



FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

Social participation in later life: A focus on environmental challenges

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DOCTOR OF ADULT EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES
of

Dra. Honghui PAN

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Summary

This Ph.D. dissertation contributes to current ageing research by adopting diverse samples and research methods in approaching the research topic of social participation in later life. In particular, this Ph.D dissertation addresses three new “environmental” challenges in social participation: 1) the influence of the changing media environment, 2) the influence of relocation to long-term care institutions, and 3) the interdependence between migration, culture and ageing.

The findings show that new media usage (e.g. Internet) can be promoted for increasing older adults’ participation level while taking into account the fact that older adults still have a preference for traditional media usage (e.g. newspaper, TV, municipality newsletter). Relocation to long-term care (LTC) institutions does not necessarily mean that older residents will withdraw from social participation. LTC staff should be aware of their potential in devising social participation programs, not restricted to physical activity but offer a portfolio of activities. Social participation programs should also be linked with the residents’ life-course experiences to overcome their reported barriers related to social participation. Chinese culture can also be a double-edged sword, both a motivator and a barrier, to older Chinese migrants’ social participation.

The dissertation puts forward three policy recommendations regarding promoting old-age social participation in different environments: 1) respect older adults’ media preference in a digital inclusive society, 2) prioritize meaningful participation to realize healthy ageing among LTC residents and 3) embrace cultural diversity to promote social participation among ethnic minority migrants.

Curriculum Vitae

Honghui Pan started her Ph.D. in September, 2015 in the research team Belgian Ageing Studies, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Her Ph.D. research topics are ageing and media usage, social participation, active and healthy ageing in the context of migration, and long-term care. As a first-generation migrant herself, she is tremendously interested in the cultural implications for social participation of older ethnic minority migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands. She also displays research interest in the potential of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in offering older adults more channels to be informed about social participation opportunities.

During her Ph.D. journey, Honghui Pan, both as first author and co-author, has published in peer-reviewed journals with high impact factor, for instance, Journal of Information, Communication and Society, Journals of Gerontology: Social Sciences (indexed in SCI, SSCI, Web of Science, etc.). She has presented her research in academic conferences in Frankfurt (Germany), The Hague (the Netherlands), Swansea (Wales), Pécs (Hungary), Madrid (Spain) and Tokyo (Japan).