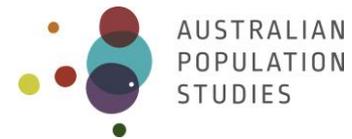


Will my parents come to Australia when retired? Later-life transnational migration intentions of Chinese parents



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Abstract

Background

China is the second largest source country of immigrants to Australia every year. The elderly parents of these working-age immigrants in Australia usually visit their children on a tourist visa, which allows short term family gatherings. These visits do not require much effort. However, when it comes to long-term transnational migration, the decision becomes hard to make and often involves complex factors, such as personal preferences and lifestyle choices.

Aims

This paper aims to examine the later-life transnational migration intentions of elderly Chinese parents and how the parents' intentions are affected by personal preferences, personality and lifestyle differences between the generations.

Data and methods

This paper uses data from a two-stage study including an online survey and semi-structured interviews conducted in Sydney from October 2018 to May 2019 with both caregivers (adult children who are first-generation immigrants living in Australia) and their elderly parents.

Results

The study found that external contributors such as language barriers and transport dependence in Australia, and existing social ties as well as another adult child living in China, have a negative influence on moving to Australia.

Conclusions

Elderly parents with an optimistic and outgoing personality are more likely to consider moving to Australia compared to those who are more conservative. Foremost, conflicts due to different lifestyles between the generations reduces the possibility of parents' later-life migration to Australia.

Key words

Transnational migration; population ageing; China

1. Introduction

Australia absorbs thousands of skilled migrants every year (Spinks 2010). Since 2011, China has been the second largest immigrant source country, after India (Australian Department of Home Affairs 2019a). Over a quarter of the resident population in Australia were born overseas (28.5%, or 6.9 million), of which 2.2% (0.5 million) were born in China (excluding SARs) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017). In 2018, 109,713 permanent residence visas were granted to immigrants through the Skill stream of the Migration Program, of which 13.6% were from China (Australian Department of Home Affairs 2019b).

In contrast to Australian culture, where aged parents and adult children tend to live separately and independently, China has a long tradition of 'filial piety' (Hui and Yu 2009), the virtue of respecting parents and old people. It includes material and emotional requirements including "support, memorialising, deference, compliance, respect, and love" (Wang et al. 2009 p. 22). As ageing requires elderly people to adapt to declining health with more demand for support (Näre et al. 2017), adult children in China generally believe they have an obligation to take care of their aged parents in their later life (Bryant and Lim 2013; Lai 2005; Wilmoth 2012). The median age of working-age Chinese migrants in Australia is 33.6 years old (Australian Department of Home Affairs 2019a), and their parents are retirement age. Elderly parents of immigrants usually enter Australia on tourist visas which allow them to visit their children regularly for a short time (Wilding and Baldassar 2018).

However, it is a difficult decision for elderly parents to migrate to Australia for long-term living or permanently. Personal attributes, such as personal preferences and lifestyle choice, are the main individual factors that contribute to this later-life decision, as well as external objective factors such as visa restrictions and financial status. This study examines how the later-life transnational migration intentions of elderly Chinese parents whose adult children have immigrated to Australia is affected by personal preferences, personality, and lifestyle differences between the two generations. Previous studies on later-life transnational migration are reviewed in section 2. Section 3 presents the interview methodology and sections 4 to 6 analyse data collected through semi-structured interviews. Section 7 concludes the paper.

2. Later-life transnational migration

Older people tend to be less mobile and more satisfied with their existing homes and neighbourhood (Chapman and Lombard, 2006), and age in place (Zhou 2012). Residential mobility is usually a response to lifecycle events (the triggers). For old people, these triggers are usually divorce, becoming empty nesters, retirement, physical health degradation, income loss, and widowhood (Clark 2011; Walters 2002). Reasons for later-life transnational migration are diverse according to previous studies (Han et al. 2019), including seeking better amenities or a warmer climate, dual-nationality marriages (Warnes, 2009), seeking support from, and living with, children (Thang et al. 2012), seeking a lower cost of living and more natural environment (Sunil et al. 2007), and sometimes seeking the freedom to study and work (Thang et al. 2012). In this research, familism is seen as the primary reason for elderly parents to move internationally: to reunite with their adult children (Sadarangani and Jun 2015), and to provide childcare to grandchildren.

Studies have explored why later-life transnational migration occurs, but very little research has investigated the elements contributing to this transnational migration decision. For Chinese elderly parents, moving to Australia where their adult children live seems to be an obvious choice, especially for those from a 'one-child' family¹ and bounded by filial piety. However, deciding to move abroad is a complex process and the decision is constrained not only by the residential location of their adult children but also by many other objective factors.

At the macro level, factors include immigration and settlement policies, visa restrictions, and the international relationship between the destination and home country. Micro factors, on the other hand, include both subjective and objective factors. Subjective factors include lifecycle and family expectations, particularly "cultural expectations and social roles that inform kin relations which are often fractured by distance and absence" (Baldassar 2007 p. 278); and seeking better air and food quality. Objective factors are related to elderly parents' health status for long-distance mobility, and their knowledge of the English language. The family's financial ability to sponsor the migration is also essential.

Nonetheless, the first and foremost factor is still personal attributes, including personal preference, personality, and lifestyle choice which often vary from person to person. Do elderly parents with particular personal preference or personality traits tend to make different migration choices? Adult children play a vital role in the migration decision and process since they are normally the inviters and financial sponsors for parent visa applications. When adult children and their elderly parents have different lifestyles in daily life, conflicts may arise. Will this lifestyle conflicts affect the migration intention of elderly parents? In the following sections, these questions will be investigated.

3. Data and methods

As indicated earlier, different lifestyles and personality between two generations are vital. To better investigate this issue, studies need to explore both parties' understanding. However, the majority of previous studies focus on elderly parents themselves and neglect the adult children's role in this decision-making process. In addition, some adult children refuse to invite their parents to Australia due to conflicts in lifestyle and attitudes to daily life, but they may hide the reason from their parents due to the 'filial piety' moral restraint. By interviewing the adult children, we are hoping to uncover these hidden reasons that cannot be revealed by interviewing the elderly parents. In addition, many of the elderly parents still live in China which makes it more difficult to have them agree to and to participate in interviews.

Therefore, this paper uses data from a two-stage study including an online survey and semi-structured interviews conducted from October 2018 to May 2019 (UNSW Human Research Ethics Approval Number HC17479). The study was conducted to understand the immigration decision of elderly Chinese parents from the perspective of the adult children in Australia and how inter-generational conflict between the two generations impacts the later-life migration intention of elderly Chinese parents.

¹ The 'One-Child' policy was introduced in the 1980s and lasted until 2015 in China; under this fertility control policy, many families in China could only have one child.

Stage one was a random sampling online questionnaire survey targeting caregivers (adult children) who are first-generation Chinese immigrants living in Australia. A multi-stage sampling method was designed using Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census data. As most Chinese migrants in Australia live in Sydney (39%) and Melbourne (35%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014), Sydney is used as a representative city for this target population group. A bilingual questionnaire in English and Mandarin was developed and delivered to 38 Statistical Areas Level-1 in Sydney with a high proportion of China-born residents. A total of 142 valid responses were received. Of all survey participants, 31 agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews. After further contact, ten were interviewed in stage two of the study. The others either did not reply or changed their mind. The semi-structured interviews were conducted from June to August 2019 in Mandarin by the first author. Table 1 summarises the characteristics of the ten interviewees.

Table 1: Characteristics of the interviewees and their parents

Code	Adult Children Interviewees					Elderly Parents of Interviewees			
	Gender ^a	Age	Marital Status ^b	Visa Status ^c	Sibling ^d	Age Cohort	Marital Status ^b	Parents' Immigration Intention ^e	Visited Aus
1	F	36	M	PR	YB (1)	56-65	M	M: Yes, PR visa applied F: Not sure	Yes
2	M	29	M	PR	YS (1)	56-65	Divorced (Mother); Remarried (Father);	Not sure	Yes
3	F	30	M	Citizen	YS (1)	56-65	M	Not sure	Yes
4	F	28	M	PR	OC	56-65	M	Yes, PR visa applied	Yes
5*	M	29	M	PR	OC	56-65	M	M: Yes, PR visa received F: Not sure Father	Yes
6*	M	32	NM	Citizen	OC	56-65	M	Not sure	Yes
7	F	35	M	PR	OC	56-65	M	Not sure	Yes
8*	F	33	M	PR	OC	66-75	M	Yes, intended to apply	Yes
9	F	43	DF	Citizen	OB (1)	65-75	M	Not sure	Yes
10	F	33	M	PR	OC	56-65	M	Not sure	No

Notes:

a. Gender: F = Female, M = Male;

b. Marital Status: M = Married, DF = De-facto, NM = Never Married, D = Divorced, R = Remarried;

c. Visa status: PR = Permanent resident visa of Australia; Citizen = Citizen of Australia;

d. Sibling: YB = Younger brother, YS = Younger sister, OB = Older brother, OC = Only child. Number in brackets is the number of siblings;

e. M = Mother, F = Father, PR = Permanent Resident

* Interviewed with parents.

Of the ten interviews, seven were conducted with an adult child only and three were with both the adult child and their elderly parents, based on the participants' willingness. All ten interviewee groups expressed to some degree that personal preferences, or lifestyle conflicts between Australia and China and between the two generations, or the personality of the elderly parents impacted the migration intention to Australia. Some mentioned this influence as an additional factor to other essential ones such as financial affordability and care responsibilities in China for the parents' own parents (i.e. the grandparents of the adult children in Australia). Three factors that emerged from the

interviews of personal preferences, personality, and lifestyle conflicts are discussed in the following three sections.

4. Impact of elderly parents' personal preferences

Personal preference is one of the most important factors in elderly parents' intention to migrate to Australia or stay in China. This subjective factor is a combination of personal feeling and some external contributors. It is hard to isolate it from other external factors such as environment, quality of life, language ability, and number of adult children.

For instance, interviewee 4 indicated her parents-in-law would like to stay in China and her father-in-law did not want to move because of his personal preference. According to her, her father-in-law used to take business trips worldwide and had been to many different places. He had experienced different lifestyles at home and abroad, and enjoyed the idea of living in China more than moving abroad. Her parents-in-law used to live in cities; now, they have returned to the countryside, where their relatives live. Her parents-in-law have another son who lives in China which also contributes to their decision to stay in China, although the other son does not live with them. In this case, having relatives and another son and enjoying the lifestyle in China formed the parents' personal preference.

Interviewee 9 said she had asked her parents about migration as an alternative to retirement in China six years ago. At that time, it was much easier to apply for a parent visa for Australia than now²; but her parents refused, although they agreed that Australia is a nice place. The main reason was that her parents felt they could not adapt to life in Australia.

They have all their friends in China and are used to Chinese culture. I know many elderly people here in Australia. Some of them immigrated to Australia and can adapt to life here quite well, while others cannot assimilate. So, I do not want to push them. If they do not want to come, I will just respect their decision. (Interviewee 9)

Her older brother lives in China which ensures her parents have support. Her parents were seeking more spiritual pursuits in their retirement, not material ones. They feel confident and comfortable with their existing social ties. It would be challenging for them to rebuild new social ties if they moved to Australia. They would rely more on their children for mobility in Australia; in China, they could extend their period of independent living and mobility.

Both interviewee 3 and interviewee 5 claimed that their mothers are still busy with work in China and not being able to speak English worries them about moving to Australia. Although they share similar external contributors, the migration decision of their parents differs. Interviewee 3's mother felt uncomfortable in Australia and would prefer to stay in China while interviewee 5's mother

² Places available in the Parent migration stream have gradually decreased while demand has increased. In 2013-2014, 2,250 Non-Contributory Parent visas and 6,675 Contributory Parent visas were granted to applicants which decreased to 1,218 and 5,587 in 2018-2019. In the same period, applicants in the pipeline for the Non-Contributory Parent visa increased from 36,000 to 49,994 and for the Contributory Parent visa from 12,800 to 52,805 (Australian Department of Home Affairs, 2011-2019).

enjoyed living in Australia in general and will move to Australia in the future. Despite different personal feelings about living in Australia, another important external contributor to their decisions is that interviewee 3 has a younger sister in China while interviewee 5 is the only child in his family.

5. Impact of elderly parents' personality

During the interviews, it was observed that the personality of the elderly parents and their previous life experience greatly affected their intention to migrate. Different from personal preference, which is a subjective willingness, personality is a personal characteristic that people are born with or have formed due to life experience.

Interviewee 1's parents-in-law live in a medium-sized provincial capital city in China but grew up in a small town. The city has good air quality and a slower pace of life. They had never left China before visiting Australia. She believed that this contributed to her parents-in-law's decision to stay in China as they feel comfortable in their hometown. The air quality of Australia is no longer an attractive factor to them; but she thought the most important reason was her parents-in-law's personalities. They were not enthusiastic about new or unfamiliar things.

My parents-in-law have compromising personalities. My parents, in contrast, always try to improve and achieve a better result. I believe their immigration decisions are associated with their experience and personalities. (Interviewee 1)

She provided an example: her parents learned to drive when they were teenagers. Her parents-in-law did not drive at all. She used to suggest her father-in-law learn to drive in Australia and promised to buy him a car so that he could drive himself around, but her father-in-law was not interested.

Although interviewee 1 and her husband had been living in Australia for three years, had new jobs, a new house and cars, and they and their children were used to their life in Australia and felt comfortable living here, her parents-in-law still thought they were not as comfortable as living in China, as they believe their son and daughter-in-law have to work harder. Eating out is more expensive (considering the exchange rate between currencies) and public transport is less convenient in Australia. Interviewee 1 added that she had told her parents-in-law they could stay in a Chinese community where they could live without speaking English.

My parents-in-law are not good at adapting to a new environment. They prefer to live close to their old friends. Making new friends to them is not so attractive. They are afraid of having no common topic with new friends. I think it is associated with their personality and living habits. (Interviewee 1)

Her own parents, on the contrary, are keen to learn new concepts and accept new things. Her own parents, although also unfamiliar with Sydney, were willing to 'get the feel of the city'. For instance, her father installed a translator in his smartphone and used it to talk to neighbours or when grocery shopping, and was confident being out on his own. Her mother was also an outgoing person. Before interviewee 1 moved to her current suburb, she lived in a suburb popular with Chinese people. Her mother joined a social group during her first week in Australia, and then joined in dancing, and even competitions, and quickly became involved in the neighbourhood. Her parents-in-law would not even

bother to try these things, as in their mind, they had just come for temporary support and would return to China anyway.

This was similar to interviewee 2's parents and parents-in-law. Interviewee 2's parents travelled extensively worldwide. Both of his parents could drive in Australia. His stepmother was from Hong Kong and was very familiar with driving on the left-hand side of the road. On the contrary, his parents-in-law had difficulty driving, and limited English skills. Compared to his parents-in-law, his parents are better at learning new things and could adapt to new environments faster. Therefore, his parents tended to follow their own preferences, however his parents-in-law considered their children's opinion more when selecting retirement locations.

Interviewee 6's father, who had travelled widely, had plenty of experience of living and working in many cultures and languages. He also had friends in Australia, including those he had met through work, or who also have children studying and living in Australia. His personal experiences made him confident about living in Australia, even without the company of his son and this ability also enabled his wife to feel comfortable living in a country with different cultures and languages. They are willing to move to Australia. His father said that, despite the Chinese 'reunion with family' tradition,

Whether you like Australia and the lifestyle here [in Australia] is also important. It will not work well if you come here only for your child. The personality of the parents and your financial status also count when making the decision. (Interviewee 6's father)

Interviewee 8's father also enjoys travelling and has been to many other countries. He indicated that he is optimistic and willing to learn new things. He and his wife are determined to move to Australia to be reunited with their daughter.

Interviewee 7 thought her parents might experience some emotional change if they moved to Australia, due to the new external environment. This does not refer to the physical environment, such as living style or community facilities, but refers to changes in the neighbours her parents are familiar with and the communication style they have with these neighbours, accompanied by the feeling of being needed. Her parents live in a 'Da Yuan'³ in China. Her parents were teachers and used to educate other people. Everyone in the community showed great respect to her parents, were willing to talk with her parents and consulted her parents for advice if they had a problem. She thought her parents would lose the feeling of being respected and needed if they moved to Australia.

This will be the most important emotional change for them. I think my parents are not the ones with a strong will; not like the ones who never care what other people do or say. They have a relatively great need for recognition from other people. If they have no one to guide, they will feel uncomfortable. Of course, they will deny such need. But they indeed are weak in inner strength. They do like worship from other people, although I think this admiration is kind of cheap. (Interviewee 7).

³ Da Yuan refers to small communities fenced and guarded by security guards; people in a community usually work for the same company.

This personality of her parents, from her point of view, is the main reason that may affect her parents emotionally if they moved to Australia. This can also lead to conflict between the two generations in daily life. The daughter did not want to be controlled by, or instructive at, while her parents were used to doing this.

6. Impact of different lifestyles

For some interviewee families, the different lifestyle is another key reason for their parents not to move to Australia. This different lifestyle is explained at two levels: different lifestyles between China and Australia; and different lifestyles, or attitudes towards life, between two generations.

Interviewee 10 indicated that her parents were not used to the lifestyle here in Australia.

They are so used to life at home. For example, they exercise every morning in small parks near home and have 'Guang Chang Wu'⁴ in the evening. They sometimes play Mahjong with their friends in the afternoon. They already have social ties and a routine. They worry that they need to re-build a social network here. It is easy for us young generation, but it is hard for them to adapt to new lifestyles. (Interviewee 10)

Interviewee 1 mentioned that her parents will not stay in Australia long term because they are used to the lifestyle in China including food, methods of travel, and social ties. All these stop them from leaving China. Her parents-in-law also refused to come to Australia because they are not used to the lifestyle in Australia and it is difficult for them to adapt to a new environment.

Interviewee 7's parents could communicate in English, although not at a proficient level. Her parents have social health insurance in China, and the welfare in Australia, such as Medicare and the age pension, is not attractive to them. Better air quality and natural environment are the most attractive aspects of life in Australia, compared to China.

My parents are fond of seeing animals such as birds. I have purchased an apartment in Rhodes [a popular suburb for Chinese people in Sydney] where there is a lake and a park around it. I think it is a good place for them, although the population density is high, the natural environment is good. After all, a better natural environment and air quality are what they come to Australia for. My parents can exercise and see animals there. Besides, the community in Rhodes is relatively quiet which is different from other popular Chinese community. (Interviewee 7)

Despite Australia's better natural environment, her parents still prefer to live in China. Interviewee 7 stated her parents have no friends in Australia; all her parents' relatives and social ties are in China.

⁴ "Guang Chang wu is square dancing in Chinese style. It refers to the daily dances which take place in China's public squares; an activity which has over 100 million people regularly up on their feet. Each day, to music piped through mounted speakers, dancers gather in the country's parks and central squares, to perform the choreographed routines of guangchang wu."

(<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/blog/how-do-you-guangchang-wu-square-dancing-chinese-style>. Accessed 7 March 2020).

Her parents sometimes strolled around, but normally ended in quarrels, which interviewee 7 was tired of dealing with.

Her parents feel more comfortable living in China with fewer 'restrictions', particularly the restriction on smoking in Australia where residents cannot smoke in specific, public places. Interviewee 7's father is used to smoking wherever and whenever he wants in China, and he also thought cigarettes in Australia are too expensive, at about five times the price in China, and the flavour also varies. Her father felt like he was being controlled in daily life in Australia. There are also other differences between interviewee 7's lifestyle and her parents' lifestyle.

I have a very high standard in my own home in hygiene. I want everything in my home to be clean and in order. My parents, on the contrary, often make home chaotic. They like to store a lot of useless things at home (which makes the home a mess). They feel annoyed to clean the floor when it is dirty. [Living with me] is like living in someone else's home and they lose power at my home. That is why they do not want to come to Australia. Even when they come here, they will not stay long. Our living habits are so different. (Interviewee 7)

Interviewee 7 also said she and her parents had different attitudes towards life. For instance, her mother usually forwarded a lot of 'spam' news to her. She sometimes had phone calls with her mother, but they were usually her mother's complaints about her father, or her grandparents. Interviewee 7 felt the calls were quite negative which annoyed her.

When shopping, interviewee 7 believes that affordability and benefits to her own family are most important. However, her parents care more about how other people see them. This is called 'Mian Zi'⁵ in Chinese, and represents a sense of dignity or self-respect. People who care too much about 'Mian Zi' normally mind how other people see them and will sometimes do things beyond their capacity just to earn respect or admiration from other people. Interviewee 7 said she cannot understand when her parents even felt they had disgraced themselves, but insisted on buying many gifts for their relatives. Interviewee 7 and her mother also had different opinions on raising the next generation. Her mother wanted her to bear three children, while she thought it would be a bad idea.

My mother will definitely want to come to Australia to help me take care of my children. But I have determined not to let her do so. I am worried that the support they can provide is limited while I may use more energy to quarrel with them. I would rather care for the children myself, even though I will be quite busy and tired, rather than letting them come to help. (Interviewee 7)

She and her parents have now learnt to respect each other's lifestyle when they visit each other.

I used to want to change their thoughts and habits during the first few times when I returned to China. But now I have figured it out. It is their home, not mine. If I do not want them to be backseat drivers and I want them to respect my lifestyle, I need to learn to respect their

⁵ Mian Zi is the measure of one's position, prestige and leverage in society; it "is built up through initial high position, wealth, power, ability, through cleverly establishing social ties to a number of prominent people, as well as through avoidance of acts that would cause unfavorable comment" (Hu 1944 p. 61; Aris 2017)

habits. We could not change each other. What we can do is to keep a certain distance.
(Interviewee 7)

Differences in lifestyles was an obvious factor influencing interviewee 7's parents to consider whether to move to Australia or not. Interviewee 7 thought the primary cause for her parents to choose to stay in China was lifestyle and a spiritual demand. The natural environment and air quality in Australia would not be enough to meet their lifestyle and spiritual needs in later life. They can still have a social life with their friends and leisure activities, such as attending university for elderly people, in China.

If they come to Australia for retirement life, it would be a passive compromise because they could no longer travel by themselves and are only capable of taking care of themselves, having no energy to dictate to other people. It would be when they have to go to nursing homes and be cared for by professional nursing staff (that they would come to Australia). Otherwise, they will stay in China when they still have the self-maintenance ability. Their personal demand is the most important reason for their choice. (Interviewee 7)

This lifestyle difference does not mean the relationship between the two generations is negative. In fact, interviewee 7 said she had taken her parents travelling around Australia and they very much enjoyed it. Her parents had financially sponsored her education and living expenses when she was studying in Australia.

They are quite satisfied with their retirement life now in China. They have enough superannuation and savings. They have their own property. I always tell them to stop saving money (as it is a common habit in China) but spend more to have good food, to keep healthy, to travel and have fun. I tell them not to worry (about me). I do not need them to spend money on me. So, I believe they are having a very satisfied life now. (Interviewee 7)

7. Conclusions

This study examined how personal preferences, the personality of elderly parents, and differences in lifestyles between two generations impact the migration intentions of elderly Chinese parents regarding a potential move Australia after retirement. The results show that these factors are important in the later-life transnational migration intentions of elderly Chinese parents (see Table 2).

Personal preference is a grounding factor in this migration decision-making process. Some elderly parents are more than happy to move and reunite with their adult children. Some who are initially unwilling to move to Australia may be persuaded by their adult children and agree to move to Australia, sometimes after visiting and experiencing life in Australia. Other parents who prefer living in China may stick to their personal location preference and not migrate. The adult children will normally respect their parents' decision. They will visit China frequently and consider temporarily returning to China when their parents require more care.

The personality of elderly parents, different from personal preference, also influences their intentions. Elderly parents who are open to new things and concepts are more willing to try a new lifestyle in Australia. The parents interviewed were optimistic and outgoing. They had travelled to

Table 2: Summary of impact of three factors on migration intention: personal preference, personality and lifestyle differences

Personal Attributes	Adult Children in Australia	Elderly Parents
Personal preferences		<p>Negative for migration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatives (parents, other child) in China (4, 7, 9) • Social ties in China (4, 7, 9) • Relying on children for transport (1, 2) • English barrier (2, 3, 5) <p>Positive for migration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only child (5, 6, 8) • Have friends in Australia (6) • English ability (2, 6, 7)
Personality		<p>Negative for migration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative (1) • Less travel experiences (1) • Emotional change as lose power in family (7) <p>Positive for migration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to new things, learning (1, 2, 8) • More travel experiences (1, 2, 6, 8) • Take children’s opinion in consideration (2)
Lifestyle choices/conflicts	<p>Negative for migration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House hygiene (7) • Different parenting concept for childcare (7) • Different life concept (7) <p>Positive for migration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for childcare (1) 	<p>Negative for migration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food in China, travel in China, social activities in China (e.g. dancing, mah-jong) (1, 9, 10) • Restrictions on life in Australia (e.g. smoking) (7) <p>Positive for migration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air quality and natural environment in Australia (5, 7)

Notes: Number in brackets refers to interview numbers in Table 1. ‘Negative’ means the factor has negative impact in elderly parents’ migration intention to Australia; ‘Positive’ means the factor will positively contribute to their migration intention.

many other countries previously, and were happy to learn English and make new friends. On the contrary, elderly parents who are conservative or have stayed in one place for their whole life and not travelled to other countries are less likely to migrate. They are less open to new things and tend to stay in their ‘comfort zone’, a place they are familiar with and where they have their social network close by.

Adult children play an important role in the later-life migration of their elderly Chinese parents as Australia’s parent visa requires adult children to be the sponsor. When adult children, especially those who assimilate culture and lifestyle in the host country, have a different lifestyle from their elderly parents, conflicts may appear in daily life and this reduces the likelihood of transnational migration. In addition, Chinese elderly parents will expect increasing dependence on their adult children in daily activities if they move to Australia. This increasing dependence results from both worsening health and also external obstacles such as language barriers and transport dependence as revealed in this study and previous research (Ip et al. 2007; Sadarangani & Jun 2015; Wilmoth 2001).

Complex factors affect the decision-making process for transnational migration in later life. Internal attributes of the migrant, such as personal preference and personality, and external factors including but not limited to visa restrictions, relationship with adult children, and the migration policies of the host and home countries jointly influence the later-life transnational migration decision. This qualitative study is based on ten interviews. Further study is required to examine the trade-off between the costs and benefits of transnational migration for the two generations of Chinese-born immigrants in Australia and their elderly parents.

8. Key messages

- The difference in adopted lifestyles between two generations (adult children and elderly parents) impacts on the transitional migration intention of elderly Chinese parents to Australia.
- Adult children in Australia play an important role in this later-life migration activity of the elderly Chinese parents.
- Those parents unwilling to move to Australia can be persuaded to move by their adult children in Australia.
- Intergenerational conflicts in lifestyle decrease the propensity of transnational migration of Chinese parents.

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