

# Examining the disjunctures between policy and care in Canada's Parent and Grandparent Supervisa

Ilyan Ferrer

Ilyan Ferrer is based at School of Social Work, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

## Abstract

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this paper is to examine disjunctures between the ways in which Canada's Parent and Grandparent Supervisa is framed within policy documents and press releases, and how it is actually experienced by older adults and their adult children from the Global South who engage in intergenerational care exchanges once they reunify.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *A case study involving qualitative interviews with a married couple (adult children), and official texts from Citizenship and Immigration Canada were analyzed, and subsequently categorized according to themes.*

**Findings** – *The findings of this paper first demonstrate how policies such as the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa and the revamped Family Sponsorship program are ostensibly made to alleviate the significant backlog of family reunification applications, but in reality streamline and categorize older adults from the Global South as visitors who are given minimal state entitlements. Second, the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa reinforces forms of structured dependency by placing the responsibility and burden of care onto sponsors who must provide financial, social, and health care to their older parents. Finally, official statements on the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa and restructured Family Sponsorship program ignore the complex intergenerational exchanges that take place to ensure the survival of the family unit.*

**Research limitations/implications** – *Given the nature of the case study's design, the study's findings speak to the experiences of Anlyn and Edwin; adult children who sponsored an older parent under the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa. Given the recency of the program, the issues highlighted provide a much-needed starting point in examining the Supervisa's impact on families from the Global South. Moreover, future studies could critically assess how the highly gendered nature of care is experienced under Canada's temporary reunification programs.*

**Practical implications** – *The study highlights the everyday challenges of sponsoring a parent under the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa. These issues are particularly important for policy makers and practitioners to assess and understand how such policies transform dynamics of care for families from the Global South. The unbalanced power dynamics raises questions on how to best support overburdened adult children, and vulnerable older parents who have no access to state resources.*

**Originality/value** – *The findings of this paper further the understanding of how families from the Global South provide and receive care under the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa. These experiences, however, are neglected within official state policies which frame older newcomers as visitors who are managed, and denied entitlements to state resources. Revealing disjunctures between policy and lived experiences can assist service providers, professionals, and policy makers to recognize how programs like the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa overburden the family unit, and exacerbate conditions of poverty and marginalization.*

**Keywords** *Global South, Intergenerational care, Older im/migrants, Parent and Grandparent Supervisa, Transnational families, Family unit*

**Paper type** *Research paper*

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## Introduction and literature review

The Government of Canada is fully committed to helping families reunite. We recognize what parents and grandparents want most is to be able to spend time with their families (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).

In 2011 the number of people over the age of 65 in Canada reached close to five million, representing 14.8 percent of its entire population (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2013). The increasing number of older cohorts in Canada mirrors that of other Global North societies where lower fertility rates, increased life expectancy, and an aging baby boomer population reflect a rapidly graying demographic. While the focus in Canadian research and policy has prioritized the aging, longevity, and healthier outcomes of older adults as they occur over the lifecourse, research on older im/migrants from the Global South remains largely underdeveloped (Durst and MacLean, 2010). This paucity of research is most striking when considering the increasing diversity of the Canadian population, and the recent shifts in im/migration policies that have imposed stricter eligibility requirements for permanent reunification, and created a specific visa class for its older applicants. These policies not only set the conditions for entry into Canadian borders, but also shape relationships between older adults and adult children who engage in intergenerational and increasingly transnational caregiving exchanges.

While im/migration is not a new phenomenon, the recent globalization and growth of cross-border capital flows, production systems, and international trade have attributed to the unprecedented growth, volume, and significance of global migration (Castles and Miller, 2003; Yeates, 1999). These recent developments have set the stage for the acceleration, differentiation, feminization, and politicization of migration (Castles and Miller, 2009). These shifts have significant implications for migration flows from Global South to Global North societies. Although the North-South divide is colloquially understood as a demarcation of geographic locations, im/migration scholars have argued that distinctions between the Global North and Global South are centered on the global axis of social, political, and economic inequality between and within so-called “developed” and “developing” worlds (Castles, 2003; Del Casino, 2009; Reuveny and Thompson, 2008). Though research in Canada’s older im/migrant population from the Global South remains underdeveloped, recent gerontological studies on the broader experiences of older im/migrants have started to explore the considerable heterogeneity and diversity that they represent. Torres (2012) noted how the complexities that older im/migrants encounter are invoked by different legal and socio-economic statuses, motivations for leaving the homeland, and at various stages of the lifecourse. While migration scholars have focussed on the economic reasons for leaving the homeland (Massey *et al.*, 1993; Torres, 2013), considerations of how older adults engage in “economies of kinship” where reasons for migration are motivated by family care reception and provision, are emerging within transnational caregiving research (Baldassar, 2007). Despite being separated by national borders, families continue to engage in complex and mutual caregiving exchanges, and are actively complicit in the structural shifts in family dynamics and social networks (Phillipson and Ahmed, 2004). Using the experiences of older migrants in the USA as a case example, Treas (2008) also found that older adults maintain strong emotional attachments to their personal connections and customs of the homeland despite im/migration policies which categorize older migrants as temporary visitors, permanent residents, or naturalized citizens. These attachments and loyalties are not only formed within the family, but also through the cultural diaspora in what Treas (2008) described as, “the often contradictory positions that transnational immigrants attempt to reconcile in the service of a self that is inextricably linked to the lives of others” (p. 469). Once reunited with their families, Treas (2008) found that older im/migrants engage in “domestic economizing,” an arrangement where older family members assume caregiving roles within the intergenerational family to allow their adult children to participate in the labor market, and to ensure the preservation and transmission of culture to their grandchildren. These new realities shape cultural constructions of family relations, roles, and obligations, which counter the dominant assumptions of late life immigration based on economic motivations.

While the existence of transnational families is not a new phenomenon, changes to the im/migration regime within sending and receiving countries have created what Bernhard *et al.* (2008) have called the “proliferation of spatially ruptured family arrangements” (p. 4). The

emergence and growth of global families is due in large part to the complexities of the new political economy which emphasizes the free flow of global capital through processes of transnationalism, and the retrenchment of state provisions (Phillipson and Ahmed, 2004). Scholars have identified transnationalism as a process of movement that is anchored by two or more nation states (Faist 2000 as cited in Torres, 2013), but bound to processes of globalization and the free flow of global capital; thus transcending nation-state borders. The connections between the two create complicated and complex understandings of how older im/migrants cross-national borders to be with their families, and maintain relationships across borders. While existing literature has delved into the intersections between capitalism, im/migration, and neoliberalism (see Barber and Lem, 2012; Phillipson and Ahmed, 2004), scholarship in Canada has been slow to consider how such austerity-driven measures impact lived experiences of older im/migrants from the Global South, and family members who are often responsible for their parents' entrance into Global North societies.

### *Older im/migrants in Canada*

Within the Canadian context, older im/migrants from the Global South are largely comprised of two groups (Durst, 2010; Koehn *et al.*, 2010). The first group is characterized by older adults who have aged-in-place after arriving as part of the influx of newcomers under the Economic Class program during the mid-twentieth century. It was during this time that Canada's nation-building project liberalized its immigration program by eliminating explicitly discriminatory admissions criteria, and facilitated channels for reunification among family members (Durst, 2010; Koehn *et al.*, 2010). While immigrants during this time period are said to have had longer opportunities for adaptation and integration, as well as access to state institutions and programs (Durst and MacLean, 2010), structural barriers and forms of exclusion (e.g. relegation to the secondary/peripheral labor market, poverty) have meant that some immigrants experienced social and economic inequities that extend into later life (Galabuzi, 2006; Li, 2002).

A second group of older immigrants in Canada is comprised of newcomers who arrived under the Family Sponsorship category prior to its changes in 2014. An important provision of this program was the "Ten-year Dependency Period" clause whereby sponsored older immigrants were reliant on their sponsors for basic social and economic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, dental, and eye care for a period of ten years. Stipulations of the Family Sponsorship category denied full access to health care services, and basic income security programs (pensions) such as the Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), the latter of which provides monetary supplements to retired recipients who have a low income, and are currently living in Canada. Existing research has highlighted that 25-40 percent of immigrant seniors under family sponsorship report no source of income (Koehn *et al.*, 2010). For older immigrants from the Global South the imposition of a dependency clause, which restricted access to basic pension schemes for the first ten years, created structured dependencies on adult children who bore the economic brunt of these access inequities. Recently the Canadian state revamped its im/migration programs (in particular, the Family Sponsorship program) with the aim of instilling efficiency and accessibility into what was widely construed to be an albatross of a program; characterized by a long-standing reputation of being open to international applicants but also having unwieldy and extensive wait times. This has propelled the Canadian state to reconsider and ultimately overhaul how its im/migration programs allow newcomers to enter and integrate within its borders. For older adults in particular, the changes to Canadian im/migration brought the "Parent and Grandparent Supervisa" – a streamlined visa program which allows older parents to temporarily reunify with their families in Canada.

### *Introduction of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa*

In the autumn of 2011, Canada's then Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, announced the creation of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa, a "10 year multiple-entry visa which allows applicants to visit loved ones in Canada for up to 24 months at a time without the need for renewal of their status" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011). According to press releases by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the program's intent was to eliminate the sizeable backlog of applications to the Family Sponsorship class of immigration, which in previous years had taken a period of up to eight years to process

(Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011). This was done through a two-phased action plan, which first placed a moratorium on older adults accepted through the Family Sponsorship category so that the existing applications could be assessed and processed. The moratorium also provided time for policy makers to revamp the eligibility requirements for family reunification when it would reopen to older adults in 2014. The second phase of the action plan redirected older adults seeking entry into Canada to the newly created Parent and Grandparent Supervisa Program. A year after its inception, CIC released a statement lauding the “great success” of the program change, with more than 3,500 Parent and Grandparent Supervisa applicants being accepted and granted a visitor’s visa; representing an 87 percent approval rate, and a 20 percent reduction of queued applications within the Family Sponsorship program (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Minister Kenney highlighted the efficiency and effectiveness of the changes in the following CIC press release statement:

Our government is committed to family reunification. I’m happy to see that the program is growing and that more and more eligible parents and grandparents are getting the opportunity to spend longer periods of time with their loved ones in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012).

In January 2014 the Canadian government program formally reopened the Family Sponsorship program to older applicants but introduced more stringent qualifying criteria to assuage concerns about the social and financial costs of allowing incoming older adults to reunify with their families whether it be on a permanent or interim basis. In a statement highlighting changes to the Family Sponsorship program, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2013a) declared that “sponsors [must] have the financial means to support parents and grandparents, while reducing the net costs to Canadian taxpayers by leading to less reliance on health care and social programs.” New qualifying criteria included an increase in the minimum necessary income (MNI) needed to support older adults, as well as an extension of the dependency period where sponsors are required to pay for health and social services for 20 years instead of the previous requirement of 10 years. According to CIC, the rationale for a MNI increase was to “ensure sponsors can adequately provide for their sponsored parents and grandparents,” while the newly imposed 20-year dependency period would guarantee that “sponsors, not taxpayers, remain responsible for any welfare or supplementary health care costs” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013b). Perhaps most notable was the maximum number of completed applications that CIC assesses on an annual basis (i.e. the program pauses the number of applications it receives as soon as it receives its quota set at 5,000). Table I provides an overview of the recent changes to the eligibility requirements for the Family Sponsorship program and the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa.

In light of this policy shift, the current study examines the how the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa was formed, and how it continues to be framed as a necessary policy shift needed to meet the new realities of Canada’s aging demographic. This rhetoric and discourse will then be juxtaposed with the experiences of older adults and their family members who are responsible for coordinating applications, and subsequent care once their parents enter Canadian borders. This paper demonstrates how the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa is ostensibly meant to alleviate the backlog of family sponsorship applications by providing an efficient and streamlined method for family reunification, but in reality requires considerable effort from adult children who must coordinate applications transnationally. These costs include fees for applications, passports, medical insurance, and other travel-related costs. Once older adults are granted a Parent and Grandparent Supervisa and are reunified with their families in Canada, adult children assume full financial and social responsibilities of their parents – receiving little by way of state support. These types of structural changes calls into question the survival of the intergenerational family unit, the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty, and the imbalanced power dynamics given the structured dependency of older parents on their adult children. The disjuncture between policy discourse and lived experiences also underscores the unrecognized, and uncompensated caring labor that Supervisa families engage in while in Canada.

## Methodology

### *Data sources and collection process*

This paper adopted a case study approach to examine the implications of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa on the experiences of a Filipino family in Canada whose intergenerational

**Table 1** Comparison between the Family Sponsorship program (pre- and post-January 2014) and the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa

	<i>Family sponsorship for older adults (pre-2014)</i>	<i>Phase 1: Parent and Grandparent Supervisa</i>	<i>Phase 2: revamped family sponsorship for older adults (post-2014)</i>
Minimum necessary income	Sponsor must meet minimum necessary income (MNI) to support family, and incoming parent and grandparent. MNI set at above the low-income cut-off (LICO) threshold	Sponsor must meet MNI based on low-income cut-off	Increased MNI by 30% from previous family sponsorship criteria
Commitment of sponsor (financial, social, etc.)	10-year dependency period: signed sponsorship agreement where sponsor commits to providing basic needs of sponsored person(s) such as food, clothing, and shelter for 10 years	Statement from child or grandchild that s/he will provide financial support	Extension of dependency period to 20-year dependency period
Medical insurance	Agreement to reimburse government for every benefit provided as social assistance to the parent or grandparent	Have valid Canadian medical insurance coverage for at least one year	Agreement to reimburse government for every benefit provided as social assistance to the parent or grandparent Proof of income from Canada Revenue Agency over a 3-year period
Potential for permanent residency	Potential eligibility for permanent residency, and access to state pensions following 10-year dependency period	No possibility for permanent residency, and thus no access to state pensions	Potential to apply for permanent residency and access to pensions following 20-year dependency period
Maximum number of completed applications assessed (per year)	na	na	5,000

composition included married adult children, grandparents, and grandchildren who live in Canada. Given the recent changes to the Family Sponsorship program and the introduction of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa, a case study was used to interrogate the experiences, issues, and concerns of family members who apply through these programs. As a research design, a case study provides “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Participants in this study were part of a larger qualitative study on the aging experiences of Filipinos in Montreal, Quebec. Participant recruitment took place through posted advertisements in local newspapers, and through a process of snowball sampling. The participants for this case study were chosen for their extensive descriptions and reflections of applying through the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa.

The design for this study triangulated multiple sources of data to highlight the disjunctures that exist between state policies and the everyday experiences of families who are bound by these regulations. In particular, two data sources were analyzed for this paper; the first was textual data from CIC policy documents and statements about the reformed Family Sponsorship program, and the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa. These textual sources offered an important understanding of the ways in which policies regulate and mediate responsibilities and care exchanges between family members. These press statements were then juxtaposed with in-depth interviews with Analyn and Edwin (pseudonyms to ensure participant anonymity) a heterosexual Filipino couple who recently sponsored their mother through Canada’s Parent and Grandparent Supervisa. Open-ended questions were utilized to elicit rich narrative accounts and recall of experiences related to sponsoring their parent through the Supervisa program. During the 2.5-hour interview, the adult children were also asked about the ways in which they provided and received intergenerational care, as well as their knowledge of existing aging and im/migration policies. Among the questions asked were: What are your experiences in caring for and receiving care from your parent(s)? Why did you decide to sponsor your parent(s) through the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa? What were some of your expectations of having your parent(s) live with you? Interviews with Analyn and Edwin were conducted in English, digitally recorded and then

transcribed verbatim by the author. The research was conducted in accordance with standards set forth by the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and approved by the Research Ethics Board Office at McGill University.

### *Data analysis*

Analysis of textual and interview data began with a process of open coding, where the researcher read, coded, and categorized transcripts and policy documents along meaningful concepts and themes. These themes were meant to describe the experiences of families under the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa, and ultimately provide an account of how these experiences match policy rhetoric and discourse. To ensure that breadth and depth of the analysis process, all data sources (transcripts, documents, and codes) were read a second time in an iterative process consistent with the explanation-building process of a case study (Yin, 2014). Themes from both interview transcripts and policy documents were then compared to identify key disjunctures between what is presented in policy discourse, and the experiences of a family who had successfully applied on behalf of an older parent under the newly formed Parent and Grandparent Supervisa. To ensure the validity and authenticity of the research findings, im/migration scholars and practitioners were solicited to check the trustworthiness of the data and research findings.

## Findings

### *Establishing a narrative of efficiency and responsibility: limiting family sponsorship and streamlining the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa*

As CIC formally transitioned the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa into a permanent program, and lifted the moratorium on the Family Sponsorship program for older applicants, the rhetoric surrounding the program's reforms has (and continues to be) centered on instilling efficiency and increased accessibility into one of Canada's well-known immigration channels. Statements by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011, 2012) depicted the Family Sponsorship program as an unwieldy program with an unmanageable number of applications that take a significant amount of time and resources to process:

If we do not take real action now, the large and growing backlog in the parents and grandparents program will lead to completely unmanageable wait times. Through this balanced series of measures, we will be able to dramatically reduce the backlog and wait times, while the new Parent and Grandparent Supervisa will allow more family members to pay extended visits to their loved ones (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).

For the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa program to be sustainable, it must be redesigned to avoid future backlogs. The redesigned program must also be sensitive to fiscal constraints, bearing in mind Canada's generous public health-care system and other social benefits (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012).

Though the rhetoric surrounding the Supervisa focused on reducing queued wait times within Canadian im/migration programs, its implications are felt in other ways. First, the introduction of a temporal component means that applicants are, by default, considered a "genuine visitor to Canada who will leave by choice at the end of the visit" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). The notion of a genuine visitor is coded with assumptions that members of this category are excluded from the imagined Canadian community and are therefore rationalized to be ineligible for state provided services and entitlements. By implementing more restrictive eligibility criteria for family sponsorship and subsequent permanent residency, older adults and their sponsors have to no choice but to apply to the streamlined Parent and Grandparent Supervisa, which imposes a length of stay limitation, and reinforces relationships of structured dependency between older adults and their adult children where the former are reliant on the latter for economic support, health and social care (see Table I). These transformations have effectively shifted conceptualizations of citizenship and family, in turn, structuring how im/migrants are received and managed; creating a tiered immigration program for older adults and their adult children who are expected to meet means tested criteria based on financial capacities.

Though these types of policies harken to the explicitly exclusionary policies of past Canadian immigration regimes, they are more reflective of the rationale underplaying the current context of transnational migration which valorizes the flow of global capital, and the sustained binary of a productive and unproductive labor force, for which older adults from the Global South are generally situated in the latter category. In describing the second phase of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa, former minister Kenney presented the juxtaposition and contradiction between the perceived generousities of the Canadian state with the growing concern for austerity:

We choose to have such a program in a way that corresponds to our fiscal limit as a country, to the limits in our healthcare system, which is why we do not admit an unlimited number of senior citizens. If we're not going to have that program, then our next choice is: do we want to manage it properly or not? [...] We could take some responsible decisions to have a fast program that's properly managed, so that sponsored parents and grandparents can be admitted in a year or two after their application. We choose to be generous, to reflect the practical limits of our generosity, but also to have a program that is efficient and timely so that people who make those applications can expect a decision in a reasonable amount of time (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013c).

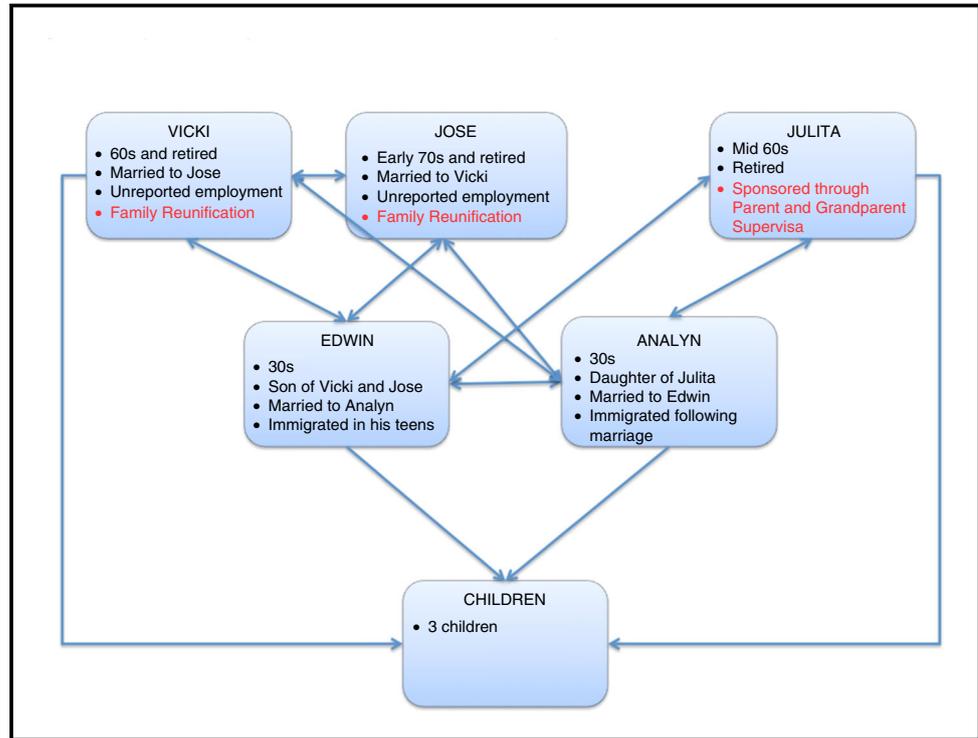
The statements above reinforce and maintain the dominant imagery of Canada as a bastion for newcomers, underlining the charitable and welcoming nature of existing im/migration policies. These statements, however, are juxtaposed with the rhetoric and justification of austerity measures which create rigid eligibility criteria in accessing health and social care systems. While these measures might assuage concerns of depleting resources within an aging society, they render invisible the actual experiences of aging and caring relationships between family members. The disjunctures between how the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa is framed publically, and the actual experiences of family sponsors highlight the largely (in)visible coordination efforts and caring labor exchanges that occur between family members.

#### *The case of Analyn and Edwin*

Edwin and Analyn are a Filipino heterosexual couple in their 30s, and have three children. Edwin and his parents received their citizenship shortly after being sponsored by another family member under the Family Sponsorship program. Analyn, on the other hand, received permanent residency after her marriage to Edwin. Together Analyn and Edwin live in a rented apartment complex in Montreal, and have jobs in the secondary/peripheral labor market. In addition to providing care to their children, the couple provides intergenerational care for their three parents (see Figure 1). Edwin's older mother (Vicki) and father (Jose) are both retired but continue to engage in unreported employment while receiving their OAS and GIS entitlements. At the early stages of their marriage, both Analyn and Edwin lived with Vicki and Jose; providing intergenerational instrumental, financial, and social care. After the birth of their third child, the couple moved to a different apartment in order to care for their expanding family. Despite being in separate households, Edwin continues to provide instrumental care to his parents by driving them to various medical appointments and social engagements. Both he and Analyn also provide financial support to Vicki and Jose on a regular basis.

After the introduction of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa in 2012 the couple decided to sponsor Analyn's mother, Julita, who was living in the Philippines. Not knowing that the Family Sponsorship program was in the process of undergoing significant reform, they submitted a Supervisa application on behalf of Julita and received a five years visitor's visa. While Analyn and Edwin confirm the expediency of the Supervisa application process, their experiences also highlight some of the challenges of assuming economic and social responsibilities for their parent's medical and financial needs. However, in spite of the extensive costs, the couple also acknowledged the benefits of having an older parent provide childcare and caring labor for their young children. Analyn and Edwin's interviews revealed, from an analytical standpoint, disjunctures between what is offered in text, and the interactions and exchanges that occur on an everyday basis. These disjunctures reveal how the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa is presented to the wider public as a way to ensure that Canadian resources are not being consumed by older visitors from the Global South, but is, at very same time, producing heavy burdens on adult children within intergenerational families who provide care on a day-to-day basis. We now turn to the disjunctures that exist between policy discourse and the lived experiences of families under the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa.

**Figure 1** Dynamics of care within Edwin and Analyn's family



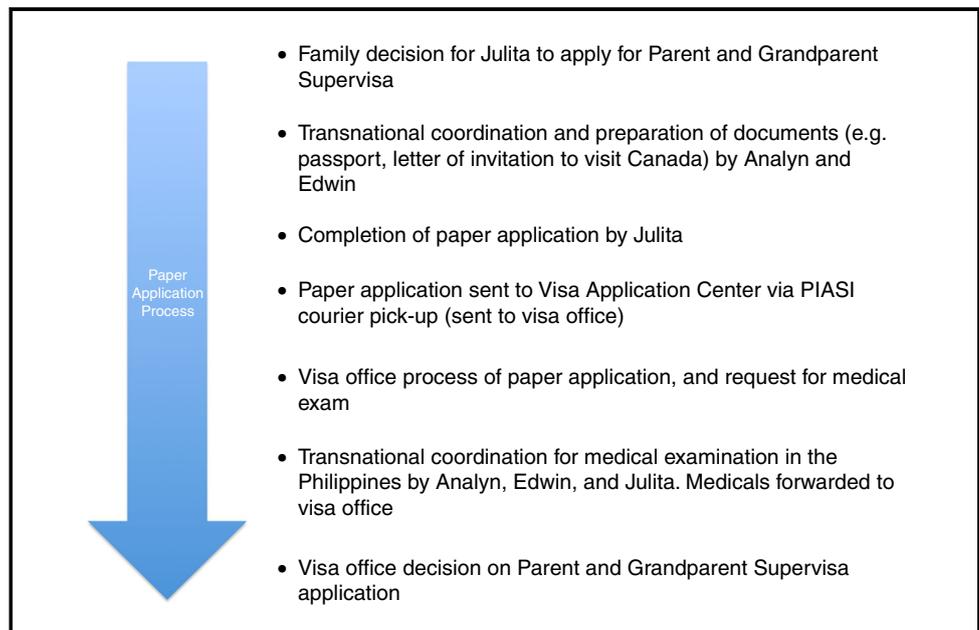
### *Disjunctures between policy and experiences*

*Disjuncture 1: challenges and difficulties of applying through the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa.* Though CIC lauds the Supervisa's efficiency and ease of use, the actual process of applying is not as straightforward as claimed, and includes multiple actors who are implicated in the process of application and assessment. Analyn's recounting of her mother's Supervisa application process highlights how adult children must go through extensive lengths to coordinate the application process on behalf of their older parent(s). These efforts were complicated by the bureaucratized relationship between CIC, the Canadian embassy in the Philippines, third party service providers who facilitate the application process, adult children who coordinate the Supervisa on behalf of their parents, and older adults who prepare to migrate to Canada. Most of Analyn's dealings were not with CIC but with the Canadian embassy and its contracted service providers such as the Visa Application Center (VAC) in Manila and the Philippine Interactive Audiotext Services (PIASI) which arranged the collection and courier of the paper application to the visa office. Analyn was asked to describe the steps she took when she applied for the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa on behalf of her mother, who was living in the Philippines at the time of application (see Figure 2 for an overview of this process).

While these services are available online, Analyn and Edwin revealed that they pursued a paper application because their mother did not have access to a computer in the Philippines. As such, Analyn and Edwin engaged in coordination efforts to ensure that Julita was able to apply to one of the Philippines' VACs (in Manila and Cebu). Given the considerable distance between herself and her mother, Analyn enlisted the help of a friend living in the Philippines to help complete, and ensure the paper application was properly administered by the VAC in Manila. In the following excerpt, Analyn discusses how she prepared her mother's passport, medical exam, and birth certificate – all requisites for a Parent and Grandparent Supervisa. These realities highlight how applicants of the Global South are reliant on their local or transnational adult children to help navigate through the bureaucratized migration process:

Analyn: My mother filled out the form. [...] You can apply in the computer [...] but] if you apply for the paper you have to call the embassy (VAC), and then they're gonna pick [it] up for you. That's what they [do].

**Figure 2** Schematic of Parent and Grandparent Supervisa application process



Interviewer: So once your mom filled out the forms [...] she called the embassy?

Analyn: Well before we send all the papers to her, we just tell [her]: "get a passport, get everything done". Birth certificate, marriage certificate. [...] And then we send the paper application form and then she fill it out, and then she went to Manila because we were in the province. She went to Manila to the embassy, and they said, "No you cannot come here and give that paper. Just call us, and we're going to pick up the paper in your place".

Interviewer: Then who said that you were accepted for the visa?

Analyn: [Canadian embassy in the] Philippines.

Interviewer: I always thought it was Canada.

Analyn: Nothing to do here. Only the stamp [...] I tried to call [CIC]. I tried to call because my mother is here. [She's] like a tourist. I tried to call before, and I said, "Is it possible to sponsor my mom because she's already here? She [has] a Supervisa, and I want to sponsor her to stay. Can I sponsor her?" They said that sponsorship is abolished for now until 2014. [...] I'm really shocked.

In the excerpt above, Analyn also discussed her initial intentions of sponsoring her mother only to realize that the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa did not offer a pathway to permanent residency. Analyn expressed initial shock, and would later question whether it would be financially feasible to have her mother remain in Canada because of the high costs for private insurance. Even with the Family Sponsorship program reopened to all older adults, Analyn and Edwin would encounter additional financial barriers given the new financial criteria for sponsoring older parents. As a family of five, Analyn and Edwin's combined income would need to match the MNI set at \$63,833 CAD in 2013. This poses a significant barrier which, when combined with CIC's self-imposed cap of 5,000 applicants accepted for evaluation, extinguishes hopes of Julita reuniting with her Canadian family on a permanent basis. The changes to the Family Sponsorship program ultimately demonstrate exclusionary criteria for families of the Global South looking to sponsor their older parents and grandparents by imposing criteria which are difficult, if not impossible, for families in poverty to meet. Instead these families find that their only opportunity to reunite with their older parents is through the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa, a program that offers temporary reunification but places a significant burden on sponsors to provide financial support and caring labor.

*Disjuncture 2: experiences of social and health care exclusion.* Like past im/migration programs specifically catered to older applicants, the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa reinforces relationships of structured dependency between older adults and their sponsors. The financial regulations are particularly stringent since assessments are based on low-income cut off rates. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011), one of the requirements of a Supervisa is a signed letter by a sponsor attesting to their relationship to the applicant, as well as the ability to provide financial coverage for health care costs. In the latter, sponsors must submit proof that they have purchased Canadian medical insurance covering a minimum of \$100,000 in health care, hospitalization, and repatriation costs. In Analyn and Edwin's case, the significant financial responsibility calls into question their ability to support Julita over the long term; specifically beyond the anticipated two years they thought would be granted. In the following excerpt, Analyn discussed the feasibility of having her mother stay in Canada for five years, citing among other costs, the annual and fluctuating fees for private health insurance:

Analyn: Insurance for her, if you don't have that [...] you have to buy insurance for her.

Interviewer: Is that expensive to get?

Analyn: Very. One year is \$2,000 CAD. [...] It's really freaking me out because they gave her [a] 5-year visa. It's too much. It's too much because what we understand is [she's] only [here for] 2 years. And they give her [a] 5-year visa. [...] It's really surprising for me, because maybe after 1 year she goes home, and then she's going to come back again. That's what's in our mind [...]. They didn't state there that it's 2 years maximum or 2 years minimum. That's what we thought that it's 2 years maximum; that's it. And she can go home and maybe we can extend her and file another.

Analyn further described how the added financial responsibility had become a significant stressor especially when monitoring her mother's health. Analyn expressed worry whenever Julita required medical attention because while her mother was covered by private insurance, Analyn was responsible to pay for immediate services, which did not offer guarantees of full reimbursement. This type of uncertainty has prompted Analyn and Edwin to reconsider whether they will re-apply for the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa in the future:

Analyn: I wish she could have her permanent residence because it's really hard for her to get sick. And we have the insurance but, she [got] sick already. And then [...] we pay for the expenses in the hospital, and then you don't even know because the insurance [says] "Oh, did she have the sickness before in the Philippines?" [...] So we said, "No it's the first time that she has this". Thank God everything is approved and they give back the money. [...] One time she cannot she cannot lift herself to go out. It hurts here (Analyn points to her back), and then we go to the hospital. [...] You have to think too that maybe they're not going to reimburse the money. I'm going to think about in another year, [whether] to renew for another 2,000. So we might get her here as a permanent resident not spend[ing] how [much]? 5 years for 10 thousand [dollars].

Broadly speaking the implications of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa can be said to exacerbate experiences where older migrants are structurally dependent on their sponsors for financial and social support (Phillipson and Ahmed, 2004). For older adults, these conditions are made more difficult by restrictions in accessing pension and health care programs, which position older visitors as dependents who must be managed, and restricted in the types of entitlements and services they receive. Such a framework makes it difficult, if not impossible, to integrate into the host society given the heavy dependency on adult children, and the paucity of opportunities to engage in the labor market. The impact is not only felt by older adults under the Supervisa, but also adult children who sponsor their parents and serve as the sole providers of health insurance, food, shelter, clothing, and transportation. While questions are legitimately raised as to whether sponsors have the capacity to assume complete stewardship of their parent's care, focus must also be placed on the implications of having these forms of structured dependency; where visiting parents are heavily and solely reliant on their adult children for financial support, and health and social care.

*Disjuncture 3: acknowledging the care labor exchanges between parents and adult children.* Despite the significant financial toll of having a visiting parent under the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa, adult children are also the benefactors of care labor provided by their older parents. Julita's presence meant immediate assistance in household duties and domestic tasks especially

in caring for the newborn child. When asked to describe the type of work her mother provided on a daily basis, Analyn was quick to identify household labor and the caregiving her mother provided to the grandchildren:

Analyn: [She's] helping us a lot. Before it was really hard for us to go out because sometimes you want to go out without kids. Now I can just rush here and there in the groceries and everything. I can get my things because she's here. She's really a big help, mostly [taking] care of the baby because my two kids go to school. She does everything! Sometimes you have to tell her, "No! Stop! You have to rest!"

For Analyn and Edwin, Julita's childcare has allowed them more time to participate in the labor market and fulfill caregiving responsibilities to other members of their family (namely Edwin's parents). Visiting older parents in this regard, provide important caregiving contributions within the intergenerational family. In the following excerpt the couple described the crucial role that they played in caring for Edwin's parents, as well as the traditional mores that compel Filipino adult children to look after their aging parents:

Edwin: Filipino parents really expect you take care of them. At first, [my parents] were really emotional even though we were moving next door [...] What they were more worried about was transportation. If they get sick, if they had to go to the hospital I would drive them around. We did groceries and everything. [...] Tradition-wise, it's the youngest boy that takes care of the parents.

Analyn: We [are] concerned about their health. It's deteriorating.

Edwin: Yeah, especially with my dad.

Analyn: He's taking a lot of medicine already. We just want them not to work anymore [...] but they don't like. They said they're going to get bored.

Interviewer: So what kinds of health concerns do they have?

Analyn: They have complicated [issues]. They have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. (Analyn laughs) Sometimes I'm so mean to them. [...] I'm telling them, "Are you not tired of going to the hospital?" They keep going to the hospital. It's really tiring for them and they need, especially when they're sick, more [care].

The excerpt above highlights the multiple and interfamilial responsibilities that Analyn and Edwin assume for their family unit. Although Vicki and Jose receive OAS and GIS, they maintained their jobs in the underground economy to supplement their late life pensions. Perhaps most revealing was their continued need for instrumental support from their adult children, which included accompaniment to health care appointments, grocery shopping, and transportation from one location to another. This type of care even extends to day-to-day management of health, where Analyn and Edwin remind Jose of his diabetes, and high cholesterol and blood pressure. Analyn and Edwin were also apprehensive over their parent's participation in the secondary/peripheral labor market given these health concerns. These types of interactions highlight the realities of care within Analyn and Edwin's family, which are characterized by dynamic care reciprocation and exchanges. These realities of provision and reception, however, are notably absent within the rhetoric and discourse of the Family Sponsorship and Supervisa programs.

## Discussion

This paper examined disjunctures between the ways in which the revamped Family Sponsorship program, and the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa are framed within policy documents and press releases, and how they are actually experienced by older adults and their family members. The findings first demonstrate how policies such as the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa are ostensibly made to alleviate the significant backlog of family reunification applications by creating temporary and seemingly more efficient programs for older applicants to apply to and quickly be accepted under. Such policy developments are in line with global restructuring efforts characterized by austerity-driven measures which reduce (or in some cases deny completely) entitlements for newcomers. Welfare in the European Union, for instance, is highly contingent on interrelated factors such as migration history, sociological status, past relationship with the paid labor market, and "location" within a particular member state (Dwyer and Papadimitriou, 2006; Warnes, 2002; Warnes *et al.*, 2004). Here, notions of citizenship are highly stratified and built

around an ideal of the citizen as a paid worker, or a paid worker who is a national of an EU member state. Dwyer and Papadimitriou (2006) noted how policy at the state level serves to diminish rather than enhance the social security rights of certain older international migrants. In this regard, highlighting the connections between transnationalism and structural challenges that reflect the everyday experiences of older im/migrants from the Global South and their sponsors provides a potential framework for understanding the inequalities between nation states and the crisis it generates in supporting older people (Phillipson and Ahmed, 2004). While older applicants are still able to apply for family sponsorship in Canada, recent amendments to the Family Sponsorship program make it all but impossible for all older adults to meet the increasingly rigorous financial criteria. As such, the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa becomes the only way in which older adults can enter Canada to reunify with their families.

By reducing the number of opportunities for older im/migrants to permanently immigrate to Canada, these policies placate anxieties and concerns of an aging population, and in particular, the issue of an influx of older adults coming from the Global South. Whether purposeful or not, such measures explicitly categorize older adults as “visitors” who must be surveilled, and made ineligible for state benefits because of common perceptions that they consume valuable and scarce resources. Analyn and Edwin’s experiences of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa highlight the need for policy makers to pay specific attention to the disjunctures between policy rhetoric, and the actual experiences that are produced as a direct result of these austerity-driven programs. Though the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa emphasizes the desire and need for older adults to join their families in Canada, the policy places a drastic strain on the family unit once reunification occurs. By placing the burden of care onto sponsors, the Supervisa completely ignores the considerable coordination and responsibilities that are placed on adult children. Moreover, the financial requirements and criteria places additional burden on sponsors and families like Edwin and Analyn who are already caring for young children and other family members (e.g. multiple older parents). For Global South families who are largely participating in the secondary/peripheral labor market, this perpetuates the cycle of poverty given the added financial burdens of supporting their parents when they require medical attention and other health/social services.

In Canada, the influence of neoliberal governmentality (and austerity governance) has effectively altered im/migration and labor policies to streamline more transient and low-cost labor from the Global South to be placed immediately in the secondary and peripheral labor market (Rice and Prince, 2013). While programs such as the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the Live-in-Caregiver Program (domestic work program) were created to facilitate the flow of transient and cheap labor into Canadian borders, opportunities for immigration and permanent residency are dwindling as eligibility criteria are becoming more strict and rigid. Well-known immigration policies such as the Family Reunification program, and the Economic Class advertise for a specific type of applicant; one who is young and productive. These assumptions however, fail to consider the significant caring labor contributions that older adults from the Global South provide to the family unit. For instance, upon reunification, older adults provide babysitting to their grandchildren which then liberates their adult children to participate in the labor market. As Analyn and Edwin’s case allude to, the intergenerational relationship between family members liberates the couple to participate in the labor market, and/or extend their capacity to care for other members of their family unit. It is, generally speaking, an arrangement that allows the family to survive. Such examples reflect scholarly work which demonstrate how older im/migrants from the Global South participate in the redistribution of care resources which include emotion, time, and cultural knowledge that cross-generational and border lines (Zhou, 2013).

The recent changes to the Family Sponsorship program, and introduction of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa pose important questions on how intergenerational norms are actively being transformed. By forcing older adults to reunify with their families in block increments, the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa first reinforces the dominance of the traditional nuclear family as the primary (and oftentimes sole) source of care, and second inherently exposes older parents to potentially vulnerable situations because they are structurally reliant on their sponsors and adult children for financial, social, and health care (as well as systematically denied state rights

and entitlement). The imbalanced power dynamics are certainly neglected in policy discourse, and must be monitored to ensure the rights and welfare of Supervisa parents are respected. It is here where health care and social service providers could intervene and provide resources, which would help alleviate the uneven power dynamics between adult children and older parents. At the very least, additional research could be done to examine how older adults experience and perceive these forms of structural dependency.

## Conclusion

As this paper has shown, the combination of the reformed Family Reunification Program and the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa reconstitutes family reunification as temporary (on the need for older adults from the Global South to temporarily reunify with their families) – assuring the public that they will not drain scarce resources during their stay. Such discourse at best, ignores the caring labor exchanges that allow adult children to participate in the labor force, and ensures that the family is cared for (with little expense to the state). At worst, this type of policy disrupts family dynamics by placing considerable burden on sponsors to care for their parent's financial, social, and physical well-being. The unbalanced power dynamics also pushes older parents into potentially vulnerable positions where they are structurally dependent on their adult children for financial and social support. These invisible realities warrant further attention from policy makers, practitioners, and scholars especially in terms of how these types of policies impede caring relationships both locally and transnationally. Given the recency of the program changes, the experiences and issues highlighted by the case study provide a much-needed starting point in examining the impact of the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa on Global South families in Canada and transnationally. Such findings could serve as an impetus for future research to consider the highly gendered nature of care especially among the Filipino caregivers (Parrenas, 2005), and the extent to which women apply for, and subsequently care for children and grandchildren under the Parent and Grandparent Supervisa.

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### About the author

Ilyan Ferrer is a PhD Candidate at the McGill University's School of Social Work. His research interests include social gerontology, im/migration, and intersectionality research. Ilyan Ferrer can be contacted at: [ilyan.ferrer@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:ilyan.ferrer@mail.mcgill.ca)

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