

# Transnational family migration from Hong Kong: The challenges and impacts

## 跨國香港家庭移民的挑戰與影響

The topic of migration has garnered significant attention and raised concerns in Hong Kong in recent years. The social impact of migration on migrants and their families is being extensively researched in the field of migration studies. **Dr Lucille Ngan**, Associate Head and Associate Professor at the Department of Social Science at HSUHK, is a specialist in transnational migration. Her recent three papers\* focus on various aspects of transnational Hong Kong families' migration journeys.

In her newest paper, "Negotiating Work-Family Transitions: Reverse Family Migration among Second-Generation Hong Kong Mothers", Dr Ngan explores the work-family transitions of previously employed, overseas-educated mothers who have re-migrated from Hong Kong to their former countries of settlement – Canada, Australia, the United States, or the United Kingdom.

Despite their transnational backgrounds that set them apart from most first-generation immigrant mothers, they too experience compromised careers and domestication upon reverse migration. Yet, these second-generation returnee mothers accept, and in some cases embrace, such compromises.

Dr Ngan discusses how the process of family migration often restricts skilled Chinese women's ability to have the totality of a meaningful family life, personal satisfaction, professional success, and financial independence. Such process often leads to downward career paths and an increase in domestic responsibilities for these mothers. She argues that, in addition to economic considerations, various interconnected factors such as gender dynamics, cultural influences, transnational connections, and family lifestyles significantly influence how second-generation returnee mothers navigate the transitions between work and family life.

The stories of these returnee mothers shed light on a conflicting sense of the sacrificial self that is often associated with new Chinese immigrant women, and a sense of personal fulfilment as wives and mothers who were achieving their aspirations for a better quality of family life.

Currently Dr Ngan is working on a Research Grants Committee-funded Faculty Development Scheme research project that explores transnational ageing, and family processes among older parents from Hong Kong. She explains that older people can face specific conditions – such as retirement, reduced income, age-related health conditions, reduced physical mobility, need for daily living assistance – not commonly shared by those in

other age groups. Research and policies related to ageing tend to explore and support "ageing in place" in local communities. However, for older Hong Kong parents who find themselves in continuous migration movement, or who are part of families separated by national borders, the processes of ageing intersect with dynamic familial, social, cultural and economic forces that impact their everyday transnational lives.

Dr Ngan points out that migration involves uprooting and resettlement which can have implications not only on oneself, but also on family relationships and friendships. It is not a simple process. Therefore, for students with plans to emigrate, she advises that it is crucial for them to carefully assess their own circumstances, aspirations, and priorities before making any decisions. Additionally, they should thoroughly understand the job market, educational opportunities, cultural norms, and legal requirements of the destination country.



**Dr Lucille Ngan**  
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近年，「移民」話題在香港備受討論和關注，學者也仔細研究「移民」對移民人士及其家庭成員的社會影響。恒生大學社會科學系副系主任兼副教授**顏樂榮博士**聚焦跨國移民研究，她最近發表的三篇論文\*，就探討跨國香港家庭移民軌跡的相關議題。

顏博士在她最新發表的論文《工作與家庭轉變之間的協商：第二代再次移民的香港母親》中，探討曾在海外接受教育和香港工作的第二代移民母親，從香港再次移居到加拿大、澳洲、美國或英國，所面對的工作及家庭轉變。

儘管這些第二代回流母親的跨國背景，使她們與大多數第一代移民母親不同，但她們在再次移民時同樣經歷對事業的妥協並需負擔更多家務，而她們在某些情況下也甘於接受和妥協。

顏博士探討家庭移民如何限制具技能的中國女性追求有意義的家庭生活、個人滿足、事業成功和財政獨立，因為移民往往使其職業生涯「走下坡」，照顧家庭的責任亦隨之增加。她認為除了經濟考慮外，性別動態、文化影響、跨國聯繫和家庭生活方式等各種互相關聯的因素，均對第二代回流母親如何度過工作和家庭生活的轉變有顯著影響。

這些回流母親的故事，揭示了新移民的中國女性常有一種矛盾的「自我犧牲」意識，以及她們作為妻子和母親，冀實現美好家庭生活的個人滿足感。

目前，顏博士正進行研究資助局資助的「教員發展計劃」研究項目，探究香港長者的跨國養老與家庭生活經驗。她解釋，老年人有機會面臨其年齡層獨有的問題，如退休、收入減少、健康衰退、行動力減弱，生活援助需求增加等，而與人口老化相關的研究和政策往往傾向聚焦本地社區的老龄化問題。然而，對一些香港年邁父母來說，他們的家庭成員分佈世界各地，他們或有需要在各地遊走，因此其生活及老化問題，亦與跨國家庭、社會、文化和經濟因素息息相關，影響他們的日常生活。

顏博士認為，移民涉及離鄉別井和重新安頓，對個人、家庭關係和友誼皆有影響，過程並不簡單。因此，她建議有意移民的學生需謹慎計劃，在作出任何決定前，必須仔細評估自己的情況、意願和優先事項，同時充分瞭解目的地的就業市場、教育機會、文化常態和法律要求。

\* The three papers are: 三篇論文為：

Ngan, L.L. (2024). Negotiating Work-Family Transitions: Reverse Family Migration among Second-Generation Hong Kong Mothers. *Critical Asian Studies*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2024.2329983>.

Ngan, L.L. & Chan, A.K. (2024). The Quest for Lifestyle: Reverse Family Migration among Hong Kong Returnee Parents. *International Migration Review*, 58(1), 94-116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183221149024>

Ngan, L.L., Chan, A.K., Chan, R.H., & Siu, Q.K. (2023). The impact of a transnational background on family migration considerations amid political uncertainty: Second-generation returnees in Hong Kong. *China Review*, 23(3), 217-243. <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/250/article/905454>