, you might need help to finish some tasks, maybe she can help you.”* (Mother, F3)

Due to the limited English skills of the mother (F3), she tries to seek help from the researcher whenever opportunities arise. Father (F4) also made similar requests for help from the researcher during the interview after finding out his wife was still waiting for a spot in the ESOL class.

*“I don’t understand why the school office hasn’t contacted my wife regarding her ESOL application. I guess the staff there were discriminating against her*



*since she doesn't know any English. It was just not fair, and I have never heard her talk about that before honestly. Maybe you can go with her to ask for some clarification and explanation, and they will treat you seriously since you can communicate well with them....and see when she can be allocated a spot in the class, or at least give her an assessment to see what level of the class she is waiting for?"* (Father, F4)

Given the researcher's status as a PhD student in the UK, Father (F5), who has applied for asylum, has asked the researcher to write a note for him explaining how we got to know each other, as well as his family. His lawyer has asked him to find people who are of higher social status to provide personal notes for the judge to review during the court hearing to decide on his asylum status.

*"Would you mind giving me a personal note saying how we knew each other and for how long, and also my family and my personal character? I need them for a court hearing soon. I will be so grateful for your help, you know me, my wife and my children, it's very stressful for me as I don't know what the judge might ask or say to me. I don't want to be separated from my family here."* (Father, F5)

Even though the researcher was not in these families' close friend circle and was connected only through 'weak ties' and transient acquaintances, parents made use of this connection to seek practical support and information. Some families were able to get the help and services they needed, while other families continued to struggle to find help. Mother of Family 5 has access to free child care services while she is

attending the ESOL classes; however, Mothers 1 and 2 have struggled to obtain free child care services. The mother of Family 4 has been waiting for about two years for ESOL class in a new district in Glasgow and has not heard back from the staff, while other mothers have had more positive experiences in the process of enrolling for ESOL classes. These differences might be due to lack of information and misunderstandings when communicating.

#### **6.4 Compare and Contrast**

Strategies, such as comparing life in China versus those in the UK, were frequently employed as a tool to help participants to rationalise their actions and lead to more positive emotions. Families compare the education system, health care system, cultural differences, political systems and the environment. For example, Mother (F 4) mentioned the lack of rigour in the curriculum in the UK compared to China, but she believes her children have a higher chance of getting into a good university in the UK. On the other hand, Mother (F 5) thinks that the UK education system is more reasonable.

*“You know, the schools in China put huge pressure on students with lots of homework and examinations; there are more opportunities for higher education here compared to China.” (Mother, F5)*

*“Here in Scotland, I think my children will have an opportunity to become well-educated in universities. It was very competitive in China, and it’s always about “Guanxi” when it comes to the top universities, say you know someone or have lots of money.” (Mother, F3)*

Families also stressed the freedoms they have in Scotland, such as the freedom of speech. Father and Mother (F3) have both mentioned that living in Scotland gives them peace of mind and the freedom to enjoy their life.

*“At least we have freedom here in Scotland. In China, we worried what to say and you don't know if people around you are spies for the government.”*

(Father, F3)

*“I enjoy living in the UK, and the freedom I have for example, I can openly criticise the UK government, but I can't do that in China. You will be dead if you say anything anti-government.”* (Mother, F3)

Families mentioned the UK government takes better care of them, in the sense that education and health care are free. Compared to China, UK has a higher quality of life and their children will have the opportunity to grow up in a more fair and humane society. All the parents recalled the difficult lives they have had since childhood in China, and the lack of opportunities to learn or further their education because of poverty at home. They believe that the next generation will have a much brighter future in the UK.

*“The government here is good in providing things for us free of charge such as the children's education and health care services, which are vital for living a good life. We can't find those good deals in China.”* (Father, F2)

The mother of Family 3 mentioned she likes the doctors and the medicine here in Glasgow, compared to those in China. Her oldest son has been having a terrible

cough and respiratory problems for a long time. He got better after coming to Glasgow, because the doctor gave him different medicines than those in China. She credited her son's recovery to the doctors and medicine here.

*“The local GP is good. My oldest son used to suffer a lot of throat inflammation in China, and they always gave him a lot of medicine, which didn't help. Since he came to Scotland, the GP here only prescribed one medicine and he got better.”* (Mother, F3)

Families also compared the kind of people, neighbourhood, and welfare system they experienced in different places and points of time in their lives. Family 2 lived in London for a few years; the mother prefers living in Glasgow.

*“It provides better welfare for families in need than in London. Also, people in Glasgow are nicer and more helpful.”* (Mother, F2)

Similarly, the father of Family 5 had lived in London and expressed a similar view. During the interviews, it was a common theme for not only the parents, but the older children as well, to use reference points to compare and contrast their lives in the U.K. and China; or experiences with different GP offices in Glasgow. Thus, they concluded their lives were better in the UK, based on their experiences and insights.

*“Friends in school are nice and helpful, and I play with them a lot. I got invited to birthday parties here in Glasgow, which is fun. I miss my relatives in China, but school here is definitely more fun.”* (Boy 1, F4) *“I like the*

*school here in Glasgow; it's more fun and much less homework than the one I went in China.” (Boy 1, F3)*

## **6.5 Technology**

Technology, not surprisingly, is another extremely important theme in serving an overarching bridge and/or link to the host country, country of origin, and beyond. All mothers make great use of the internet to connect with families and friends in China, friends in the UK, and elsewhere.

*“It's nice to talk to family in China via ‘Wechat’, at least my parents can see the children in video chat. They are getting old, and they miss the children. I call my mother often and it helps to know I always have someone to talk to...” (Mother, F1)*

This communication greatly improves their lives by allowing them to stay in touch with people they care about and love, and maintain close ties and relationships. Technology also provides a channel for them to seek help in terms of information and emotional support, as needed.

*“I rely on the internet a lot, such as texting friends on ‘Wechat’ and Facebook Messenger. I got information, such as arts and crafts workshop for families online.” (Mother, F5)*

Knowing how to search for activities for children online provides the mother of Family 5 an efficient way to obtain the information she needs to benefit her children.

All families utilise the application of ‘Wechat’ to make audio and video calls for free as long as they have a strong and stable WIFI connections. The fathers also commented on the importance of internet connection in the daily lives of their family. They understand the mothers and children rely heavily on stable and fast internet connection for various purposes such as talking to family and friends, searching for information, and playing games for children.

*“Yes, it’s very important to have good strong WIFI connection. They can’t live with slow internet I am afraid....chatting with friends and family!”*  
(Father, F1)

*“That’s probably one of the most important and useful things in the house; good fast WIFI I guess. My sons can help search for information online for us, and they provide a channel for information definitely.”* (Father, F4)

Older children consistently mentioned that having a strong internet connection is extremely important to them as they are dependent on it for many activities at home such as doing homework, locating information and playing games.

*“Right, we can’t play games with slow internet.”* (Boy 2, F4)

*“My mom asked me to find out things online sometimes, and I can’t help if the wifi is not working.”* (Boy 1, F1)

*“Some homework assignment needs students to look up information online, and I need to be able to get that done at home.”* (Boy 1, F3)

## 6.6 Conclusion

Families explored important constructs of living a good life and at the same time, highlighted the many challenges of living in the UK. In the discussion, all families talked about the pathways to wellbeing, but they also articulated things that are preventing from reaching their goals, such as limited information and resources in host communities. The strengths and weaknesses of their particular social bonds determine whether those bonds can serve to lead to bridging connections for these families, and thus impact their wellbeing in resettlement.

To sum up, the main strengths for these 5 families are the loyalty of the few bonds families have and for those who possess strong bonds, which serve the function of bridges. However, the limited number and capacities of their social bonds, and the issues of trust and ‘guanxi’ appear to be the biggest hurdles for developing a more diverse base for bonds, which could lead to bridges and links. With their very limited English skills, non-commitment to attending the ESOL classes, and excessive and exclusive bonds with their own groups, these would not help them integrate into the mainstream society or achieve some of the goals they claimed to be important for family wellbeing, such as helping their children to excel in education and be financially sound and have a nice house of their own.

In addition, trust and the norms of reciprocity are central to the patterns of social connections within these families and play a key role in networking, and seeking and offering help on a daily basis. For example, mother (F1) lost trust in the interpreting services and the local dentists and thus seldom uses those services. On the other hand, mother (F2) has built trust with a non-Chinese friend and they have helped

each other with taking care of the children. All participants have mentioned the importance of being able to repay favours in maintaining a functional relationship in their circle of friends. How this three-phase research study answers the research questions and the implications of the findings will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.



## Chapter 7

### Discussion

#### 7.1 Introduction

This research project set out to explore the resettlement experiences of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in Glasgow through a three-phase study guided by the following research questions:

- What are the core constructs associated with wellbeing from the perspectives of the Chinese ASR population?
- What is the pattern of social connections for the Chinese ASR population?
- What roles do social connections play in achieving the wellbeing constructs identified by the Chinese ASR families?

This study concluded with a descriptive account of what makes a good life for the Chinese ASRs and their living experiences in the finding chapters. The aim of this chapter is to collate all the phases into a whole and summarize and interpret important findings with regard to the research questions. More importantly, the discussion of the implications in terms of policy, practice and theory will be presented. Last but not least, recommendations on how policy makers and service providers could utilize the research findings to improve various areas in host communities for the Chinese ASR populations will be illustrated. Social connections, including bonds, bridges and links, social support, social relationships and networks remain a significant topic both on its own, and woven into different layers of

constructs to impact wellbeing, for example children's education and financial stability. The discussion will highlight those impacts and mechanisms that, to varying degrees, either determine the success of achieving subjective wellbeing or the perpetuation of a cycle of poverty and limitations. The discussion will also draw on key informant's inputs, my observations and interpretation of findings, as well as findings from existing literature.

## **7.2 Subjective wellbeing constructs**

In this section, the themes on wellbeing constructs will be discussed with reference to family wellbeing (Phase 3) and individual wellbeing (Phase 1). The similarities as well as differences regarding the two different group will be analysed.

### **7.2.1 Themes on wellbeing constructs**

The findings of the study show that participants place great emphasis on social relationships and support, children's education, staying healthy, financial independence, living conditions, freedom of speech and gathering and obtaining citizenship in host communities. The findings reveal that participants left their country of origin mainly because of extreme economic hardship. However, they might not have experienced the extreme hardship of fleeing their country of origin without the most basic things in their hands such as the identity cards/passports or change of clothes. Thus, the common theme of 'reaching a safe place' in a host country is not present in the study unlike other refugee studies (Ganagamma, 2017).

### **7.2.2 Wellbeing constructs for families**

Findings from phase three help shed light on what the Chinese ASR families consider as living a good life. Parents in this study put children's education at the top

of the list, and they understand the significance of education as a key determining factor for their children's success. In order to achieve success of their children, the role of the mother, the quality of the school and its students, having the right kind of resources (money, information), children's mentality, hard work and their peer group influence, and whether children listen to parents' advice were all mentioned by parents as crucial factors. Family refugee wellbeing studies have also highlighted the importance of education for children in the host country, and parents in those studies have more or less similar concerns about whether their children will be able to achieve a good education (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; Major et al., 2013). Education is seen as the most promising way that children can guarantee a professional job and move up the social ladder in the host societies.

The findings reveal that parents prioritized supervising children and ensuring they are successful in their education and future career paths and put aside their own learning of the English language. It could be a unique phenomenon for this population, as Phillimore and Goodson (2008) find that other ethnic ASRs put great emphasis in their own education and learning opportunities. Parents understood their lack of foundation in the area of education; most parents in the study did not have a high school education. None of them had ever learned English, which is the medium of instruction in the UK. They complained about not being able to remember a few English words in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, and seemed not to consider the possibility of attending formal schooling in the country.

Overall, families prioritized the education of the children, the health of family members, obtaining legal status in the UK, having solid and strong relationships with

a few close friends in the same ethnic group, and being financially independent from the Government. These five Chinese families maintained their Chinese traditions and ways of life. They came from extreme poverty with very little opportunity to succeed in life. They placed all their hope of bringing the families out of the cycle of poverty and low socio-economic status in the next generation; but this change would occur only if their children were to obtain good professional jobs in society. In order to maintain their culture, holding on to language, celebrations of festivals and food, close contact with the Chinese community and other Chinese, who share the same dialect, is crucial. All of these depend on a stable financial situation for the families, as mothers keep continue to stress the importance of providing children with extra-curricular activities and tutorials in order for them to optimize their learning opportunities. All these activities, as the parents noted, are very costly.

### **7.2.3 Wellbeing constructs for individuals**

There were more similarities than differences between the wellbeing constructs for individuals in phase 1 and those for families in phase 3. Children's education, opportunities to learn, their future career and overall being emerged as the most commonly mentioned priority. Keeping a job and having access to health care followed as the next most frequently mentioned constructs of wellbeing.

However, a couple of constructs worth mentioning are "spirituality" and "human rights issues", which some individuals prioritized as important in phase 1. Data revealed that freedom to believe and practice religious rituals and readings is important aspect of living a good life. Some participants belong to the Falun Gong group and they meet twice a week to study the readings of the book written by the

Falun Gong master and practice the ‘gong’ (a meditation exercise). There are gatherings in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. These provided participants a sense of peace and harmony as well as bonding with other practitioners during the gathering. Spirituality has been an important indicator of wellbeing and the Chinese government’s low tolerance on religious freedom and gathering, as well as heavy handed policy with persecutions could be a reason why some participants treasure their freedom to worship and gather in the host community.

In this study, no participants indicated that they had endured torture or imprisonment prior to coming to Glasgow. Most of the participants were very cautious of disclosing any information about their lives in China or how they reached the UK. Even in the UK, Chinese migrants and students are very careful not to comment on sensitive topics regarding the Chinese government and its policies on social media platform. Findings in phase 1 suggest that having basic fundamental human rights to association, assembly, and speech as important wellbeing construct, which indicated their yearning for freedom and appreciation of the freedom they have in the UK. It was mentioned briefly by some families in phase 3, but it was not one of the most important wellbeing constructs as indicated by some individuals.

### **7.3 Family pathways to wellbeing**

Thus, analyzing families’ pathways and struggles to achieving living a good life give insights into the type and amount of social capital, particularly social connections, these families have, and how that capital affect life in the host community for the families. This section will provide interpretations and insights on the themes emerged as pathways to wellbeing.

### **7.3.1 Roles of family members**

Children's success and doing well in all aspects of life, particularly in academics, is seen as success for the entire family. The collective identity of family as one unit, with the exception that members will work together to cope with challenges and stressors is a strong belief in the Chinese tradition. The Chinese family is extremely cohesive, and family members depend on each other for support, both emotional and for carrying out daily tasks (Hsu, 1985). Therefore, the success of one member is shared and celebrated as success for the entire family.

Children play an important role in optimizing family wellbeing. The older children in the five families, who took part in phase 3, seemed to understand their role. In fact, older children carry a heavy burden in the family especially when the fathers are rarely home. These children take on an 'adult' roles in helping their mothers manage the day-to-day chores and problems of the family as mothers reported in both phase 2 and 3. Children are the ones who adjusted much faster to the new life in resettlement in terms of learning the language, making friends and adjusting to a new culture and way of life. With parents' limited English language skills, they find it disempowering when they have to rely heavily on their older children for help. Children take on a role similar to that of the head of the family, performing tasks such as reading mails and making phone calls to agencies, when they should be the responsibilities of the parents'.

As a result, children become the brokers of the family, and this gives them power in the family as they possess more information and knowledge compared to their parents. It is not the norm in traditional Chinese family dynamics where parents hold

absolute power over their children. These role reversals not only shift family dynamics, but also pose a threat to parents' identity and 'face' within the family, as well as in the Chinese community. It can lead to conflicts and misunderstandings between parents and children (Lustig et al. 2004), and potentially compromise the respect children have for their parents (Renzaho et al., 2011).

Similar findings were reported in other studies relating to parent-children relationships and the changing roles and expectations of children in the migration context (Atwell et al. 2009; Lewig et al. 2010). Disconnection to their children due to factors such as language barriers, change of roles and decreased parental influence in instilling culture and heritage in their children is a major concern for migrant parents (Lin et al. 2009; Williams, 2008). It also undermined parents' power in enforcing discipline and their values on their children with the changes of family dynamics and roles, which are mentioned by parents in this study and resonated in other migration studies (Renzaho et al. 2011; Milner & Khawajia, 2010). In phase 3, parents mentioned that their lack of English language skills often make them feel isolated from the local Scottish people. It could make them feel isolated from their children when the young ones started to build relationships with people in the local community, such as in schools and neighbourhood.

As mentioned in the chapter 2, the literature shows that refugee children and families are at substantially higher risk of mental health issues related to the exposure of war, violence, and forced migration (Kirmayer et al. 2011; Wilson et al. 2010). Children, especially those older ones who witnessed and experienced the turmoil of forced migration, carried a big burden on their shoulders with these new family roles in

resettlement. Children in this study resort to playing electronic games, hanging out with their peers and other Chinese children for support.

Parents use multiple strategies to achieve the goals of providing a good education for their children. The division of labour in the household is clear. The fathers provide financial support and occasionally take upon the role of disciplinarian to stop the children from playing games and the mothers play a crucial role in saving money in bank accounts, and most try to minimise unnecessary expenses such as going out too much since transportation costs are high. Parents, particularly mothers, not only value education, but expect children to maintain most of their original culture and language; it is for this reason that they send their children to study Chinese on Saturdays.

One of the parenting styles noted in the homes is an authoritarian style, where parents' words represent an absolute order for the children. This style of parenting was evident in home visits and discussions with the mothers, who spend much more time with their children than the fathers. At times, parents talked about the importance of disciplining their children in order to shape good behaviours that match parental expectations such as being polite and showing obedience. The lack of information and strategies in the host community about the proper way to discipline children was stressful for parents. They face the challenges of changing roles, power dynamics and parenting in a new place; support and information surrounding those areas, including mental health services for families, would be helpful for these families.



### **7.3.2 Close friendship – for practical help and emotional support**

Findings reveal having close relationships as an important factor to achieving a good life; families and friends provide emotional support, companionship, a sense of identity, practical help and information, and help maintain the Chinese culture. In this study, the data shows that most of the participants understand the importance of a strong social network in helping them achieve their goals in life. The network often consists of a circle of friends who can provide various types of assistance and support. The relationships and contacts an individual has may affect the decision to migrate, and the ability to get help with accommodation, jobs, information and emotional support (Boyd, 1989: 651).

Data from the exploratory stage reveals a similar pattern; participants and case workers mentioned one of the main reasons for the Chinese coming to the UK was because family and friends had moved and settled there. Thus, networks are seen as a key element in facilitating migration especially when those who had previously settled in the UK painted a rosy picture of their lives in the host community. Social networks, support and connections are typical ways for any community to achieve common and individual goods, but it is particularly crucial for the asylum and refugee communities. This finding strongly relates to the main objective of the study to investigate the patterns of bonds, bridges and links, and how the interactions impact overall wellbeing.

### **7.3.3 Patterns of social connection**

Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in Glasgow tend to be isolated in the host community as indicated by both key informants and participants themselves.

Nonetheless, there seems to be fair to close bonds within families, and participants are surrounded by a few good friends, largely people from their own ethnic group. Ethnic groups can sometimes be excessively bonded when people associate primarily with individuals who are from the same culture. Thus, they are likely to engage solely in co-ethnic organisations and networks, rather than exploring the opportunities to participate in local organisations in the host community; the findings have confirmed this. Literature in the field of migration has also indicated that excessive bonded relationships may lead to social exclusion and isolation (Pittaway and Shteir, 2009).

In the Uslaner and Conley's analysis (2003) of a *Los Angeles Times* survey of Chinese in California, the authors found that those who believed they were more integrated into the American society and had friends of diverse backgrounds were more likely to engage in civic participation (Uslaner & Conley, 2003). On the contrary, those Chinese who felt marginalized and were connected exclusively with other Chinese people were more likely to participate only in their own ethnic civic organisations. These findings resonate with those of the present study, that participants primarily attend activities organised by the Chinese Community and Development Partnership (CCDP) such as the Moon Festival and Chinese New Year. The activities and workshops organised by local agencies such as the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) on the other hand, have not been well attended by Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs). Local agency staff thought that non-attendance might be due to language and cultural barriers; however, this research found that Chinese ASRs did not even know about those events. Also, some participants clearly stated that there was no reason for them to try to communicate with the local people,

since they do not know the language well. In fact, there was often an interpreter on site to help with translations when an agency such as SRC or the British Red Cross (BRC) hosted a workshop for people from different countries. Nonetheless, the lack of information, time and interest has prevented the Chinese from attending activities or workshops organised by local agencies. These events would have offered opportunities for them to meet other ethnic groups and local service providers that serve as great opportunities for building their bridging capital.

#### **7.3.4 Compare and contrast**

Families have employed specific strategies to explain the decisions to leave China and seek refuge in the UK. These explanations made them feel better about their decisions and to a certain extent, about themselves as '*responsible caring parents*' to their children. For example, mothers (F1, F3 and F4) on one hand complained about their children having very little homework or studying to do after school. In terms of the amount of homework and examinations, compared to other children studying in China, these mothers drew the conclusion that their children might not be learning as much as their peers in China. However, they believed that their children would have a better chance of getting into a good university in the UK and a brighter future compared to students in China. Parents compare and contrast the quality of education and the possibility of being admitted into a good university on a very superficial level, such as the amount of homework children bring home and what their friends mentioned about their children's situation in China. Chinese migrant families on the whole, place a tremendous amount of focus and emphasis on their children's education; participants heard these success stories, from earlier migrants, and think that their children will follow suit and be successful. On the whole, they felt hopeful

about the possibility of success, and did their best to instill the importance of studying hard in their children's minds.

Likewise, Mother (F3) praised the quality of medicine in Scotland, noting it was far above the standards in China because her son recovered from a terrible cough after taking medicine prescribed by a local UK doctor. In fact, moving from a polluted part of China to Scotland, where the air is much fresher, may be of great help to the child's respiratory system. However, the mother wanted to make a strong point about how effective the medicine in Glasgow is, compared to that in China. The point that these families were trying to make is clear; it was a blessing for them to reside in Scotland, and they were far better off and happier, compared to where they came from. Overall, parents often try to make themselves feel better when facing negative aspects of the host community by pinpointing the worse conditions in China or choosing to discuss a greater good or benefit in the UK that helps offset the negative aspects to life in their new communities. Their ultimate goal is to highlight the positive sides of living in Glasgow and their priorities in life as mentioned in the family wellbeing constructs, for example, good education for their children and good health for their family members.

This study confirms previous studies (Alam & Imran, 2015; Lee, 2012; Williams, 2016) that technology is vital to achieve a good standard of living, which is not new in the migrant and refugee literature. The advantages of having access to technology include staying connected with friends and families, accessing information, and entertainment. Having a strong and stable internet connection is crucial for the families especially among the older children who love gaming. However, this study

was not able to draw a link between access to technology and its impact on social inclusion among the refugee migrants as did the study in Australia conducted by Alam & Imran (2015).

#### **7.4 The English language - a crucial facilitator to wellbeing**

A lack of English proficiency complicates participants' lives in many ways. Findings of this study are similar to other refugee studies on this issue (Gray & Elliott, 2001; Blake et al., 2017; Phillimore, 2010). Participants often reported having difficulties in retaining materials learned in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, thus, making little progress. Research suggests that language skills may improve the feeling of perceived acceptance by one's peers and thus, enhance the sense of environmental mastery and wellbeing (Liebkind et al., 2004). A qualitative study of refugee youth in the UK found that English language acquisition and proficiency provided opportunities to seek help and support from host communities and local agencies (Sorgen, 2015).

All adult participants have a limited English proficiency and very few of them had reported ever engaged in activities organised by the local agencies. The few exceptions, such as family events in the local community and women's day celebrations for minorities occurred because of invitations by the case workers at Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) or by participants' close friends, who learned of the events. The low level of English proficiency of minority groups remains a top concern of the UK government in terms of refugee integration. Morrice et al. (2019) suggested that those who have low language proficiency are found to be at risk for long-term dependency and exclusion. This finding echoed

exactly the situation of what the Chinese ASRs are facing, while their needs are unmet, they continue to have limited capacities and opportunities for learning the English language.

#### **7.4.1 Language and parenting**

Researchers have identified language as a tool that facilitates the acquisition and transmission of information through interacting socially with one's surroundings (Feely & Harzing, 2003). Most researchers would agree that language plays an important role in linking people to knowledge (Chomsky, 1996; Grunhage-Monetti et al., 2003). Knowledge and information enhance power, and participants understand that their lack of English language skills undermines their power to get information and thus, compromises their access to economic opportunities and social resources. As a result, parents in this study find themselves isolated from information networks locally. It is common to hear participants mention their frustrations about not being able to find out resources or activities for children to which other local parents have access.

The English language is one of the most challenging barriers for the families. Parents identified their low proficiency in the English language as an obstacle to positive parenting experiences, access to employment, education, or effective health care services. This reality could make parenting challenging, particularly when parents are confronted with parenting situations that they have not expected and which are alien to them (Kwak, 2003). Similarly, Simich et al. (2010) suggest that refugee families may experience changing roles when parents and children adjust into the new environment, context, and culture.

#### **7.4.2 Language and friendship - social interactions with others and the local people**

Poor English language skills was a deterrent to making friends with local people, asking for help in the host community, getting information from local schools and community, and so forth. All participants in the study see their lack of English as a key obstacle to leading a good life, as it limits their capacity to ask for help from local service providers such as ESOL administrators and the housing authority.

Research has highlighted the severity of the issue, not only for Chinese migrants (Huang & Spurgeon, 2006) but also for other ASR populations in the resettlement process (Phillimore, 2011). Those who can communicate, or who at least try to do so with others in English, reported more positive experiences in the host community. These experiences helped them feel being included and instilled a sense of integration into the host community.

This study shows that parents were unable to interact with local people in their community or parents of children's friends due to cultural differences. The differences between the two cultures, the lack of common interests, feelings of inferiority to the local people and language barrier are cited as main reasons for not trying to socialise with the local people. One participant, however, reported a satisfactory relationship with a person from other minority group. They share the same social status as refugees and both are learning the English language. This common experience created a safe space for the two mothers to become friends and help each other in times of need such as babysitting. A couple of participants also mentioned feeling ashamed when their friend, who barely knows English, tried to communicate with a local person at an event. 'Saving face' and '*mianzi*' are

considered important in the Chinese culture, and some are very careful not to lose face in public.

Refugees often come from countries where their language is different from the host country's language. Thus, their language skills are very limited in the beginning. It is likely that the lack of proficiency in the language of the host country is a major obstacle for migrants/refugees in establishing intergroup contact. My study shows that most participants have very minimal or no social interaction with the local people, and some are struggling with loneliness and isolation at times. This information confirms the findings of Phillimore (2011), who provides qualitative evidence about the link between language and contact among refugees in the UK. She points out that those refugees in the UK, who were unable to speak English felt incapable of building relationships with local people. As a consequence, they experienced particularly high levels of isolation, which is one of the challenges that participants mentioned in this study.

This study reveals that none of the adult participants reported having a close friend, who is a local person from the host community, to a large extent because of their limited English skills. A study with 263 former asylum seekers in Britain conducted by the Home Office (Carey-Wood, Duke, Karn, & Marshall, 1995) found that those who came to the UK with better English language skills were more likely to make British friends. Questionnaire data from the same study confirmed that English language proficiency was positively related to the amount of contact with British people. In short, that research suggests that language proficiency facilitates contact with local people (Tip, Brown, Morrice, Collyer, & Easterbrook, 2019). My study



confirms the finding that language proficiency is a key factor for communication and making friends in the local community.

### **7.4.3 Language skills and employment**

This study shows that limited language skills perpetuates a vicious cycle for participants; it leads to limited opportunities for access to information and limited choice of employment. With almost no English skills, participants in this study have no opportunities to find other jobs with higher pay; their only option is working in Chinese restaurants, which offers minimum wages. This information confirms findings from another study in Glasgow (Strang and O'Brien, 2017); refugees described how carefully they had to manage their lives under conditions of ongoing poverty. Some talked explicitly about the shame they felt depending on welfare benefits, instead of working, even though they were fit and healthy. These findings resonate with all the fathers' voices in my study especially for those who have been put in limbo waiting for their asylum case to be called by the Home Office. They do not want to receive '*welfare money*' as the fathers put it, when they are fit to earn.

Nawyn et al. (2012) found that refugees were concerned that their lack of English abilities would limit their employment prospects. Nonetheless, their primary concern was the lack of access to basic information, which was also caused by linguistic isolation. Proficiency in the language of the host country is important in every aspect of refugees' lives, and employment is one of the most significant areas. Bjorn et al. (2013) found that refugees in Sweden reported trying to learn the local language and looking for employment in the host community. It was not easy for parents to find a job similar to the one they had in their country of origin.

In the UK, refugees have experienced discrimination as a main barrier to employment (Bloch, 2004). In addition, the process of re-qualification for certain professions such as doctors, has been found to be problematic (Stewart, 2007). Pietka-Nykaza (2015) explored the strategies of refugees re-entering their professions (doctors and teachers) in the UK; the necessity for re-qualification and re-education seemed to be the only route for these refugees to get back to their profession in the UK. Recognition of qualifications obtained elsewhere is one of the major obstacles for refugees finding satisfying employment. Though the participants in my study did not face similar situations, they did report their lack of language skills highly limited their choice of employment in Glasgow, which confirms the findings of Nawyn et al. (2012).

#### **7.4.4 Low motivation for language learning and its impact**

Even though participants understood the importance of the English language, this study reveals a lack of continuous attendance of English classes. Full occupation with young children for mothers and long hours of employment for fathers made it challenging for participants to follow through with pursuing language learning. Mothers reported slow progress of their language skills, possibly due to difficulty in memorising vocabulary; they continued to rely heavily on others for interpretation support. Competing demands from official appointments and childcare duties interfered with learning by disrupting attendance at classes; the emotional and cognitive toll also inhibited focus and concentration (Horner and Hamner 2002; Castaneda et al. 2008). Given the crucial role of language skills as a gateway to many other things in the resettlement process, slow progress in the English language will indeed lead to slower progress across all integration pathways (Scottish Refugee

Council 2015, 2016). Both the Sudanese (Deng & Marlowe 2013) and the Chinese participants in this study highlighted the challenges of attending English language classes such as transportation cost and childcare.

While participants recognised the importance of language skills, parents in this study indicated it was difficult to learn a new language because of their age and lack of time. In addition, a variety of services are already provided by Chinese businesses specifically target Chinese customers provide services including driving schools, hairdressers, mobile phone internet data plan and repair and grocery shopping in Glasgow. Many participants are able to survive by just using their own dialect when procuring many services. This reality demotivates participants from learning the English language since they can choose from services already provided by their own ethnic group. The lack of cultural capital, such as mastery of the language and education, according to Bourdieu (1986), makes it difficult for migrants to acquire necessary social capital, particularly bridging capital, in host communities. With the exception of the three older children and mothers of family two (F2) and family five (F5), who have been trying hard to acquire English language skills, most participants have limited language skills. Consequently, parents hoped, and took every action possible to ensure that their children grasp every opportunity to learn and fulfil their dreams in the future through education.

### **7.5 Challenges in resettlement process**

Findings have highlighted Chinese ASRs' struggles and hardships throughout the period of the research. Interviews with key informants, such as the case workers and staff of CCDP as well as housing officers, also revealed the concerns and issues

faced by this population. The findings chapter (Chapter 5) reveals limited bridging and linking capital, and concerns about trust and opportunity to give in the host community. Life overall poses many challenges for the participants - poverty, legal status, language barrier, and isolation, and a unique set of challenges for parents in the host community.

Data reveals many challenges faced by the Chinese ASRs in Glasgow. In addition to the challenges noted immediately above, additional challenges include poor housing and neighbourhoods, perceived discrimination and racism, isolation and mental health issues, which can be found across the three findings chapters. Similarly, a study conducted between May 2013 and December 2015 (Strang, Baillot and Mignard, 2018) reported that refugee households had financial difficulties, language barriers and difficulties in attending language classes, a sense of shame at being dependent on benefits, and limited social and family connections in Scotland.

Overall, refugees' friends tend to be either asylum seekers in asylum accommodation or other new refugees in temporary accommodation. Neither of these groups are allowed to have additional people to stay in their home, as per the rules of the Home Office. The father of family 5 experienced lack of housing when his children and their mother received asylum housing support, but he was not allowed to stay with them since he was not legally married. He had to seek help from his own limited circle of connections to stay nights with a number of acquaintances. Refugee families face many challenges in adapting to the culture in the UK (Carey-Wood et al., 1995). Some of the key barriers and their implications for them in the host community will be discussed in the next section.

### **7.5.1 Impact of the asylum process on integration and wellbeing**

The changes in the asylum policies and the negative impact on the overall wellbeing on ASRs are mentioned, such as mental health issues (anxiety and depression) and social isolation in Chapter 2. How the asylum process impact the Chinese ASRs was not one of the research questions of this study, however, some participants mentioned the challenges that the asylum process posed on them and their families. Most of the narratives are similar to what other researchers found regarding this issue in the UK. Janniesari et al. (2019) and Chase (2013) found themes, such as dehumanization, loss of identity, poverty, confusion, poor mental health outcomes, social isolation, and stigmatization related to the impact of the UK asylum process. It stopped asylum seekers from working, planning for the future, keeping them waiting in limbo, and limited their access to services and resources. All these lead to mental health concerns. The participants in this study talked about the confusing and ever-changing asylum process, and it created challenges in planning for their future. The threat of deportation is real, and participants found the system oppressive – some mentioned living in fear (for example, Father of family 5 cited in Chapter 6).

Lack of a safe space and living in poor housing conditions and neighbourhood also stemmed from the dispersal policy. Frustration of long waiting times for the asylum case to be called and isolation were mentioned by many ASRs in other studies as well as this study. Some interviewees failed to understand the asylum process, particularly the overwhelming pace the process started and the little time for them to understand the process. They have problem securing a lawyer and at the same time, trying to manage a new life in isolation. All these causes a state of mental distress. Families in this study mentioned they felt like their hands were tied during the period

of asylum waiting. They were anxious about the outcomes and two families were still 'waiting in limbo' during phase 3 of the study. Many had been told that they might have to wait up to 5 years for a decision from the UK Border Agency with respect to their applications for further leave to remain in the UK (Chase, 2013). Some participants of this study talked about waiting over 8 years in Glasgow for their asylum cases to be called. In addition, the other families who had obtained 'leave to remain' (LTR) experienced stressful situations when they were given 2.5 years rather than 5 years in their LTR status. The sense of powerlessness and identity loss are common themes of those who are waiting in limbo.

Also, being labelled as 'asylum seekers' dictated how they are treated. The label subjected them to continued surveillance and control (Chase, 2010). Outside the system, it seems to differentiate asylum seekers from citizens, and leave them more vulnerable to be targets of discrimination and stigma (McDonald & Billings 2007; Morris 2009). Participants from 18 different countries, such as Somalia, Eritrea and Nigeria in the study conducted by Chase (2013) in the UK could not be open about who they were or disclosed to others their legal status because of stigma. Similarly, participants in this study indicated concerns regarding their treatment by health clinics or schools once others found out they were asylum seekers, which were discussed in earlier findings chapters.

Mental health concerns no doubt were related to earlier trauma, however, findings suggested that the immigration status, the uncertainties of legal status and the future exacerbated these mental health problems. Plenty of asylum seekers experienced anxiety, depression and insomnia due to a lack of permanent status of refugees in the

UK. They can still be sent back to their country of origin any time by the Home Office. In this study, findings reveal that parents are worried and very anxious about not being able to extend their leave to remain status, as well as the cost associated with it. They talked about the possibilities of being kicked out of the country, and how this would adversely impact their children, especially the ones who were born in the UK. The older children have adjusted well to the lives of the UK, its culture, language and education system, and parents thought it would be unjust to send them back to China, which have totally different systems in all aspects of lives. All the above concerns would greatly impact the overall wellbeing of participants. Regarding integration, 'foundation' being one of the categories of the IOI framework, stresses the important principles including the rights that are given to individuals, and the expectations and obligations of citizenship. Living a life in limbo and the confusing asylum process have made it hard for asylum seekers to work towards integration or materialize the dream of citizenship.

### **7.5.2 Parenting in host country**

The study reveals that parents were unclear about what their rights were; they felt the tensions between local laws, cultural norms, and traditional cultural parenting beliefs and practices. The findings are consistent with other studies. Refugee studies from Australia and the UK highlighted the fact that refugee parents face additional stress associated with the experience of changes in family roles (Gonsalves, 1992; Lamberg, 1996). Both studies found that participants came from countries where the use of physical discipline was accepted as an appropriate parenting practice; however, this practice was not acceptable in the host countries. Parents lack information about acceptable parenting practices and other alternative strategies that

could be used to discipline children and adolescents in host countries. This could cause confusion, misunderstanding, and worse still, fearful and mistrust toward government departments when parents were approached by child protection team or warned of losing their children. It could potentially become a barrier for integration and negatively impact their wellbeing if trust is not built.

Physical punishment, which is traditionally used in many Asian countries, may be against the law in host countries such as the UK, where participants reside (Lewig et al., 2010; Gewirtz et al., 2008). Refugee parents have the challenge of parenting within a new system in an unfamiliar place and often lack a network of support.

Mothers in phase three reported that they sometimes feel like a single parents since the fathers are not available most of the time. These mothers, similar to other refugee mothers, largely came from a collectivistic community, where child rearing is a shared responsibility of extended family and friends. However, this situation was not the case in the host community, where there was no such system in place to support raising children (Ambert, 1994).

Studies on refugee parenting during the resettlement process concluded that parents found it very challenging to cope with multiple losses such as culture, customs, land, language, and family members, in addition to having inadequate resources and living in unstable environments (Ambert, 1994; Wadsworth, 2010; Williams, 2008). The changing roles and power dynamics in the family, as suggested by existing literature as well as findings in this study (discussed in earlier section), complicated parenting and the relationship between parents and children.



### 7.5.3 Self-esteem, Discrimination and Racism

Participants from all phases of the study reported some sorts of discriminatory treatment in the host community. The treatment negatively affected their self-esteem, perceptions of the local people and their interactions with them in the community. A study on Sudanese refugee families in New Zealand found that their resettlement experience not only relates to the social and physical environments in which the refugees live, but is also related to the attitude of residents in the host community (Marlowe, 2011).

The data illustrates the fact that discriminatory treatment from the local community has made participants feel uncomfortable or not welcomed in places, such as the GP's office and schools. Perceived discrimination has long been known to be one of the most important stressors for immigrants in the resettlement process (Montgomery & Foldspang, 2007). A body of research exists that reveal discriminatory experiences among immigrant youth, which was linked to negative behavioural, psychological and health-related outcomes (Ferdinand, Paradies, and Kelaher, 2015). Findings suggest that participants experienced discrimination, such as the 16-year-old student discussed her experience in the school in phase 1. This type of treatment has been found among other refugee youth populations. For example, Correa-Velez, Gifford, and Barnett (2010) did a longitudinal study with ninety-seven refugee youth from eleven countries in Australia, and they found that perceived discrimination is a key predictor of participants' wellbeing. It will also affect refugees' adaptation if they experience high levels of discrimination in the host society. In addition, a study conducted in Glasgow found 11 out of 25 refugees interviewed experienced or

witnessed aggressive, racist behaviour from drug users and alcoholics in their building (Strang et al, 2018), which negatively impacted their lives in Glasgow.

#### **7.5.4 Mental Health & Coping**

Throughout the research process, isolation was cited as a concern from individuals, families and key informants in the Chinese ASR population. The coping strategy of female participants was limited to drawing on a small circle of co-ethnic women, who are struggling with similar issues, and bound by lack of information and fear of losing face. Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder were the most commonly reported mental health issues among refugees (Pumariega et al., 2005). Some research has found poorer mental health among refugees has been linked to being female (Chung & Bemak, 2002). On the contrary, better mental health status has been linked to fewer perceived discrimination experiences and the ability to achieve goals, maintain stable relationships with significant others, use certain coping strategies, and gain employment (Bieser, 2009).

The data reveals that none of the participants have sought medical or mental health support for themselves or their families, even though they mentioned feeling isolated, stressed and sad at times. Overall, key informants such as a teacher at the Chinese school and staff members at Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) suggested that the mental health status of some Chinese ASRs is one of the main concerns, however, there are not enough resources in the Chinese agencies, such as CCDP to reach out to these families. Due to participants' lack of English skills and information, they have limited ability to seek help from local agencies. People seldom seek help from the medical professionals as mental health issues remain a

taboo in the Chinese community. Under-reporting of psychiatric problems has been noted among the English Chinese (Li et al., 1999); they reportedly have a tendency to view low mood symptoms as being related to social problems, and therefore not suitable for medical treatment (Prior et al., 2000). The Chinese have been found much more likely than the general population to have a 'severe lack of social support' (38% compared to 15%) and to report worries about harassment (Sproston et al., 2000). Explanations for low use of the National Health Services (NHS) focus upon barriers to seeking help (Li et al., 1999) and specifically on high levels of communication difficulties with western doctors (Green et al., 2002). The Chinese help-seeking behaviours will be discussed next in this chapter.

The self-reliance qualities of some mothers in phase three have tapped into all their strengths; mothers have taken on most of the responsibilities of the household on their shoulders. Parents who can draw on their resources and strengths may be effective in helping their children to develop resilience and provide emotional support to their children in times of difficulty (German, 2008).

#### **7.5.5 Lack of social capital – information and resources**

There is a lack of various kinds of social capital as this study reveals. Parents live in isolation and find themselves unable to find help particularly those mothers who are at home with the children. The mothers reported that it was very different when they were back home in their country where there was family support from grandparents, uncles and aunts, friends and neighbours. They reported feeling bad or feeling that they would lose 'face' if they disclosed their difficulties and weaknesses to others.

The lack of extended family networks in Glasgow made raising children more

difficult. In the study of Sudanese refugees in New Zealand, Deng and Marlowe (2013) found a similar phenomenon; none of the female participants had relatives or extended family members to support them in raising their children. The absence of immediate and extended family support adds additional strains on parents, who are adjusting to a completely new culture. This challenge is particularly evident in cultures where family problems are often kept within the family and no outside help would be sought (Lewig et al, 2010). Social capital (resources from social relationships and connections within the family and the community) may be one of the strongest predictors of resilience and adjustment in high risk families, such as refugees (Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2003). It can be empowering for refugee families to participate in host community activities to get more social support, access to language skills, cultural knowledge and other information and resources (Goodkind & Foster-Fishman, 2002).

The findings suggest that the Chinese ASR families have limited access to information. When they do not learn of important activities or workshops, they are not given a chance to attend. Gender is another critical issue; women's opportunities to participate will be reduced if issues such as childcare and cost of transportation prevent them from leaving their home. Findings from Deng and Marlowe (2013) also finds similar concerns - mothers with limited cultural, social and linguistic resources put them in disadvantageous position in terms of access to services and resources. Thus, mothers were forced to cope with hardships which involved the lack of English skills, difficulty accessing transport, financial pressures, and feeling as if they did not belong.

### **7.5.6 Particular challenges for young people**

Three children had experienced separation from family prior to joining their families in Glasgow; they experienced a difficult adjustment period that included language barriers and cultural differences. On the one hand, they were glad they were able to reunite with their family in Glasgow, but on the other hand, they missed their grandparents and relatives who had taken care of them while they were in China. Several reported trying their best to study hard and adjust to a completely new life in the UK, while sharing the worries of financial hardship and legal status of their families. Refugee children and young people often have experienced a wide range of traumatic events prior to their arrival in a settlement country. These may have included coming under combat fire and bombing; destruction of home and schools; separation from and disappearance of parents, family members, and friends; witnessing violence and death; prolonged danger; and perilous journeys. Some may have experienced forced conscription, arrest, detention, sexual assault, and torture (Amnesty International, 2002; UNHCR, 2008).

Refugee adolescents face many challenges when resettling in a new place, and having a supportive family is a crucial factor in assisting them to achieve wellbeing. Correa-Velez et al (2010) found that while families are central to the wellbeing of the refugee youth, changing family dynamics may pose a threat to wellbeing and affect resettlement negatively. This study also reveals young people's challenges including changes in roles, family dynamics, and responsibilities within the family, as well as communication between parents and older children. During the acculturation process, many refugee adolescents face conflicting beliefs and attitudes that can lead to imbalance between two different cultures. In addition, refugee families are not

always equipped to manage those challenges and conflicts that lead to new family dynamics; they must try to discover a new family equilibrium in the new environment (Milner & Khawaja, 2010).

## **7.6 Chinese help-seeking behaviours**

An understanding of the Chinese culture and how it affects adjustment to life in the UK is a significant factor in this research study. A brief introduction to the Chinese philosophy and value systems are laid out in Chapter 2, the Literature review section. The concepts of '*guanxi*' (mutual, reciprocal social relationship), '*lian*' (face) and '*mianzi*' (reputation) govern people's behaviours to a certain extent. Most Chinese will not seek help from people with whom they do not have a '*guanxi*' relationship. Nor would they seek help if that help-seeking behaviour leads to exposure of their weaknesses and thus, causes them or their families to lose face or end up with a bad reputation in the community.

Despite the potential to get some sort of practical, informational and emotional support from their Chinese friends, participants convey a sense of hesitation in receiving or seeking support if they have insufficient capacity to return others' favours. Participants reported there are factors to consider before they ask for help due to their traditional way of doing things; these include cultural values, gender-role identification, their command of the English language and the opportunity to give to others.

### **7.6.1 'Guanxi'**

The Chinese term '*guanxi*' refers to a range of social relationships, which can be understood as mutual benefits between two parties, such as resources, information

and concrete help. In the process, '*Guanxi*' serves as a form of social capital in which resources generated from interpersonal relationships between those who engage are considered valuable. Some might hesitate to enter this '*guanxi*' relationship if they do not see a good fit for themselves. For example, one might hesitate to receive help if they know they are not in a place to return any favour in due course; while other might not want to lend the help if they do not anticipate any return of favour in the near future. Participants have clearly indicated their reluctance to seek help too often from their friends due to various reasons, such as troubling others and knowing their constraints in returning favours. In social capital theory, Bourdieu's (1986) views of '*guanxi*' as a credential for credit as essential clearly conveyed in the notion of '*guanxi*' here.

Ager and Strang (2008) draw attention to the bonding that can emerge from refugees having access to support from co-ethnic groups. Participants draw on help and support from close friends in their ethnic group, described as a mutual process. However, it is evident that participants would not ask for help, such as translating often from one particular friend as those friends are seen as very precious and valuable, and often, not in their close circle of friends. Those are people who are considered to have a higher status, in terms of education and employment, than they do. Participants clearly seize their opportunities whenever I went for a visit with them, and seeking help from someone of a 'weak ties' as well as seeing themselves as being helpful and 'pay their dues' in advance in the research process put them in a more comfortable position to ask for help.

### 7.6.2 Face/'Mianzi'

According to Ho (1994), concerns with losing face and feelings of shame are significant problems in Chinese people's help-seeking behaviour. Many Chinese people consider face-saving to be more important than seeking social support at difficult times. '*Lian*' (face) and '*mianzi*' (face with the connotation of reputation) are the two central conceptualisations of face in the Chinese culture. '*Lian*' refers to society's confidence in the integrity and moral character of a person; the loss of '*lian*' makes it hard for a person to function properly in his/her community. '*Mianzi*', on the other hand, has the connotation of a person's reputation and public image built upon that person's successes in life. Disclosing one's weaknesses or problems to others results in a loss of '*mianzi*'. Losing face is highly undesirable for a Chinese individual since it will not only lead to a loss of social reputation and status but also bring shame and embarrassment to the family (Ho, 1994). The label 'asylum seeker' or 'refugee' have huge negative connotations. The Chinese meaning of the two terms are literally people looking for a safe haven and people of problems or difficulties. Most Chinese people would not want to be labelled as someone who are weak with problems, and therefore, need to seek out to others for help and support. It is evident that there is almost no literature that studies Chinese asylum seekers and refugees, even though there has been a sizable number of Chinese ASRs in the UK since the beginning of year 2000. Research regarding the Chinese migrants, particularly forced migrants, can be found in big cities, such as London, Manchester and Birmingham. However, the number of studies of Chinese ASRs is scant. It may be due to the fact that the Chinese ASRs is a very hard to reach group and they do not want to be labelled as asylum seekers or refugees because this is associated with being weak and



needing help. Also, it potentially not only affects their self-esteem and identity negatively, but also their families and the elders at home due to the collective nature of this population.

At the beginning of the research process, I encountered a lot of obstacles in trying to locate Chinese ASRs and invite them to participate in a refugee wellbeing study.

Instead of using the term refugee, I resorted to calling it a migrant wellbeing study so as not to turn potential participants away. Once I had spent a certain period of time with participants and when trust and rapport were built, instead of asking, “Are you an asylum seeker or refugee?”, “Did you apply for asylum support or did you obtain ‘leave to remain’ status?” was asked. It seemed easier for participants to open up the conversation if the questions are less personal, and they did not feel the demeaning of the terms – asylum seekers and refugees in Chinese.

### **7.6.3 Gender-role identification**

The saying, ‘Men focus on the outside, female focus on the inside’ is a widespread belief in Chinese society. Men work outside to earn a living for the family while women take care of household chores and children in the home. A study (Zuo & Bian, 2001) conducted in Beijing with 39 couples found that the husband's breadwinner role and wife's housekeeper role retain their primary place in Chinese families. Both husbands and wives considered women's employment career as a legitimate part of womanhood, but they both believed that men's family role should be tied more to market work and women's to household responsibilities. To both husbands and wives, a man of "failed aspiration" (Coltrane, 1996) would be perceived as "incapable," "lacking ambition," and as "relying on wives for financial

support". Some female participants mentioned they would not ask their husbands for help with caring for young children, taking garbage out or cleaning the house since those are not considered men's work; and some even said that type of work would affect men's self-esteem if people saw them doing household work (Chapter 5). In this case, some female participants have shouldered a heavy burden, and they do not discuss their concerns or problems with their spouses. In one interview, the husband (F4) was shocked and angry to find out his wife has been waiting for a spot in the English class for over a year (Chapter 6). This lack of knowledge indicated the level of poor communication between spouses and also a lack of willingness on the part of females to seek help from their spouses.

#### **7.6.4 Level of trust & reciprocity**

According to Putnam (2007: 137), 'Norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness' are prerequisites of social networking and as Coleman argues, 'a group whose members manifest trustworthiness.... will be able to accomplish much more than a comparable group lacking that trust' (1990: 304). In this research phase, these families have complex relationships with the wider 'ethnic community' that may involve different layers of trust. Relying on someone for information about where to buy cheaper fresh vegetables is different from trusting them to translate some official letters or assist with translation at a medical appointment. In fact, as the mother in Family 1 said, she would not make use of the translation service from a local Chinese agency as the Cantonese translator gossiped about her medical issues to others in the community. Expectations of support may also be resented as a burden (Evereti and Zontini, 2006; Ryan, 2004). For this reason, some participants are reluctant to seek help from their friends or agencies due to the lack of a trusting relationship.

Findings of phase two shows very limited opportunities for reciprocal relationships among the participants. Putnam has argued that the exercise of reciprocal help-giving and receiving is fundamental to the development and maintenance of social capital and in turn to the creation of a community where resources are shared for all (Putnam 2000). Most participants do not have the opportunity and capability to give or help, except within their own families and the close friend circle. They will also consider if they can help others in return before asking others for assistance. The data supports Putnam's theory that the opportunity for reciprocity is crucial to building strong bonding and bridging capital; the findings of phase two revealed some who have fair to strong bonding capital but very little bridging capital (Chapter 5). Likewise, it also relates to the Chinese term described earlier, '*guanxi*', where the relationship of mutual help is involved. When participants do not foresee any possibilities of giving back to a particular person, they would be hesitant to seek help from him or her unless it is an emergency.

### **7.7 Implications of findings on policy and practice**

The findings of the study (as discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6) have added knowledge of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees' (ASR) subjective wellbeing constructs and the pathways to reach those aspirations. The findings will not only inform policymakers and academicians, but also have important implications for those practitioners who are working and supporting the Chinese ASR families in Glasgow. At the time of the research, there was limited information about this population as mentioned by agency workers at the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and the British Red Cross (BRC). These agencies directly work with ASRs and staff

expressed concerns about the Chinese ASRs as they have limited information about the population, which has been growing in Glasgow. Findings regarding the wellbeing constructs and the patterns of social connections were shared with the advisory group - SRC, BRC and CCDP. More importantly, how the Chinese ASRs' limited social bonds and bridges impact their wellbeing, and thus their integration in the host community will be compiled into a report to share with the advisory group and wider stakeholders. Those information will be helpful for agencies and service providers working with the asylum and refugee population, particularly those invisible groups. Findings from this research provide knowledge for understanding the roles and functions of social connections of the Chinese ASR families, which could add knowledge and strategies for widening their support systems and easing some of the challenges in everyday life.

Social connections have gained wide research attention in refugee wellbeing studies, and are an important indicators of wellbeing (Ager and Strang, 2008). Findings show limited pathways to wellbeing for the Chinese ASR families in terms of social bonds and bridges. Social bonds seldom lead to bridges for these families, on the contrary, they might have jeopardized the opportunity to connect with other ethnic ASR groups or local people in the host community. The small number of close Chinese friends these families have, as well as the Chinese agencies, such as CCDP, the Chinese school and the Chinese grocery stores in a way provide a comfort zone for new comers, particularly for those who have very limited English skills. Equivalent to this situation is the China town in big cities like London, Liverpool and Manchester where Chinese people gather frequently. There is a small so called China town area in Glasgow, where a gate can be seen from a distance to signal the

beginning of the area. A Chinese grocery store, a Chinese restaurant, a Hong Kong style bakery, and professionals such as lawyers and accountants are available in the building. These families know of places in Glasgow where they can gather with their own kind and find services provided by the Chinese businesses. On the surface, this appears to be a self-sufficient circle, but it could have negative impact on the Chinese ASR families. It led to, for some, a lack of motivation to learn the local language, meet other ethnic ASR families or connect with the local refugee agencies, which can offer support and professional services and advice in the resettlement process. The severity of the lack of English language skills and parenting skills was discussed in the earlier section of this chapter. They directly impact lives in resettlement negatively. The close knit Chinese community, therefore, might not serve these Chinese ASR families well especially when some of their social bonds are weak and sparse and thus, undermine their opportunities to obtain bridging capital and integration with host community subsequently.

Families in the study wanted to be financially independent and they expressed reluctance in getting financial help from the UK government. It is evident in the family interview when men talked about the importance of keeping their jobs and earning for their families. The saying of “having hands and feet” means that as long as they are able to work, they would not seek help. The implication is that if you are physically able, your own efforts should be enough, and you should not need to rely on outside help. Local refugee agencies seldom see Chinese ASR in workshops or seminars, and their non-seeking help mentality in fact could undermine the opportunity to access to important, accurate information which could be beneficial to them. Limited bridging capital for the Chinese families could be one of the most

crucial reasons for their lack of information. The uncertainties of ‘living in limbo’ and the policy of the asylum process in the UK also created huge concerns, which have implications for policy. The recommendations stem out from the above implications will be discussed in section 7.9.

## **7.8 Implications for underpinning theoretical frameworks**

This section examines the research findings in the light of the theoretical frameworks employed in this study as reference points. Implications on Wellbeing in Developing Countries Model (WeD), the ‘Indicators of Integration’ (IOI), and the social capital theory will be discussed individually with reference to research findings and relevant existing literature.

### **7.8.1 Wellbeing in Developing Countries Model (WeD)**

The framework identifies three key dimensions: the material, the relational, and the subjective. First, the material dimension comprises assets, welfare, and standards of living. Second, the relational dimension includes a social and a human component. Lastly, the subjective dimension consists of two parts: people’s perceptions of their positions, and their cultural values, ideologies, and beliefs. All three dimensions are interrelated and interconnected, and the framework stresses the unified nature of the model. The essence of this framework is the presence of the objective aspects as well as subjective aspects of the three important elements of the material, the social and the human.

Findings from my study suggest that participants are struggling with poverty, sub-standard living conditions, and limited welfare or assets of families. Second, the relational consists of two aspects: the social (social relationships and access to public

goods) and the human (capabilities, attitudes to life, and personal relationships). My study indicated that social relations are one of the most significant factors of living a good life; participants made friends with the same ethnic group who share the same culture, as well as accessing to resources and information. This finding also highlighted the subjective aspects, such as social and cultural identities, and participants' beliefs and perceptions of their positions in other aspects. The social mapping tool used in phase two allows an objective measure of the aspects of trust and reciprocity.

Findings indicate that the subjective aspects of social concern in the Wellbeing in the Developing (WeD) Countries model has a significant impact on wellbeing (White, 2010). Many of these aspects emerged in the data. For example, participants were concerned about social aspects of their neighbourhood and the overall quality of the environment in the community. Access to services, air quality and the cleanliness of their living environment were cited as factors contributing to living well or not. The second part of the relational aspect covers the human component, which is crucial, as it allows the analysis of capabilities, attitudes of life, and personal relationships. The present study did not generate any objective data for the aspect of household structure or education, information, and skills. However, it presents the subjective aspect of the human element, such as participants' satisfaction level of health, information, and education when participants described what constituted living a good life in those areas.

Some mentioned trust as an important factor in maintaining a close friendship and receiving help. Spirituality/personal growth provides insights of living a good life for

some, particularly in phase one. Capabilities to attain the constructs of wellbeing, have often been mentioned by participants, presenting difficulties for individuals and families in the host community. For example, participants discussed the limitations on choosing a particular school in a better district for their children even though education is free for all children. They are not capable of moving to a better school due to where they live. Also, they lack the financial resources to move to the neighbourhood, where the better schools are located.

The WeD model also emphasizes the ‘collective’ effort in obtaining a good life. Particularly for family wellbeing, individual members, for example the fathers in this study, bring forth material impact, while children’s wellbeing and the overall welfare of the family is overseen by heavily invested mothers. The model allows great flexibility to explore the subjective meaning of living a good life as well as collective effort. Culturally, the Chinese are considered a ‘collective group’, and the emphasis is on collective identity. As a result of this collective identity, people identify themselves as Chinese, from a particular province, with a certain last name and within an extended family network. The parallel concept in the Wellbeing in Developing countries (WeD) model describes the collective dimension to subjective perceptions (White, 2009). The material and relationship components of the framework share similarities with the categories of ‘Means and Markers’ and ‘Social Connections’ in the “Indicators of Integration” (IOI) framework.

However, there are concerns about the WeD framework in guiding a wellbeing study. The subjective aspects of each category (material, social, and human) requires thoughtful consideration of appropriate methodology and data collection methods to



generate findings for those aspects. The subjective aspect, according to White et al. (2008) is much more than a random selection of individual perceptions. It is rather seen as constituted in culture and ideology, which in fact structures the material, social and personal at the bottom of the triangle (Chapter 2, section 2.5.2, p. 59). Thus, researchers might need a set of thorough and detailed guidelines to capture an accurate and full picture of how participants think about those aspects of their lives. More elaborations on how to incorporate the subjective elements into the objective, as well as how it is constituted in culture and ideology to form a holistic view will be beneficial.

### **7.8.2 “Indicators of Integration” (IOI)**

“Indicators of Integration” is a conceptual framework defining core domains of refugee integration. It plays a major role in shaping policy, practice and academic debate, particularly on issues regarding refugee integration (Strang & Quinn, 2019). There are ten domains organised into four groups, namely ‘Markers and Means’ (functional indicators including employment, housing, education, and health); ‘Social Connection’ (drawing on social capital constructs of bonds, bridges and links); ‘Facilitators’ (including language and cultural knowledge, and safety and stability); and lastly ‘Foundation’ (relating to rights, expectations and obligations that go with citizenship).

The findings on wellbeing constructs fall into all the respective categories and domains of the “Indicators of Integration”, which is one of the reference points for the study. Children’s education, having a stable job, staying healthy and having access to health care, and a house of their own fall into the category of ‘Markers and

Means' - employment, housing, education and health domains. Social relationships and support from friends fall into the category of social connections (honds, bridges and links). All participants acknowledge the importance of the English language as a facilitator. Human rights, freedom to pursue the things they want to do, and becoming citizens of the UK are crucial to participants and fall under the category of 'foundation' - rights & citizenship.

Men in the study talked about not being able to work legally during the asylum-seeking period. They felt helpless since they were fit to work. They also felt ashamed about getting money from the government when they could have earned a living for their family. Others who could work legally felt under pressure to work longer hours because they had young children at home. Employment affected the wellbeing, not only of the men in the study, but of the entire family. Examining the indicators in the IOI framework, this study confirms that the domain areas are intertwined and affect one another. Having legal status and rights to work (rights & citizenship domain) under the 'Foundation' category have a direct impact on the employment and health domains of the participants.

A neighbourhood study in Glasgow found that migrants (mostly refugees) with poorer English were more likely to feel unsafe going out after dark (Kearns and Whitley 2015). The authors argued that refugees living in deprived areas reduce social integration and cohesion due to hostility from other residents. Participants in this study who lived in more run-down and poor neighbourhoods, such as Easterhouse and Springburn expressed fear about going out at night. Fathers who worked out of town would remind their wives and children not to go out at night.

Participants in phase one specifically mentioned they would feel safer going out if their English skills was better. The IOI domains of 'Housing' and 'Safety' are interrelated in this case, as some participants did not feel safe in their neighbourhood, and the fear influenced their decisions to go out especially when it was dark outside.

This study emphasises the 'social connections' category with three domains, namely 'bonds', 'bridges' and 'links' to determine where the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) get the access to the services and resources they need to live a good life. Social connections, such as the bonding capital participants have acquired play an important role in wellbeing, which has been discussed previously. More importantly, findings reveal weak bridging capital and very weak linking capital for participants and a lack of opportunities to develop language skills or gain qualifications for more secure and better paid jobs. Even though a few participants possess relatively strong bonding relationships, which can serve as bridges and links when needed as discussed in the findings chapters, it can be a short term solution and it will not be sustainable in the long run, as findings reveal those help might not be available at times of urgent needs. Currently, the close knit bonds mainly provide temporary relief of financial hardship by providing jobs in the kitchen, where there is no stability and worse still, it limits their opportunities to engage in the local community with local people. It does not provide an environment that motivates the learning of the English language, and thus depriving this population of a step toward integration. Language, a key facilitator, plays an important role in all other domains in the IOI framework. The English language, mentioned by most of the participants as important in living a good life, seems to be the most challenging issue for this group as this study suggests.

The relationship between bonds and bridges, and how the patterns of social connections impact wellbeing will be discussed in the next section on social capital theory. Therefore, a clearer conceptualization of the relationship between ‘bonds’ and ‘bridges’ would certainly be helpful in the IOI framework to potentially acknowledge the functions and capacity of bonds to serve the function of bridges and links, and it could provide strategies on policy and practice in resettlement.

In a recent paper published by Strang & Quinn (2019), the authors provided new insights into refugee social connections and the impact of these connections on mental health and wellbeing. The authors note that since trust is a key element in the domain of social connections, they proposed that ‘trust’ be included as a ‘facilitator’ in the framework (Strang & Quinn, 2019). The findings from this study support that proposal, as trust plays a crucial role in many other domains, such as making friends with a neighbour (social connections), seeking medical help (health) or feeling safe (safety & stability), as discussed previously in the findings chapter and section 7.6.4.

In addition, as mentioned in the earlier section that some participants prioritize spirituality and personal growth as important constructs of wellbeing. The study suggests that the IOI framework consider adding an element to gauge the impact of how spirituality could be encompass into the existing categories/domains. Other refugee studies have made similar findings about the impact of religious gathering, worship, and spiritual activities on wellbeing (Allen, 2010; Pandya, 2018). Spiritual practices and personal growth may be crucial to optimise wellbeing. My previous work with the refugee populations in the US has also highlighted the importance of religious freedom, and the availability of a place of worship for the Muslim

population. In Grand Forks, ND where I worked as a refugee coordinator, the creation of a temple has improved refugees' sense of spiritual wellbeing and belonging in their host community, since they have a common place for worship and gathering. With that said, I would recommend adding a category of spirituality in the Indicators of Integration. It will help researchers or case workers who work with refugee populations pay a closer attention to their spirituality needs, which may be a crucial element for asylum seekers and refugees adjusting to lives in the host country.

Another element that the "Indicators of Integration" framework may have overlooked is the capability of the refugees to utilise the resources they have within each domain. The ability to make good use of their social capital, such as bonds to get access to resources, is an important component to wellbeing and was revealed in this study. This study has pointed to the inability of the five families to secure desired resources, such as accurate information. The lack of information regarding rights in the host country and often, the inability to differentiate inaccurate information from friends or their ethnic community, make matters worse for the families. Phillimore (2012) focuses on both social connections and access to rights and argues that effective integration depends not only on the existence of social networks, but also the capacity and means to utilise those networks for the sharing of resources. The five families appear to lack the capacity and means to utilise their networks at times, and thus fail to achieve some of the goals they set for themselves. For example, families obtained information about regarding immigration law from their friends, which they believe is accurate. A close knit ethnic community with bonding capital might not always work in the asylum seekers and refugees' favour,

depending on the quality of both the network and the resources shared. Capabilities, as one of the human aspects of the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) model, present a full picture of what refugees could get access to and how they reach the point of contact to persons, services, or resources.

### **7.8.3 Social capital theory**

Social capital theory is one of the reference points of this research study, and it plays a critical role in shaping and framing the research questions. This section will summarize and discuss the different types of roles social capital play and their significance pertaining to wellbeing in resettlement.

#### *7.8.3.1 Education, social capital, & social class*

Children's education and academic achievement is an important indicator of living well. Making sure that the children are placed in a positive learning environment is, therefore, of paramount importance to the families. Bourdieu (1997, 1992) mentioned social capital as firmly rooted in issues of social class and power relations. He used the term 'habitus' to describe the sets of values and ways of thinking that form a bridge between subjective agency and objective position. Bourdieu (1977a) argues that schools contribute to the reproduction of existing power relations in society by privileging the cultural background of students of the dominant class. Since the culture and values of the dominant class are accessible only to those who belong to the dominant class, working class and minority students are naturally disadvantaged. Participants from different phases have mentioned discriminatory treatment from teachers in schools and staff at medical clinics. Both children and adults have expressed feelings of inferiority to the dominant class of local Scottish people, which undermined their overall wellbeing. Families in this

study have concluded that their children were placed in a disadvantaged position because of their social class. Thus, they have plans to move out of poor neighbourhoods and at the same time, encourage their children to equip themselves and work harder to compete for a good education and university in the host community. Good education leads to professional, higher-paid jobs, and thereby better social status and wealth.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that schools commit symbolic violence to working class and poor students by privileging the culture of the middle class as if it were fundamentally more valuable than the cultures of the working class and the poor. Central to Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction is the notion of *cultural capital*, which is comprised of the kinds of knowledge, dispositions, and educational qualifications that are highly valued in a particular social milieu (1986). Cultural capital is closely related to other forms of capital, such as economic capital (money and property), symbolic capital (status and legitimacy), and social capital (networks and connections) (Bourdieu, 1986; 1991; Swartz, 1997). Children with low-level resources in these forms of capital, such as refugee families and economic migrants, are likely to start their education with considerable disadvantages. It is, therefore, highly probable that they will exit from the educational system with relatively smaller gains in cultural capital than their English-speaking, middle class counterparts. This point worries the parents in the study, believing their children will be in a disadvantaged position from the beginning.

Coleman (1990) identified social capital as a resource within the families and he emphasised the structure of intergenerational relationships between parents and their

children. Parents in the study invested in their children's education and regarded it as a way for the family to rise above the cycle of poverty and the frame of a lower class uneducated group. Mothers wanted to enrol children in tutorial classes and extra-curricular activities and urged the husbands to work harder to bring extra money home. As Coleman pointed out, parents enable their children to increase their human capital through educational achievement; the process of building social capital within the family eventually links to resources outside the family. According to father (F5), his parents invested almost all of they had financially to encourage him to go to the UK to seek a better life, with more opportunities to flourish. That is the hope of the Chinese parents in this study, and the children understand their parents' plan for them to have a good education and bring wealth and fame to the entire family.

#### *7.8.3.2 Importance of social relationships*

It is evident from the findings that social relationships play an important role in the overall wellbeing of the families. Bian et al. (2015) conducted a study on the subjective wellbeing of Chinese people and found that individuals who are socially integrated are happier. The majority of participants mentioned being close friends with those who share the same ethnicity. Throughout the study, however, the data revealed that most participants have a limited number of close friends, particularly those who could really help in times of need. Kawachi and Berkman (2001) reported lack of social connections as a risk factor for social exclusion and poor health. Overall, social connections and networks, the degree of integration in society, and trust represent several of the important indicators of wellbeing, which participants have mentioned in the study. Building social support networks among ethnic communities (Khawaja et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2009), and maintaining cultural



practices within the family and community (Beiser, 2009) have been mentioned as helpful among a diverse number of refugees. Having strong and close bond with one's own ethnic group, therefore, could be a major factor for parents to keep their culture alive and pass it down to the next generation.

The five families made friends with people of similar backgrounds, status and social standing in the host community, but these relationships did not lead to a vertical jump in hierarchy or link with bridges that facilitate opportunities outside their own ethnic environment. These results further support the idea of Bourdieu's network of bonding relationships. He suggested that even a rich network of bonding relationships with other people, who are equally excluded from resources, does not help build social capital. Instead, it maintains a similar level of poverty and exclusion (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Phillimore (2012) also stated that new refugees are not in a strong position to mobilise their social networks to gain access to resources, which resonates with the participants of this research.

Family members, close friends in small Chinese circles, and the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP) provide a trusted and familiar environment for the families. They have helped generate a sense of belonging and identity in the UK. Nonetheless, these bonds did not bring forth bridging capital, as Putnam suggested. On the other hand, some of the bonds participants have, served the function of bridges, such as good friends who know English well and the CCDP staff. This finding also matches Bourdieu's (1986) idea that bonding capital at times can be powerful enough to serve as bridges and links.

The findings support the fact that social relationships, overall, are positively correlated with wellbeing. Participants who have access to support and a close relationships with friends, overall, report leading a good life in the UK, to some extent. In social capital theory, Putnam (1985) argued that people with more bonding capital will benefit from more bridging capital, and thus improve their overall situation. The findings of this study do not support this claim. The bridging roles in this study, though not as Putnam defines as someone not like you, are largely performed by people of the same ethnic group. The patterns of social connection are, therefore, worth thorough investigation to discover the reality of what and how people obtain help and where they locate resources, which will be discussed in the following section.

#### *7.8.3.3 Implications of social capital*

The development of social capital was crucial for all participants regardless of whether they are individuals or have a family in Glasgow. Social capital, in the form of trusted social relationships and networks, facilitate other forms of capital and lay the foundation for achieving the wellbeing constructs for participants. All participants establish their social bonds and relationships and their significance should not be underestimated. Some social bonds thus lead to bridging capital and beyond, when participants get jobs and material support (for example, staying with a friend for a certain period of time). That increases their economic capital. As Bourdieu (1986) formulated the theory of capital, the interplay between the different forms of capital, namely, social, economic and cultural lies in the fact that they can be changed into one another, and that the use and the acquisition of a specific capital form depends on the other forms of capital. Economic capital refers to material

assets, such as money and property rights, and it includes all kinds of material resources that can be used to acquire what participants have mentioned as aspects of wellbeing – for example, decent housing conditions, education attainment and extra-curricular classes for children. On the other hand, for those participants who lack those social bonds that lead to bridges and links, it is unlikely for them to enjoy the economic capital others have gained as mentioned earlier, such as finding a part time job or providing temporary accommodation for free. For the ASRs who have limited social capital to start with in a new place, a lack of economic and cultural capital can add more stress and feelings of powerlessness, which in turn impact their overall wellbeing. This is exactly the experiences of some of the individuals and families in this study, who arrived the UK with very limited education or assets of any sorts.

Cheung and Phillimore (2013) found that the length of residency and language competency broaden refugees' social networks, which in turn helps their access to work, resources and information. Their findings suggest that refugees who arrive with university education have significantly higher levels of English skills compared with those who have secondary or no education. Pre-migration qualifications is also an important factor in securing employment. Thus, they are more likely to make contacts with formal organizations. That could explain the reason why the Chinese ASRs in this study, who lack the cultural capital – education and the English language skills, are in a disadvantageous position when it comes to extending their social networks, linking with formal support networks and finding better employment. Further, the findings from Cheung and Phillimore (2013) did not show that bonding and bridging capital have a definite role in supporting refugees to access other types of resources needed for integration. In fact, the local language is crucial

for developing bridges and links in host community. Therefore, the key priority should be put on improving language competency, which correlate positively with broadening networks and improve access to employment and resources. The findings from the Chinese ASR families support this argument, as language was identified as the overarching barrier for participants in Glasgow, and it created further challenges in all areas in resettlement.

Similarly, Phillimore and Goodson (2008) stressed the importance of education and employment as a mechanism for economic advancement, developing language and cultural understanding and social connections. The conclusion draws here is that the more help with the English language this population gets, the better chance for them to gain economic and cultural capital. Improving the quality of ESOL classes and the availability to all ASRs, therefore, would be of paramount importance in improving refugee's English proficiency, and thus, better integration outcome and wellbeing.

#### *7.8.3.4 Trust, reciprocity and wellbeing*

Opportunities for both receiving and giving support and help in fact, promote mental wellbeing (Strang and Quinn 2019; Phillimore 2017). Trust is an important marker of social capital and is strongly associated with wellbeing. For example, the degree of trust that youth have in their families directly affects their wellbeing. The mothers' heavy reliance on the older children conveys a sense of trust from mother to child. The findings of phase two indicates low opportunities to give help to others among participants. Those who asked for help from participants were family members and close friends in Glasgow or in China. Therefore, the issue of '*guanxi*' was raised, as it implies that individuals probably would only seek help from those people with whom they were already linked, but in general, participants would not reach out to

those who have never asked them for help. This pattern explains participants' help-seeking behaviours as it is closely related to whether they are in a position to return favours. What complicates matters is the concept of '*guanxi*'; participants will think very carefully before asking for help if they do not have the capacity or opportunity to return a favour. This cultural norm might not be sustainable in their new life in Glasgow.

## **7.9 Recommendations**

This study concludes with some recommendations for policy makers and practitioners in formulating strategies in helping the Chinese ASR families or other invisible minority groups. The challenges this population are facing are real and immense, and the provision of various services, programmes, and policies could help ease some of the challenges they are facing. Even though a few participants display stronger social connections, this study presented specific concerns. Despite the importance of the bonds within the Chinese community, these bonds did not lead to wider social connections due to a lack of trust, and the most concerning of all remains the severe language barriers, which create other challenges. These hinder the development of bridging and linking capital, and therefore, undermine integration and wellbeing in resettlement. In addition, the quality of these bonds could be important but they are few in number. Thus, they did not lead to bridges or links.

Recommendations stem from the overall findings included the provision of education or learning opportunities for children. Families treasure every opportunity for the betterment of their children and their success and overall wellbeing is rated the most crucial for family wellbeing. Due to parents' limited education and English language skills, they are not in a position to advise their children on education matters. Tuition after school hours to help with managing homework and extra-curricular activities at low cost would deem very helpful for these families.

Parenting in a different cultural and legal context has posed substantial challenges to families, and research from refugee families found that host communities could provide information and education classes on parenting and promote general awareness within a resettlement context (Deng & Marlowe, 2013). The tension between cultural norms of parenting in a home country and the host country's child welfare system could make parents feel unwelcomed and unsupported (Lewig et al., 2010). Parenting support and education is crucial in helping migrant parents to understand the host culture and resources available to them regarding parenting. Besides, there could be likely knock on effects of worries that participants' parenting style might be disapproved by the local people or authority like teachers in school. In this case, it would perpetuate the Chinese mothers' reluctance to get involved with other parents and events at local school or discourage them from attending a mixed mother-toddler play group if mothers perceived shame in the process. It will, therefore, deprive them an opportunity to form bridging capital, which is crucial as the present study reveals. Therefore, it is important that social service providers give clear guidelines between discipline and punishment. Organising parenting classes with translators can be effective to pass on accurate information regarding the law and norms of parenting in a new country. There is a need to communicate with the newcomers about other alternatives to disciplining their children (Milos, 2011). Building an open and trusting relationship at the beginning of resettlement is crucial.

The present study found compelling reasons why this population was relatively less successful with learning the English language. Living among a close knit group who share the same dialect, limited opportunity to practice the English language, relying

on others to translate for them, a lack of time and the parents' limited education prior to migration all contributed to the present situation. The implications of how language barriers produce challenges and struggles is important for local service providers in order to plan or propose services in the first place.

Language barriers hinder communication with local people and service providers. Navigation of the system could be facilitated by having leaflets of services and programmes available to them, such as child care, health care and the transport system, written in both the English and Chinese language. As a key informant in BRC mentioned there was a considerable number of Chinese female seeking services in the agency when Chinese case workers and volunteers were working there; but the number started to decrease once the Chinese staff left the agency. Services provided in ASR's native language and by someone from their own ethnic group could be helpful in the early phase of resettlement.

Immediate access to language classes with childcare facilities could be beneficial. The location of the classes is another crucial factor as participants cannot afford the time and cost of traveling to classes if they are located far away from home. At the time of the research, CCDP helped run the ESOL classes and interest groups, such as sewing. It acts as a bridge between the Chinese community and the wider local community. Refugee agencies such as SRC and BRC could partner with CCDP to assist the Chinese ASRs to get access to information and build engagement with wider resources and services. Starting a 'mentor programme' can be beneficial to this population by training 'mentors', who can be local people, to provide guidance for newly arrived families. University students are often good targets to be mentors

especially for those who are studying in relevant fields, such as social work, psychology, counselling and sociology. Mentors can serve as a significant first contact of bridging capital, as they are someone from the local community who possess the knowledge and information of the host community. In return, the ASR families will volunteer in the local neighbourhood and host community (together with the mentor) in different areas, such as introducing their ethnic culture and food in public schools and community centres, to boost their confidence and improve their English language skills. If participants have more opportunity to offer help in the host community, this might help break the isolation they face at home, and extend their social network to other ethnic and local communities. Linking Chinese ASRs with a mentor could potentially help build a trusting and nurturing relationship between them.

In phase two, participants gave a very high trust score to the local library and staff. The library would potentially be a place for mothers to cultivate friendships outside their own ethnic group. It is another great source of promoting bridging capital, especially when participants have trust in the staff and the libraries. Agencies could make good use of the library when planning activities and workshops for the refugee population. Also, pamphlets and information sheets about community events and programmes written in both Chinese and English can be placed in the library since most mothers and children often visit their local library. In this way, it could improve the access to information and opportunity to meet people in the local community as well as other ethnic groups.



In the area of legal status, concerns relating to asylum policies and immigration status are discussed. Using Ager and Strang's 'Indicators and Integration' framework (IOI) as reference point can help conceptualise the ways in which participants were explicitly speaking to certain domains. While constant changes to asylum policy and 'leave to remain' status create confusion and instability and undermines the category of 'facilitators', the 'life in limbo' situation also adversely affects the rights to work and citizenship under the 'foundation' category. Some participants have applied for asylum over a long period of time, and the uncertainties have negatively impacted their wellbeing. A clear explanation of the asylum and immigration policies and rules through the help of a trusted agency will be helpful. Concerned departments and policy makers should also consider the overall impacts on this vulnerable population when deciding on policies or changing existing rules.

### **7.10 Conclusion**

Chase (2013) finds that education, learning opportunities, getting a professional job offer ASRs a good life. Those opportunities helped them project into the future, offer aspirations and a sense of hope about what their lives could look like. It holds true for participants of this study. Parents and older children recognize the importance of education and what it entails to have good qualifications. To a large extent, many ASRs in the UK share similar resettlement experiences. In this study, participants were not victims of war or torture, unlike other ASRs in the UK, and the theme of reliving past trauma was not found. What made the experiences of Chinese participants in this small scale qualitative study unique was probably the severe lack of English language competency, which was thoroughly discussed throughout this

chapter. Participants might possess close social bonds but most of these bonds did not lead to bridges or links in the host community. Concerns such as underemployment, unemployment, destitution, and homelessness were not expressed in this study. It is probably due to the fact that there is a serious shortage of labour in the catering and restaurant businesses in the UK. As stated earlier, the findings of this study based on a small sample of the Chinese ASR population in Glasgow, and it cannot be generalised to represent the overall situation of this population.

This study set out to address a gap in the literature by investigating these potentially isolated Chinese asylum seeking and refugee families' accounts of their patterns of social connections, and how they mobilise their resources to achieve their wellbeing. The discussion in this chapter tied the three phases as a whole to analyse the significance of the findings and its implications on practice and policy, and provide insights and recommendations to support the ASR populations in Glasgow.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

#### 8.1 Summary

As previously pointed out, asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) from China comprise an isolated, 'hard-to-reach' group that has attracted very little research attention. The cultural implications of looking at shame, face, and reciprocity have direct impact on this community's help seeking behaviour. This study has provided a safe space for the participants - individuals and families to talk about their lives in the host community, their resources, and the life they hope to have for themselves particularly their children. On the other hand, findings also revealed many challenges that bring frustration and confusion. For example, some asylum seeking families have not heard back from the Home Office on their asylum claim for over eight years, while other were granted an unexpected and unwelcome short period of 'leave to remain' of two and a half years. 'Life in limbo' and instability creates fear, worries and hardship for this population. Aware of these concerns, they retain hope that they will eventually be able to gain citizenship in the UK. As most fully explored in the final phase of the study, families have a clear vision of what living a good life means to them and the strategies of achieving those goals in the host community.

Findings of this research indicate that in order to cope with their concerns around social isolation and lack of access to information and services, Chinese ASRs gravitate to those who share the same culture and language, and also their ethnic networks. Within this circle of friends and support, they are able to draw upon

shared, culturally-based resources and services. The organisation, the Chinese Community Development Partnership (CCDP), had become a contact point for practical assistance for many needs of Chinese ASRs, as discussed in earlier chapters. Such provision appears vulnerable, however, CCDP is a non-profit organisation and its existence relies heavily on receiving grants and donations from the local community. At the time of this research, CCDP could only support one full time post (the manager) and two part-time staff members. The situation got worse by the end of this project, and there was only the manager left working part-time. She was worried there would not be any funding left to sustain the organisation in the following year. There are over 700 members registered with CCDP, and it has been serving those whose needs are considered the most urgent. Findings suggest that, beyond CCDP, most participants had only a small circle of close friends to fulfil their emotional needs, as well as other practical and instrumental needs. These often proved unreliable and unsatisfactory at times of pressing need. So, where can this population go for help once CCDP closes down? The Chinese ASRs could be left in an extreme situation where they might have no one or nowhere to turn to in the host community.

The thesis reaches the conclusion that, subjective wellbeing constructs for individuals and families shares similarities even though priorities vary from individual to individual, taking into consideration of his/her cultural values, traditions, as well as experiences in the host community. Their challenges, however, coupled with their reluctance to seek help due to the cultural norms like '*guanxi*', 'shame' or '*mianzi*' (face) might put this population at further risk of isolation and other mental health concerns. Therefore, studying participants' capacity to maintain

social connections with others and the types of help and support they receive is important. Mapping out the social support from families, friends, and agencies locally showed the patterns of bonds, bridges and links. An important finding of this research is that participants who possess strong bonding capital could benefit from those bonds that could serve as bridges and links and help them access those valuable resources or connections. Firstly, identifying those powerful and strong bonding relationships could be useful as they could potentially bridge the gap between the host community and this population. Secondly, if Chinese ASRs focus on limited bonding capital and the links to outside resources provided by CCDP become unsustainable, the need to build bridges and links could be more pressing than ever.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the Chinese cultural beliefs in saving face and avoiding shame inflicted on the entire family govern their behaviours to a large extent. The cultural norm of staying within the ‘in-group’, due to cultural and linguistic differences from the dominant culture in the host country, might create barriers for reaching out to the local people or other ethnic groups, thus, it is challenging for this isolated group to build bridges or links in the host community. This study reveals how participants’ cultural practice and norms inhibit them from seeking help, even though they had limited human and economic capital, thus, social capital has become more important than ever for the Chinese ASRs to obtain necessary resources and practical, specific help through bridging and linking capital.

## **8.2 Recent development of the Chinese migrants**

A recent follow up conversation with the manager of the CCDP to discuss dissemination of the project findings, supported that statement. The National Health

Service (NHS) recently approached CCDP for help to arrange a focus group of Chinese women to understand the low participation rate in smear testing in Glasgow. Since the rate of cervical cancer of Chinese women is higher than the local Scottish population, NHS wanted to find out the reasons why they are not participating in the testing especially when early detection is the key to survival from the cancer. The manager tried to promote the opportunity of participating in a focus group for the study, but there were only six people signed up after a month. NHS was hoping to recruit twelve people for a focus group discussion.

NHS had sent out letters to all the women to inform and invite them to participate in the smear testing in the local clinic, and explained how important it is to do the testing. As participants mentioned throughout this study, they received quite a number of letters every day, and they did not know what the content was. When they opened the mail and could not understand anything that was presented in front of them, the information in the mail was lost. Even though participants found someone to translate the letter for them and therefore receive that information, the thought of going into the hospital/clinic for a test on a very personal private part of the body, the unknown of the procedures of the test and how they were going to communicate with the medical professionals would be very stressful. They might choose to ignore the letter and the information altogether out of worry and fear. NHS might be able to provide translating services in the process, however, relying on a stranger for an unknown procedure could be worrisome. More importantly, participants had mentioned trust issues with translators in clinics and the process of translation. So, the questions that follow will be:

- 1) How can NHS get the message of this important information across to the Chinese women in Glasgow, who have a low participation rate in smears testing even though the rate of cervical cancer among this group is higher compared to the local Scottish women?
- 2) What are some of the effective strategies to ensure their participation in the testing?

Using the findings of this study to attempt the two questions, which are very relevant to the whole study, that is access to information, issues of trust, face/losing face, quality of the bonding capital and patterns of bonds, bridges and links. Participation in local services including workshops is low for the Chinese population. CCDP is in a good position to serve as bridges and link the Chinese migrants with the wider community, services and resources.

Having worked with the Chinese migrants for over ten years, the manager and staff members of CCDP have known this population, their cultural values and norms. Local providers have successfully identified CCDP as a bridge to pass on information and link this population with services. However, the obstacles of the language, which is a crucial facilitator as indicated in the “Indicators of Integration” framework, made it very difficult to happen even though the services are there to help save lives of the Chinese women. If they are worried about the procedure and do not trust the translation services provided by NHS, all the effort of planning for getting the Chinese women to go for the testing would be wasted. With very limited education level and the potential embarrassment and shame in discussing something very personal in groups, the idea of forming a focus group in this respect is not likely

to be effective. As I recalled participating in events hosted by the SRC and BRC, there was no Chinese participants present even though the Chinese translator was arranged to provide the translation service on site.

What looks like the best for NHS or other service providers would be to partner with a trusting ethnic organisation, such as CCDP, since trust is one of the crucial facilitators in the process. The staff of CCDP or other ethnic organisations could contact each woman and explain the importance of taking the smear testings. Due to a trusting relationship between the staff and the women, there is a higher chance that these women will take the advice and accept the invitation of the test. Staff could even coordinate taking those who choose to go for testing to the clinic in groups, and explain the procedure and answer any questions they have in the process. The advantages of adopting this strategy are that it will reach a big number of the targeted population of NHS since there are over 700 members registered with CCDP. The presence of a staff whom they trust in the process will greatly minimise the fear of the unknown – the procedures of the test and the potential shameful incidents, such as not able to communicate with the health care professionals. It turned out that CCDP successfully led a group of 23 women to do the testing. However, the interpreter that NHS had arranged was not present during the testing, fortunately, the CCDP staff interpreted for the Chinese women during the process and all of them completed the smear testing on that day.

### **8.3 Researcher reflexivity**

During the research process, participants understood the position of the researcher and the objectives of the research, which is to find out what is important to living a



good life and how they can achieve it. Knowing that I would submit a report to the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and the British Red Cross (BRC) regarding their lives in the host community, participants saw the researcher as a mediator and an advocate on their behalf.

Some participants started to turn to me when they need certain information and help especially after I had known them for some time and had developed a good rapport. For example, one participant asked me to talk to someone on the phone to arrange a delivery time of an item she bought online, another participant asked for help with translation of school notices, and a husband asked me to enquire into his wife's status at the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. In addition, men tended to ask me to tell the concerned departments of their complaints and hoped that I would take up the advocacy role on their behalf on issues, such as being able to work during the asylum seeking period and reintroducing the driving test in Chinese in Glasgow. Women mostly asked for information for children's activities and things related to education and parenting. Reflecting on my role as a researcher, I pondered on the relationship between myself and the participants, and where to draw the boundary between us. With the Chinese culture and norms in mind, the concept of '*guanxi*' was often in the back of my mind. Participants might think that being participants for the research project was a 'favour' they did for me; in return, I should fulfil my part of returning favour when they asked me for help.

In line with ethical principles espoused by the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford (Refugee Studies Centre, 2007), it is important to uphold the principle of confidentiality and anonymity of participants. When a participant discloses some

information and asked me not to share the piece of information with others, it can create dilemma especially if the information provided is significant to make an important argument in the research study. Having trained to be a professional social worker, I am more attuned to maintaining confidentiality except if I know of anyone who might hurt themselves or others. I reflect on this principle often during the entire research process and respect the fact that certain information disclosed to me will not be used as data in this research project. Nonetheless, that information has enriched my understanding of this population, the background of their migration and their lives in the host community.

It is well documented that the asylum and refugee population is particularly susceptible to the issue of trust – they are overall more suspicious of authority and people in power, and they do not trust easily. If it is not with the help of the key informants, such as case workers and co-ordinators who have known of the population for a period of time, I would have a much harder time approaching potential participants. During the early stage of the research, snowball sampling was used to reach more participants, it took a long time before someone agreed to meet for an interview. Even though some people agreed to participate, some called back and cancelled the interview in phase one and some did not show up in the participatory exercises during phase two. My reflection later as well as discussion with a few case workers with the advisory group pointed to the issue of trust. This population has a lot of concerns especially asylum seekers or those who have failed the application of asylum seeking. They were worried about disclosing their legal status or religious affiliation (i.e. Falun Gong), and the potential danger they could be put in if others learned of their situation. There were some Falun Gong practitioners

who participated in phase one of the study, but none of them participated in later stages of the study. It would have been a great opportunity to understand more of their perspectives of wellbeing and avenues to achieve their goals from this group of participants, especially the role of spirituality and personal growth.

#### **8.4 Limitations of the thesis**

The thesis sought to learn about social connections impacting subjective wellbeing of the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in a host community while being conscious of the nature of this population as ‘hard-to-reach’. In anticipation of the difficulty, it was crucial to adopt a flexible and non-intrusive method to reduce participants’ suspicions of the research or the intention of the researcher, therefore, the research process was not audio recorded until the last phase when ultimately I had built a trusting relationship with the families.

In this study, the sample was not randomly selected and the data generated therefore, was not a representation of the overall Chinese ASR population in Glasgow. This study provided limited opportunity to explore pre-migration experience even though understanding pre-migration contexts have a profound influence on refugee family and community dynamics (Rousseau et al. 1997) due to time constraint and the choice of focus on social connection patterns and wellbeing of the population. Being able to speak the language of the participants can be seen as having limitations, as one previous study (Cortazzi, Pilcher, and Jin, 2011) found that participants could be more conscious of the Chinese norms and ideas, such as saving face and avoiding shame as discussed throughout the study. It could therefore lead to limited disclosure

of participants' hardship or struggles such as mental health issues, marital status and conflicts.

### **8.5 Avenues of future research**

Findings reveal that some mothers are interested and hoping to learn the English language well for very practical reasons, such as reading mail and communicating with teachers of their children. They mentioned conflict of time for the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes with picking up children from school, lack of childcare services provided by the government or a far location of the ESOL class as obstacles for them, while Morrice et al (2019) reported similar concerns for refugees who attended the ESOL classes in the UK. Nonetheless, since there are other refugee groups who have relatively a higher success in mastering the language in the Glasgow area, this opens up further research to explore and understand why the Chinese migrants/asylum seeker and refugee (ASR) population have such obstacles in learning the English language in Glasgow. Do the main reasons suggested earlier in this chapter explain the whole situation? There could be issues surrounding the waiting period and location of classes, and how classes are designed and delivered. By comparing the success stories of what other ethnic groups have accomplished in the English language skills might shed some lights on how the classes can be redesigned to suit the needs of the Chinese.

This study has concluded with some suggestions concerning the provision of language learning for the Chinese ASRs. Firstly, having language class venues close to where the refugees live will definitely be helpful as it minimises transport costs and saves travel time. Secondly, providing free childcare during classes can

encourage parents to attend classes without worrying about the young children.

Thirdly, putting the Chinese perspective of shame into consideration, some Chinese might be discouraged to practice their inadequate English in a classroom setting especially if there are other Chinese learners in the room. This study revealed some participants felt shameful when their friend, standing next to them, used her poor, broken English to communicate with a local person in a community event, thus, employing specific strategies targeting those concerns could be useful to help the Chinese learners minimise the shame and build confidence in learning and practicing the English language.

Creative ideas, such as mobilising volunteers from people in the local community to offer English tutorial at home could be helpful. It would help consolidate the vocabularies participants learned in class as well as provide them a chance to practice the new language with a volunteer. The mentor programme suggested earlier would also be helpful once the mentor has built a trusting relationship with the individual or a family in the helping process. My experience in training volunteers and mentors for refugee families in the US was rewarding and fruitful. Each volunteer met with the family from one to three times a week; many refugees reported it as very useful in helping them use the vocabularies they have learned while practising the language in a natural setting.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

In summing up the findings and implications of this research project, this study generated data to support the claim from literature that the Chinese migrant population is an isolated, hard-to-reach group which seldom mix with other ethnic or

local communities. Their definitions of wellbeing focus largely the collective aspect based on the success of the next generation in terms of education and career paths, and this is in line with the discussion of Coleman (parents put their capital on their children) and Bourdieu (how social class and habitus inhibit success of those who belong to the lower class). One important finding is that bonding capital does not necessarily generate bridging capital, as Putnam (1993) suggested. In the Chinese close-knit ethnic community, some migrants are fortunate enough to have strong bonds that could serve as bridges and links for them as Bourdieu (1986) suggested. Therefore, creative and practical strategies to help the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) to build their bridges and links are considered crucial. This can help overcome their challenges in the host community, such as providing a mentor from the local community and making good use of the library, where participants have built trust. Language barriers could be the most pressing issue for a host community as they create obstacles in all other levels and domains in the 'Indicators of Integration' framework. Adding 'trust' and 'spirituality' besides 'language' as facilitators in the framework could help staff in organisations better assess and evaluate the needs and success of living a good life in the host community.

During these few years of research with the Chinese asylum seekers and refugees, participants had shared what living a good life mean to them and their utmost concerns about their lives in Glasgow. The five families in this study continued to work hard to achieve their dreams in the host community and hope that one day their dreams of living a good life in the UK will come true. Seeing their children receive good education, having social support from close friends and the ethnic community, and getting legal status that would allow them to visit family members in China

motivate them to keep working hard toward the constructs of wellbeing they identified.

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**Appendix 1: Key informant interview form**

1. What is your name?
2. What is/was your occupation and which organization do/did you work for?
3. Have you ever worked with any Chinese migrants?
4. If so, can you describe your experience working with the population?
5. What are some of the strengths you observed (or told by the Chinese migrants you worked with) in this population? (Examples)
6. What are some of the challenges you observed (or told by the Chinese migrants you worked with) in this population? (Examples)
7. How long have you been working/did you work with the Chinese migrants?
8. Have you worked with any migrants who have applied for asylum in the UK?  
If so, can you describe your experience working with them?
9. Do you know of any colleagues or ex-colleagues who had worked with Chinese asylum seekers/refugees? If so, would you mind connecting me with them?
10. Do you think you can introduce/connect me to any Chinese asylum seekers/refugees in town?

## **Appendix 2: Information sheet for the research process (Phase 1, 2 and 3)**



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH

### **Information sheet for participants**

My name is Caroline Cheng and I am a postgraduate research student at the Institute for Global Health and Development at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, UK. I am undertaking a research project entitled “Social Connections and Wellbeing of Chinese refugees” in Scotland.

The study attempts to examine the impact of social connections on the subjective wellbeing of Chinese asylum seekers and refugees in host countries. It is expected that the findings from this research will offer input for local refugee council and non-profit organisations on how this particular group of population has been doing in host communities. Findings will add empirical evidence to indicators of wellbeing in the refugee population, and inform policy makers and professionals who work with this population.

You are therefore invited to share your personal experiences and opinions in interviews related to social connections and subjective wellbeing. There will be individual interviews and family interviews, participatory exercises and observation in the research process. Your participation and contribution to this project will be highly appreciated.

I will assure utmost confidentiality to all participants. The information gathered in the research process will be anonymised and participant’s name will not be disclosed at any stage in the research process. You can choose not to answer any questions or withdraw from the research project at any time without giving any explanations. The findings of this study will be presented at conferences and published in journals.

If you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me for further details. The consent form is attached with this information sheet. Please return the signed form if you choose to participate in this study. Thank you.

Contact details of the researcher:

Caroline Cheng  
PhD student  
Institute for Global Health and Development  
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If you require further information, you can contact the Director of the Institute for Global Health and Development.

Dr Alastair Ager  
Director,  
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### Appendix 3: Consent Form



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH

#### Study title: Social Connections and Wellbeing of Chinese Migrants

I have had the information sheet explained to me/read and understood the information sheet. I have had an opportunity to clear any doubts regarding my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study. I have the right to not answer any questions in this interview or withdraw from this study at any time without giving any explanations. There will be no penalty for withdrawing from this study any time.

I understand that by signing this form, I am voluntarily agreeing to:

1. Participate in the above study, initiated by the researcher in pursuit of the information for research purposes.
2. Allowing researcher to take detailed notes of the information shared by me.
3. Allowing publishing (or other forms of finding disseminations) of parts of the information shared by me removing identifiable information (name, designation etc.).

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details of the researcher:

Caroline Cheng



PhD student  
Institute for Global Health and Development  
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#### Appendix 4: Phase 1 interview form

Name:

Age:

Contact information:

Number of years living in the UK:

1. R: When did you move to the UK?

你什么时候搬到英国？

Nǐ shénme shíhòu bān dào yīngguó?

2. R: When did you leave China?

你什么时候离开中国？

Nǐ shénme shíhòu líkāi zhōngguó?

3. R: What made you leave China?

什么让你离开中国？

Shénme ràng nǐ líkāi zhōngguó?

4. R: Did you come alone or with family members? (Follow up questions according to P's answers)

你独自一人还是和家人在一起？（根据P的回答跟进问题）

Nǐ dúzì yīrén háishi hé jiārén zài yīqǐ?

5. R: Do you have any family or relatives in Glasgow?

你在格拉斯哥有家庭或亲戚吗？

Nǐ zài gélāsīgē yǒu jiāting huò qīnqī ma?

6. R: How do you feel about life here?

这里的生活怎么样？

hèlǐ de shēnghuó zěnmeyàng?

7. R: How do you like it here? /How does it feel to be in Glasgow? (Follow up questions according to participant's answers)

你喜欢这里吗？

Nǐ xǐhuān zhèlǐ ma?

8. R: In your experiences, what are some of the important aspects that contribute to living a good life in Glasgow/Edinburgh? (Summarize what participant is saying and ask if there is anything else he/she wants to add to the list)

在你的经验中，什么是一些重要的方面，有助于在格拉斯哥/爱丁堡的美好生活？

Zài nǐ de jīngyàn zhōng, shénme shì yīxiē zhòngyào de fāngmiàn, yǒu zhù yú zài gélāsīgē/àidīngbǎo dì měihǎo de shēnghuó?

9. R: What do you want for your life in 10 years?

你在十年内的梦想生活是什么？

Nǐ zài shí niánnèi de mèngxiǎng shēnghuó shì shénme?

10. R: What is the range of activities you do outside home?

你大部分时间花在家里还是家外？

Nǐ dà bùfèn shíjiān huā zài jiālǐ háishì jiā wài?

11. R: Who are you generally with when you are outside your home?

当你在家外面时，你会和谁在一起？

Dāng nǐ zài jiā wàimiàn shí, nǐ huì hé shuí zài yìqǐ?

12. R: Did you come here as a refugee?

你有难民身份？

Nǐ yǒu nànmín shēnfèn ma?

13. R: Would you be interested in participating in the second phase of the research in a couple months and it will take about 2 hours of group work?

您有兴趣在几个月内参与研究的第二阶段，需要大约2小时的小组工作

Nín yǒu xìngqù zài jǐ gè yuè nèi cānyù yánjiū de dì èr jiēduàn, xūyào dàyuē 2 xiǎoshí de xiǎozǔ gōngzuò

14. R: Do you know any Chinese refugees or people who have applied for asylum in town? If so, would you mind connecting me to them/those who might be interested in participating in this research project?

你知道其他在城里的中国难民可能有兴趣参加这个研究项目吗？

Nǐ zhīdào qítā zài chéng lǐ de zhōngguó nànmín kěnéng yǒu xìngqù cānjiā zhège yánjiū xiàngmù ma?

**Remarks/notes:**

### **Appendix 5: Sample of observation notes**

Date: 20 November, 2016

Time: 3:00pm – 4:30pm

Present: Mother and the two sons (6 and 10 years old)

Shortly after I reached the family's home, the mother asked the younger boy to take out a notice from school to show me. The mother said that her son did not know what to do as mom didn't understand the notice, and the son said he was confused about the instructions. After I read the notice, I explained to them that it was about an English fun little project and students have to pick an animal from the story book that the teacher was using in class and present it in a creative way. The mother felt very frustrated and said how on earth she could figure that out. Even if she could understand what the notice meant, she had no idea how to help her son.

The mother had asked her older son to come out of the bedroom to greet me while I was visiting. The older boy was doing his homework most of the time. He said that the Chinese school took up half a day on Saturday and the teacher gave a lot of homework even though they just had class once a week. There were dictations and examinations often. The mother spent a long time with the little boy, watching her do the project while chatting with me. She occasionally checked if the older son was doing his homework in the room.

We talked about school a lot and the mother complained about notices that she could not understand. And she could not contact the teacher to ask about anything as she did not speak English well. When asked if the little boy likes going to school, he said not really. But he likes drawing. Mom said he has a good friend, who was also from China in his class. The two of them liked to play together. During the home visit, mom answered a phone call from a Chinese friend, asking if she could watch her child the next day. It seems that they are very close friends.

About an hour later, mom's friend came to visit and bought Chinese pastry with her. The two ladies enjoyed each other's company and the conversation was mostly about children's school and education. While she was talking to her friend, she cut her son's nails, and later asked him to continue to finish his homework after eating a piece of cake. She reminded the children to take out stuff that they did not understand to show me so that I could explain it to them.

## **Appendix 6: Family Interview Guide and Questions (Phase 3)**

### **Stage 3 Family Interview Guide and Questions (90 to 120 minutes)**

#### **Research Question:**

**What roles do social connections play in shaping the wellbeing of Chinese asylum/ refugee families?**

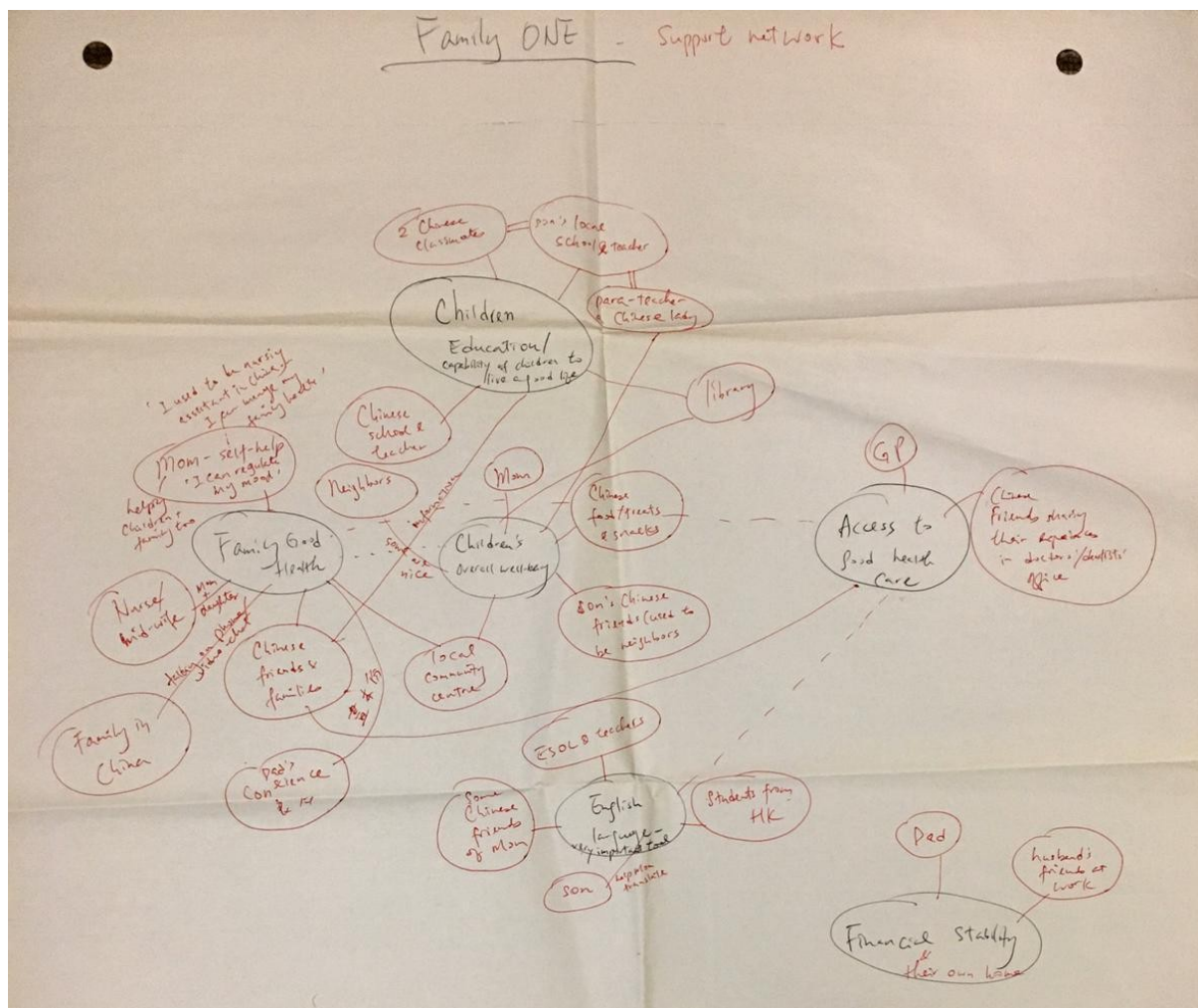
#### **Methods:**

Semi-structured interviews will be adopted utilizing open-ended questions. Prompts will be used by the researcher to illicit more details from participants' answers or validate researcher's understanding of the participants' responses. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed in English by the researcher within the same week of the interview. IPA will be utilised in the data analysis process.

#### **Questions for family discussion:**

1. Wellbeing definition: Researcher will share the findings of Stage 1 (the 6 most mentioned constructs of wellbeing) and let the family discuss what makes a good life for their family. What is important for everyone and why?
2. How did your family achieve what you have identified as living a good life (refer back to answers in Question 1) in the host community? For example, who have helped you and what kind of help did they provide? A large piece of paper and pens are available to help families create a picture of constructs mapped with their support (persons or organisations).
3. Social Connections and its implications: Building on question 2, researcher will share the findings of phase 2 in terms of the social mapping connections, such as where participants go to get help when they broke their mobile phones. Researcher then facilitate family's discussion on their patterns of social connections to generate details of their bonds and bridges based on the map created in Question 2.
4. Researcher will allow each family enough space to discuss something they deem important relating to the topic (wellbeing and how they achieve the constructs) such as challenges they face if participants choose to talk about them.

Appendix 7: Sample of family mapping activity (Image of pictures, phase 3)



### Appendix 8: Sample of categorization of themes using Thematic Analysis (Phase 1)

Table 1: Themes of constructs of wellbeing

Themes	Sub-themes	Quotes from Participants <i>translated into English</i>
1. Access to health care	visit with doctors/health care professionals in a timely fashion	1) Good health: I heard from friends that waiting time to see doctors here is long. Staying healthy is very important.
	Free health care	2) Medical care : free health care available in case I am sick, but I haven't seen any doctors for years since I am very healthy
	Good quality and efficient medical care	3) Good and free health care: Very advanced medical facilities and nice staff. I almost died in Hong Kong when they refused to take me in emergency. I was lucky to be alive.
	visit with doctors and health care professionals in a timely fashion	4) Medical care - Even though it's free here in Glasgow, the service is slow and quality poor. I have a friend who diagnosed cancer too late here and have to go back to China for surgery since the wait was too long here for him to get treatment.
2. Acquire English language skills	communicate better in English	1) Improve my English language so that I can find a job when my children are at school
	more choices of location of English classes	2)ESOL classes - The locations are far from my home and there has been a long waiting list for me to attend the classes. It would be helpful to have classes close to where I live.
	The availability of more English classes	3) The English language - I wish there were more English classes for me to choose from. I have been waiting to secure a seat in the class but the waiting list is long. One of my friends waited for 2 years before she got in a class.
3. Being close to family	Close to children and grandchildren, and spending time with them	1) The most important is being with family together. I enjoy being close to my son's family and spending every day taking care of my two grandchildren. I hope my other son's family will soon move here so that I don't have to worry about them or miss them.
	Children's learning environment in schools	1) Children's education: I heard from my sister-in-law that Chinese children are discriminated in school. I hope my kid will go to a good school and learn happily here in Glasgow.
4. Children's education	learning opportunities for children	2) Good education opportunities for my children
	good schools and learning opportunities for children	3) Children's education - good schools and learning opportunities for my children are important
	quality of education for children, fair treatment	4) Children's education - I heard from my Chinese friends that there is racial discrimination in their kids' school. It affects her children emotionally and psychologically when some teachers show favoritism toward local kids but discriminate against the Chinese kids. I am very worried it will happen to my children when

Themes	Sub-themes	Quotes from Participants they go to school.
a) Children's English proficiency	Extra English help for children recently moved to China	5) ESL classes for Chinese children in school will be helpful. My oldest one is 11 and he finds it very difficult to catch up in class since he just started learning English last year.
b) Children's learning	After school tutorials and classes in the neighbourhood	6) Children's after school activities such as those organized by Queens Cross Chinese community. Our area doesn't have any Chinese community centre like the Queens Cross area. They provide a lot of practical classes such as tuition for kids after school and other fun healthy activities such as badminton games.
c) Education for children	availability of child care and nursery	7) Good education for my children - I have been trying to find a nursery for my older child to give him a head start. I have no help in the house and it's difficult for me to care for two young children 2 years 4 months and 8 months old all the time. I hope my children can receive good education so that they can be more competitive when they grow up.
d) Learning opportunities for children	Help with homework for children after school	8) It will help me a lot if the community or school provides tutorial classes for my children since all their assignments/homework are in English and I hardly understand anything they bring home from school.
5 Children's overall wellbeing	Children growing up healthy and happy	1) My children's overall wellbeing is an important aspect. I want to see my children growing up in a healthy and supportive environment. Knowing my children are healthy (physically and psychologically) and happy contribute to my wellbeing here.
6 Close to family in China	Family in China granted visiting visa to Scotland for visit	1) Family visiting visa - it is very important for me to keep in touch with my family especially my parents in China. However, it is not easy to apply a visa for them. I have tried a few times applying for visas for my parents but was turned down every single time. I was given the reason of the possibility of my parents overstaying or not returning to China. I haven't seen my parents for years and it adversely affects my wellbeing. I miss them very much and they are hoping to come see me especially my daughter, whom they have never met.



Themes	Sub-themes	Quotes from Participants
11. Friendship	having close friends	1) Friends are important for me to share my ups and downs, and do things together with.
	having close and supportive Chinese friends	2) Friends – Chinese friends to hang out or just talk on the phone helps a lot. We support each other and help one another in times of difficulties.
	having my own house	1) Having one's own house is important since rent is very expensive here. However, it's not easy for refugees to obtain a mortgage. 2) Housing – we have been renting from the government and it would be helpful if we get some information on how to purchase our own house some day. 3) Convenient location of housing – it is important to live near shopping centres so that I can walk to get food and stuff I need.
12. Housing	having my own house	1) A good and stable job will be very helpful
	facilities in neighbourhood	2) Improve my English language so that I can find a job when my children are at school 3) Job opportunities 4) A secure and good job
13. Jobs	having a job	1) Build up my confidence in myself and learn to have my own opinions are qualities I am gradually working on. I believe they are important to contribute a better life for me.
	having a good job	2) A peace of mind – how I feel and see things, running alone outside also helps me feel better since it clears my mind. The freedom to pursue my interests is important.
	build up confidence	3) My overall wellbeing such as psychological health and spirituality is very important to me.
14. Personal growth	having a hobby	1) Friendly and helpful people in Scotland are also important. I once fell in the street and a few people rushed to help me get up, asked me if I am OK. It is very touching.
	psychological health	2) The quality of people around me such as if they are kind-hearted and helpful 3) The quality of people – being kind and considerate is very important
15. Quality of people in the community	helpful and caring people in community	
	kind and helpful neighbours kind and considerate people in neighbourhood	

Themes	Sub-themes	Quotes from Participants
16. Rights to work	Be able to work legally	1) Be able to work legally, not to worry about being caught by Home Office working as asylum seeker
	Be able to work legally	2) A legal status is the most important at the moment. I want to be able to work legally and wait for my baby to be born here
17. Stay healthy	good health	1) Good health is very important
	Good health for the whole family	2) Health is important and I hope we are healthy especially the children so that we can enjoy life together.
	good health	3) Health. It is very important to be healthy so that I can take care of my family.
	Good health for the whole family	4) Good health for the whole family – It is very important to stay healthy and enjoy life together
	timely visit with medical professionals	5) Health is very important and there's often long wait at clinics. Some clinics don't like asylum/refugee and staff has a very bad attitude toward us.
	Good and affordable transportation	1) Transport cost is expensive here, and it will be good to have some help for family with children so that we can go out more often.
18. Transportation	Affordable transportation	2) Senior discounts on transportation. I don't have to pay for any transport cost in Scotland and it helps me get to places to see friends
	efficient transportation	3) Good infrastructure such as transportation, which helps going to places like Edinburgh for a visit.
	Good and affordable transportation	4) Affordable and better transportation will help
	good and affordable transportation	5) Good and affordable transportation – it's expensive at the moment in Glasgow and it's often very congested on the roads
	good and affordable transportation	6) Good and affordable transportation – Transport is very expensive and I can't afford going to places most of the time.

**Appendix 9: Trust score calculation (Phase 2)**

Connection rank by "trust"

Connections	Average trust score of the three groups
Library	94.4
Chinese close friends	88.9
Internet	86.1
CCDP	84.6
Chinese friends who know English well	83.3
Homestart	83.3
Local community centre in neighbourhood	79.2
Glasgow Sports	76.2
Children at home	74.4
Husband	71.8
Friends in China	71.4
Family in China	70
Chinese church friends	66.7
Local shops	66.7
Chinese casual friends	64.4
ESOL classmates	63
Scottish Power	62.5
Housing Office	60
Local neighbours	59.3
Relatives in China	59.2
Police	55.6
Citizens Advice Bureau	55.6
Lawyer	54.2
Scottish Refugee Council	53.3
Chinese repair shops	53.5

### Appendix 10: IPA analysis sample: Initial notes and free associations

Teachers, friends at school → helpful to soon  
 Making progress at school work compared to first arrived.

S: 'When I first came here, I didn't want to go to school... My English was poor and I was scared of being laughed at.'

S: It's fine. The teachers are helpful and I have a few good friends... they used to help me with school work when I first came, my English was not good. Now, I can follow better in class.

R: Do you know the children in the neighbourhood? Do you play outside?

Friends at Neighbourhood = Not much

S: Not much. Once I saw a boy in the neighbourhood pee in the yard and it was disgusting. I am scared of the neighbour's dogs, he barked at me when I walked past their house. I don't play outside much. I asked my mom to take me to my friends' house to play, but Mom said they moved far away and we could not move there because my father works near where we live now, and it's convenient for him.

R: Oh I see, how often do you get to see your friends then?

S: Hmmm, I often see them at Chinese school on Saturdays. But most of the time we are learning in the classroom and there is only 15 minute break time. We usually just walked around the school and sometimes went to get a Chinese bun or treat in the canteen.

R: How long is your Chinese class on Saturdays?

Missing his Chinese friends who have moved away.  
 Only see them on Saturdays at Chinese school during break time.  
 - enjoy being together + share Chinese snacks/treats  
 Canteen → Chinese people sell Chinese bakery + buns

- scared of dogs  
 - didn't find friends in the block  
 - run down neighbourhood + children are more wild

feeling more comfortable with their own ethnic group

lack of information & support for Mom ↓ adversely affected Mom's emotional health

teacher called me back in 20 minutes to pick him up since he couldn't stop screaming and crying. He was traumatised by the new environment, new people and faces, and there are two other Chinese children (Mandarin speaking) in his class. He felt very isolated and scared. The school arranged a teacher, who is Chinese, to be in the class to help him for a while to adjust, and it was a long process for him. He remained very shy and quiet for almost 2 years. I was very frustrated and didn't know who to ask for help, and where to bring him. I hope he will get better soon and now he's 9, and he plays with his two Chinese friends sometimes.

Mental Health  
Mom perceived son's reaction to the new environment =  
traumatising  
isolating  
frightening  
Change of personality & behaviour of son → shy, quiet, inactive limited friends

R: How did you meet other Chinese and become friends?

Fin  
Cst  
in  
go  
the  
du  
he

Chinese neighbours  
shared cultural traits - dialect, food  
All mothers with young children stay at home offer support & help w each other

M: When we first moved here, there are two other Chinese families in the building. We immediately became friends since we speak the same dialect, cook the same kind of food, and we are alone here with young children to take care of all by ourselves. I guess it was just natural that we became good friends within a very short period of time.

Chinese Food

R: How do you see the education opportunity for your children here in Glasgow?

Chinese identity  
keeping one's own culture + language for the next generation

M: I have enrolled my son in the Saturday Chinese school so that he can keep up with the Chinese language especially the written part. It is very important for his future that he knows Chinese, he to communicate with family & for his future

Chinese Community  
child's future → important

Social support from own ethnic group

Loss of peers

Lack of information

know a few Chinese families in the neighbourhood and the children

played with each other sometimes in the weekend. After they-

moved away, my son has been doing worse...he sometimes

refused to go to school and I don't know what to do. I don't know

how the health system works here, and don't know where to seek help for his emotional issue.

Loss of ethnic support / friendship

Lack of information of Mental Health Support

R: So, what did you see as the obstacles in the process?

Language barrier

Low social support isolation

Overwhelming household responsibilities & child care

School support

M: I think being new here, very few friends, my poor English is I

think the biggest obstacle though. I have tried to enrol for the ESOL

class but it took a long time almost a year or so, and I studied for a

while, can't attend every class...especially after my daughter was

born... I have two kids to take care of and everything else like

cooking and bringing my son to school etc. Also, I don't know how

things work here. Having been here for 3 years or so now, it's a bit

better and the school my son goes to has been helpful.

transition from China take time to get used UK

to the way of living, making friends & learning the language

- inefficient system (ESOL) (long wait)

Being a mother & feel like the only parent (single parent)

Access to good medical care

Language barrier

Time consuming to be arranged

F: I agree medical care is very important, and the access to good care when we need them is particularly important. We can't speak

the language, and we need interpreter to assist the process. We

heard from a friend that it took a while before an interpreter was

arranged.

M: Ahhh, it was a difficult process, and I have a bad experience

with the translation services here. Those translators were not

Language barrier

Bad experience translation service

## Appendix 11: IPA analysis sample: Family One case study

**Stage 3 Family interview**

**Family One Case Study**

This is the final stage of a well-being study and it aimed to study the resettlement experiences of recent Chinese migrant families in relation to participants' social network and social connection patterns in Glasgow. IPA was employed to explore family experiences of the resettlement process in host community. IPA facilitated the processes of identifying unique and common themes across narratives and interpretation of these experiences. The study was to: (1) explore what living a good life means to the family; (2) identify social capital and connection patterns utilised by the family to achieve a good life; and (3) explicate findings to inform service providers such as the British Red Cross and Scottish Refugee Council and policy.

**Demographics: Family One**

The family consists of father, mother, a son who is 9 years old and a daughter 2 years old. They have been in Glasgow for 3 years and speak the language of Cantonese and Mandarin. They are from the Guangzhou area and Cantonese is their dialect and the language they speak at home. The father works in a Chinese restaurant and the mother used to work part-time in a Chinese take-away place prior to the birth of the second child. She stopped working after that and now she takes care of the children full time.

**Method:** A semi-structured interview was employed for this study. Interview was informal and conversational, which allow participants to describe what living a good life is like for their family in Glasgow, and who and what have been helping them to achieve those goals. Open ended questions were asked to illicit free flow conversations from participants. The researcher has known the family for about 6 months, and have visited the families 4 to 5 times to build rapport and trust prior to the interview.

**Findings: (Family 1)**

1. What are important constructs for your family to live a good life in Glasgow?  
 2. How do your family achieve the goals of living a good life?  
 3. What is the role of SC (bond, bridge & links) in the process?

The 5 most important constructs of family wellbeing decided by the parents:

1. Education for Children
2. Children's overall wellbeing (psychological and emotional/mental health) and access to free good quality health care for the family
3. The English language skills
4. Financial Stability with higher income
5. UK legal status

2b) What are the barriers of achieving?

**Method:**

The initial step of analysis involved reading and rereading of individual transcripts and initial notes were made regarding major points of interest in the margin of transcripts. Notes were refined and coded into themes that represented the experiences under investigation. The next step was searching for connections across emergent themes, and developing super-ordinate

theme (putting similar and related themes and group them together under a new title). Then, researcher moves on to the next case and repeat the steps of analysis.

Table 1. Super-Ordinate Themes and the Constituent Themes

Super-ordinate Themes	Constituent Themes
<b>The Mother (self-reliant)</b>	Helping myself Helping my children Helping my family
<b>Family support</b> <i>Social Connectedness - Bonding (SC)</i>	Division of labour (Father keeps his job and provide financial security; mother taking care of the household chores and the children; the son helps the mother with translations and taking care of sister)
<b>Chinese family and friends in China</b>	Grandparents, relatives and friends
<b>Chinese ethnic group &amp; community</b>	Mother's Chinese friends Son's Chinese friends Father's Chinese co-workers Chinese Food & Festivals Chinese school – education, identity & friendship Chinese agencies
<i>(cultural values/ Identity)</i>	
<b>Host community support &amp; services</b> <i>SC - Bridging</i>	Neighbours Teachers in local school ESOL classes Library Community Centres Medical professionals (GPs, nurses & dentists)
<i>SC - Linking - (CCOP/Kwayer → H.O., Agency)</i>	
<b>Technology &amp; Internet</b>	<i>'wechat', 'google'</i>
<b>The Mother (Self-reliant)</b>	
Self-help or self-reliance of the mother: The overall wellbeing of the children (physical, emotional and mental health) especially the older child and their education is deemed very important for the family and it's at the top of the priority for the parents. The mother has been managing the children at home and outside home to ensure that they get the best resources and information for academic success. She puts those responsibilities on her own shoulder, and keeps saying that she needs to rely on herself ultimately to provide the best for her children.	



"I have been here for 3 years, and I'm trying my best to understand the education system and which school offers the best resources for my children. My husband cannot help in any way and it all falls on my shoulder." (Mother)

Relying on herself emerged as a repeated theme in the interview from the mother. When discussing how to handle emotional stress, she said that she was an adult and she could take care of her frustrations. She also tried to find ways to help with the older child's emotional distress when they first arrived in Glasgow.

"I have tried to help my son to overcome his anxiety in the new environment; my husband cannot help in those situation and I have to handle things in the house by myself always. I am a grown up and I can take care of my emotional issues, but my son is just a child and he needs my help" (Mother)

The mother has trust issue with both the host and Chinese community and has been cautious in asking for help and receiving help. She has made use of translation services through agency and believed that confidentiality was breached. Other people in the Chinese community were gossiping about her medical condition after she visited with the doctor. She also doubts the accuracy of the information she obtains from host community and the Chinese community. The sense of relying on herself to solve daily problems is evident.

### **Family Support**

Family support each other within the household: The father keeps a job and provides for the family, brings home money to provide financial stability for the family. He occasionally helps with watching the kids so that the mother can go run an errand. His friends at work provide friendship and information about job market and immigration status, and shares information regarding local repair places. The older child serves as 'bridge' for the mother to compensate for the lack of English language skills of the parents. He helps the mother translate letters in the mail and during teacher-parent meetings. The mother also reported that the son keeps his little sister happy when he plays with her. The mother holds everything together and makes sure things are smoothly in the house such as the son goes to school, house is tidy and food is prepared.

"I go to work from morning till night, for what? For bringing money home for them so that we have food and shelter. The mother has to take care of the rest of the stuff." (Father)

### **Chinese family and friends in China**

The grandparents in China at times provide emotional support for the family especially when the mother was frustrated at home caring for children. They make use of the video chatting method to keep close touch with each other. The grandparents have not met the daughter and they are glad to see the children in the video chat. It also helps the son, who is old enough to have meaningful conversations with the grandparents, to keep up with their relationship.

"I call my family in China especially my Mom on 'wechat' often, it helps relieve my stress and also boosts my son's mood when he talks to his relatives in China. We have no one here, and my son misses the grandparents and other relatives. Also, it helps him open up a bit and talks to others, otherwise, he remains quiet most of the time at home."

**Appendix 12: IPA analysis sample: Sample of theme categorisation**

Super-ordinate theme	Constituent theme	Quotes from families
<b>Family Roles</b>	<b>Quality of Self-reliant (Mothers) &amp; perceived roles</b>	“I have to take care of everything by myself, my husband can’t help and I take care of children, the house and cooking...” (Mother, F1)
		“I try to learn the English language for my family, also for myself so that I can talk to other parents in the playgroup, and get access to information relating to children’s stuff.” (Mother, F2)
	<b>Division of labour within household &amp; Responsibilities</b>	“It’s me alone who supervise the children on their studies...that’s no help for me, I rely on myself...” (Mother, F4)
		“We need to rely on ourselves to provide for our family. I have to make sure we have money to pay rent and buy food.” (Father, F4)
	<b>Men’s roles</b>	“For me, I’m keeping a job, earning a living for my family and bringing home a stable income, that’s my responsibility and contribution.” (Father, F1)
		“She stays home a lot caring for the children, keeping them healthy and safe. I try to help watching the children too as much as I can.” (Father, F5)
	<b>Women’s roles</b>	“Many Chinese men are addicted to gambling here in the UK...for me, it’s a slow process and I realized I have to change if I want to keep my family together. I am lucky to stop early enough....I want to be a responsible father to my children.” (Father, F4)
	<b>Older children’s roles</b>	“We need to share the work here, my husband works long hours and I know it’s not easy for him. The kitchen environment is not good, tough I guess. I try to take care of the household things and all the kids by myself. Glad my oldest can be helpful, he is a good boy overall.” (Mother, F3)
		“I attended the ESOL classes for a while, and picked up some English words here and there. Now, my oldest son is here with us, and has learned English for a few years now. I can rely on him for some simple translation like talking

		to the GHA staff.” (Mother, F3) “My father works out of town and I help my mother whenever she needs help like taking care of my younger siblings.” (Son 1, F3)
Social Connections	Bonds: Chinese friends:	“My friends and I do social gatherings in each other’s homes sometimes, mothers talk and make some yummy Chinese hometown snacks while children can play with each other. Everybody is relaxed and happy! (Mother, F2)
	Emotional help	“I trust my few good friends here, they are like my sisters to me. We do stuff together like cooking, and making our home town ethnic snacks. We talk while we cook, lots of fun and laughter. Kids can play together too. We take kids out to the park and gather around festival times. They provide emotional support and friendship, I mean companionship when I am so far away from home and family.” (Mother, F5)
	Chinese Friends: Bridge with the host culture (i.e. English translation)	“Once in a while, my friends and I will meet in the library. It’s a nice place, where kids can play and adults can talk. We also go to events together in local community centre. Like the one in Possilpark. I don’t go often since the kids are young, and the weather is not very good here. That makes me hard for me to manage to get out with two young kids.” (Mother, F5)
	Advice	“I sometimes get help from some Chinese College students here, who are from Hong Kong, and they speak my dialect. They have been here longer and their English is good. They understand the law better. I trust them.” (Mother, F1)
	Reciprocity	“I was grateful to have a good Chinese friend, who is an older lady and has been living here for over 30 years. I called her when I was in the hospital, waiting to do surgery and she advised me to be careful and make sure the surgery is necessary. Later that evening, another doctor came in the room and I asked him to talk to my wife on the phone, she speaks a bit English, and she asked him why I needed surgery. Later, he told me I don't have appendicitis, so, he

		cancelled the operation. And I got discharged the next morning.” (Father, F5)
Problem minimization	Traumatic incidences, dangerous areas, non-communication, strategy	“My friends also have complaints about dentists here. One of my friends told me that the dentist pulled almost all the teeth of her chid at one setting. It was crazy.” (Mother, F1)
		“It was totally absurd and we were just picking up rubbish the neighbour threw on the street. We were shocked to see the police at our door. That’s why we stay away from those local people.” (Father, F1)
		“I once saw a boy pissing in the yard, and it was disgusting. The neighbours’ dogs also scared me when I walked past and I don’t play outside much in the neighbourhood.” (Son, F1)
Hopes & Dreams	Prayers, reunification, better future for children, more opportunities	“Our lawyer said that we have to come up with the fees to reapply for leave to remain soon, and ask us to be law-abiding. Hopefully, everything will turn out fine.” (Father, F2)
		“I just hope that someday things work out fine and we can go back to our hometown to visit our family especially our parents, who have never seen their grandchildren. That would be our dream comes true.” (Mother, F2)
		“Here in Scotland, we hope we are providing a much better opportunities for our children. They are the most important to us, we hope that they will be well-educated in universities and get a good professional job someday.” (Mother, F3)
Technology	WIFI, internet connection, google, fast internet, ‘we-chat’, phone call, video call	“It’s nice to talk to family in China via wechat, at least they can see the children in video chat, my parents are getting old, and they miss the children.” (Mother, F1)
		“Yes, that’s very important to have good wifi connection. They can’t live with slow internet I am afraid.” (Father, F1)
		“Good and stable wifi connection is very important since my mother calls us often. She might get worried if she can’t connect with us. I talk to my sister in China often too, she’s a

		teacher and has been very helpful in listening to my problems and offer some strategies like disciplining kids.” (Mother, F2)
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