

**WORKING PAPERS**

**Literature Review on Families, Migration, and Intergenerational Support in China**

**Zhonggen SUN, Huan WANG, Yi LI, Yuxuan RAO, Shiyong PING, Furong ZHANG, Lili LAI & Ke Du**  
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## Literature Review on Families, Migration, and Intergenerational Support in China

### 1. Introduction

Over the past 40 years, China transformed from being a predominantly rural country with few migrants to a “migration China” with large-scale and high-frequency migration. Today population development is dominated by migration and flow.<sup>[161]</sup> According to data from China’s seventh national census in 2020, the in-country migration (in Chinese, it is literally called ‘floating population’) has reached 376 million, an increase of 153 million or 69.73 percent over 2010. Large-scale migration not only reshapes the population’s structure but also brings unprecedented challenges to political, economic, and social development in both the outflow and inflow places.<sup>[159]</sup> China’s population is also rapidly aging. In 2020, the population aged 60 and above reached 260 million, accounting for 18.70 percent of the total population, of which 190 million were aged 65 and above, accounting for 13.5 percent of the total population. Compared with 2010, the proportion of people aged 60 and 65 increased by 5.44 and 4.63 percentage points respectively.

As a result of population migration and aging, the migration of the elderly is becoming more and more common. In 2015, there were 18 million migrants aged 60 and over, accounting for 8.4 percent of the same age group and 7.2 percent of the migrant population.<sup>[160]</sup> Previous studies have suggested that this number underestimates the total number in the elderly floating population.<sup>[162]</sup> Its scale will be even larger if the trend continues to exist in the future.

In China, compared with the migration of other age groups, seniors’ migration is more selective, and the family is the main reason for the migration. In 2015, 43 percent of seniors moved to take care of their grandchildren, 25 percent reunited with their children or looked for a place to retire, and 23 percent continued to work and do business. The impact of migration on the elderly population is enormous. The social network of the elderly population is mostly rooted in their local community, and their living and cultural habits are deeply ingrained there so after migration, seniors face greater issues in adjusting to new cultures.

Most studies on migration focus on the working-age population and youth and discuss the characteristics of labour migrants and their impact on the place of inflow and outflow from an economic perspective. Because most seniors have withdrawn from the labour market and completed the life course stages of education, fertility, and employment, they are often neglected as a migrant group. There are only a handful of studies on this group in China, and they mainly focus on the causes of “floating” or short-term residency and how elders live out their life in retirement in the new place. Those studies are submerged in population migration research or aging research so senior migrants lack the academic attention they deserve. In-depth and systematic research on the migration and mobility behaviour of elderly people and their social integration has basically been absent.

### 2. Methodology

Given the relative lack of research on Chinese families, migration, and intergenerational support, we conducted a literature review in order to:

- survey the research approaches or types, timelines, and backgrounds about

families in research on migration and intergenerational support in domestic and international studies.

- identify the approaches that underpin the research.
- analyze the characteristics of the elderly population in China, and explore the decision-making mechanisms of family members when they decide to move their senior relatives. We are also interested in seniors' social integration in their new home and what support family offers them.
- identify any research gap about families, migration, and intergenerational support related to China.

We conducted a review of published literature on families, migration, and intergenerational support both in China and worldwide. Through a comprehensive review of the English and Chinese literature, our objective was to map the development of recent research in the field. What characterizes the migration and mobility behaviour of China's elderly population? How do they make decisions to migrate, how effective is their social integration in their new home, and how do these compare with international migration (South-North migration)?

Specific research questions were:

- What characterizes the migration behaviour of the elderly? Specifically, it includes: the demographic and sociological characteristics of the floating elderly population; family characteristics of senior temporary residents; and space distribution of the elderly population.
- What is the decision-making mechanism for elders' migration? How do the elderly individuals view the purpose, reason, and significance of their migration?
- How do family members negotiate and discuss the migration of the elderly? How do family members understand the significance of seniors' migration behaviour? What is the role, willingness, and decision-making status of each subject in migration decision making?
- What is the social integration status of seniors after they move? How do family members support them? How successfully are their needs met? What are the effects of different support methods on the social integration of the migrant elderly population?
- What support do families, communities, society, and the government give to elderly migrants? How well does it meet the needs of the senior migrant population? How does this support affect their social integration?

We conducted searches with the following databases: China National Knowledge Infrastructure, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Jstor, Springlink, Wiley online library, Social Science Citation Index, and other relevant databases. In each search we used the same key words in both English and Chinese.

SPIDER is a framework that helps define questions and can be used to organize and list terms by the main concepts of each search query. SPIDER may be useful for both quantitative and qualitative studies, which is suitable to a scoping review. We adapted the SPIDER framework for our review.

The key words we used to identify the target literature are based on the main and specific question(s) as follows, following the SPIDER format. There might be subtle differences in keywords when searching Chinese literature.

- (1) S (population): *family members* (synonyms: couple, child, parent,

adult man, adult woman, adolescence, cohabitant, etc.), *migrant elderly* (synonyms: floating older population, elderly migrant, migrant grandparents, migrant grandfather, migrant grandmother, etc.).

(2) *PI* (phenomenon of interest): *family* (synonyms: the meaning of family, family structure, family function, family process, family relation, family life cycle); *elderly* (synonyms: characteristics of the elderly, family power); *migration* (related terms: motivation, influencing factors, decision making, influence); *social policy* (related terms: Hukou system, insurance, social integration); *intergenerational relations* (synonyms: intergenerational type, intergenerational interaction, intergenerational power, intergenerational support)

(3) *D* (design): *review* (synonyms: systematic review, scope review, review, survey); *interview*; *qualitative method* (regression, latent variable modeling); comparative analysis, empirical analysis, etc.

(4) *E* (evaluation): *influence*, *attitude*, *view*, *opinion*, *feel\**, *understanding*, and so forth.

(5) *R* (research type): *qualitative*, *quantitative*, or *mixed research*.

We used this rule regarding key words:

[S AND PI] AND [(D OR E) AND R].

Two reviewers cross-reviewed the literature by using the keywords to ensure neither of us missed any relevant work. As a first step, we independently reviewed the sections combining keywords: [S AND PI] AND [(D OR E) AND R]. We excluded the field of cancer migration or minerals or engineering since there were a large number of publications relevant to the keyword but not to the topic. In the review process, we also paid special attention to the literature relevant to China.

After excluding duplicated literature, we were left with 955 studies to be examined. In the second step, two reviewers re-examined each other's papers. We added papers from our personal archives we were familiar with that weren't found during the search procedure because the author did not use the relevant key words like *migration* or *family function*. This step yielded four papers. After further screening, we dropped some relevant literature that is closely related to psychology and medicine but not useful for the review. After these procedures, 158 studies met the full inclusion criteria.

Four main topics were prevalent across the studies.

### 3. The Family

In academic studies "family" generally refers to people living together in a specific living space.<sup>[1]</sup> However, the actual form of the family and its concept are constantly changing with shifts in social patterns and lifestyles. The establishment of a traditional family may be influenced by extended family, clan, and politics, but modern families are defined by only two necessary conditions, namely, a legitimate sexual relationship (i.e. legal marriage legitimated by the authority) and a special cooperative relationship.<sup>[2]</sup>

The modern family is a unit of social life based on marital, blood, and adoption relationships and constituted by the relationship between relatives.<sup>[3]</sup> The modern family covers six elements: the family is the group; marriage is the starting point and foundation; blood relations are the basis of the family; the family is a reasonable extension of marriage and blood relations; the family includes adoption relationships recognized by law or social customs; and the family should also generally live together.<sup>[4]</sup>

There are regional and cultural differences in the notion of “family.” For example, in countries that emphasize individual independence, “family” mostly refers to a group consisting of a couple and their unmarried children, while in China, where there is a greater emphasis on extended familyism, “family” often includes married adult children and other family members.<sup>[4]</sup> Although “cohabitation” and “shared living habits and economic conditions” of family members are mostly considered as the two basic characteristics of family, more and more scholars question these family characteristics.<sup>[6]</sup> In fact, there are relationships between family members who do not share the same habits or residence. Modern communication technologies allow separated families to maintain their family dynamics and there is an increasing number of families constituted by cohabitation but without a legally registered marriage. These are family relationships in which cohabitants also tend to make substantial financial and social investments in their partners and the children who live with them.<sup>[7-10]</sup>

Traditional family based on co-habitation and shared economy is no longer limited to fixed marital relationships, and the increasing numbers of cohabitation relationships have led to a more diverse definition of family.<sup>[6]</sup> At the same time, social changes such as couples postponing family formation, family dissolution, and cohabitation still cannot be explained by the traditional family life cycle theory.<sup>[11]</sup> In the face of these changes in the form and structure of families, the meaning of family needs to be explored specifically and in depth.<sup>[6, 12]</sup>

Most studies have equated the family with the household and analyzed family size and structure from the perspective of family members’ capacity and how relationships are formed. With the decline in fertility levels, increasing migration, and population mobility, as well as the increasing independence of young people after marriage, the size of Chinese families has been decreasing rapidly.<sup>[13]</sup> In 2012, household size decreased from 4.61 to 3.02 persons, a 34.5 percent decrease in size over 32 years.<sup>[14]</sup> In 2020, data from the seventh national census showed that the average household size in China decreased to 2.62 persons, a further decrease of 0.48 persons from 2010.<sup>[13]</sup>

The reduction in household size corresponds to a shrinking of the family structure. One of the most important factors in this shift from extended to nuclear family types is the demise of traditional patriarchal or matriarchal systems.<sup>[15]</sup> This shift has led to a revolution in family types<sup>[16]</sup> and given rise to such issues as small nuclear or conjugal families; extended primary families; joint families; polygamous complex families; single-person families; families constituted by same-sex relationships with the possibility of children; and cohabiting relationships with or without children in premarital relationships or unmarried.<sup>[17]</sup>

The evolution of family size and structure varies across countries and regions. In the case of East Asia, and China in particular, many researchers have pointed out a process of family change from extended to nuclear during the process of industrialization and urbanization. However, other researchers have argued that the three-generation family is still an important family type in China. Wang Yuesheng and Tong Huijie and colleagues point out that although the proportion of larger family types, such as joint families, has been decreasing in China over the past decades, they are still the main family type.<sup>[18, 19]</sup> In China, the basic family structure of the nuclear family, the immediate family, and the single-person family will continue, with the nuclear family dominating, the immediate family taking second place, and the single-person family supplementing.<sup>[18, 19]</sup>

The rate of middle-aged “empty nester” parents is on the rise. The number of two-person households and single-person households has increased significantly, highlighting the “generational” character of families. While elderly people still live at home and the majority live with their children, the proportion of those living alone has also been increasing. <sup>[18, 19]</sup> The dynamic and diverse changes in Chinese family structures provide a significant sample for family studies, which requires more attention to Chinese families.

Family functions are divided into inherent functions—which refer to the functions of love, procreation, and nurturing—and historical functions, which refer to economic, protective, reproductive, recreational, and religious functions. <sup>[21]</sup> The impact of changes in family size and structure on family functioning is immediate. Under the influence of smaller family sizes, there is a tendency for family functions to weaken and externalize. For example, in the rural area, family functions such as agricultural production, distribution, education, care for elderly, and the like are much weakened or externalized (i.e. the functions has been commodified and marketized).

In the process of changing family functions, the family moves away from its traditional goals, social regulation of family behaviour is weakened, and individuals are given more opportunities to realize their self-worth. The traditional functions of the family are gradually displaced by the satisfaction of sexual needs and special family partnerships becoming the main elements of family function. In this process, families experience an increase in the status of women, the original family size is reduced, and low fertility is a result of increased individual autonomy and self-fulfillment, as well as a move toward gender symmetry in adult work and family roles. <sup>[22]</sup>

The reduction in the number of births allows women to avoid the dangers of childbearing to a greater extent and to survive the reproductive years, while parent-child relationships become more equal and women spend less time with their children once they reach adulthood, directly leading to an increase in the status of adult women in the family and a shift in the allocation of time to work. Women spend more time and energy in the labour market, the “opportunity cost” of childbearing increases, and they are more cautious about having children. At the same time, women’s economic independence has led to a reduction in the “comparative advantage” they can obtain from marriage and a lower demand for marriage, which has combined to reduce marital stability and make families more vulnerable.

There are two main approaches to evaluating the achievement of family functioning. The first is outcome oriented and defines family functioning using the Olson Annular Mode Theory and the Beavers System Theory to specify characteristics and the extent to which family functioning is achieved. Olson Annular Mode Theory <sup>[24]</sup> is based on family theory and can be divided into three dimensions: family closeness, adaptability, and communication. Beavers’ systems model theory <sup>[25]</sup> examines family functioning in terms of family responsiveness and interaction style.

The second type is the process-oriented evaluation of family functioning. This approach describes family functioning in terms of the tasks that families need to perform, and considers that the basic function of families is to provide certain environmental conditions for the healthy physical, psychological, and social development of their members. McMaster’s Family Functioning Mode Theory proposes a series of functions for families, including basic tasks (such as meeting the material needs such as food, clothing, housing, and transportation), developmental tasks (such as adapting and promoting the growth and development of members), and crisis tasks



(such as responding to various family emergencies). The Skinner family process model theory is based on the argument that the family's primary goal is the fulfillment of various family tasks by all family members, and proposes seven dimensions to evaluate family functions, with task fulfillment being the primary function.<sup>[23]</sup>

Both of these theories focus on only one aspect of family function and cannot provide a comprehensive discussion of family function. However, family structure has changed, gradually becoming smaller and more nuclear. Families have multiple forms at different times, and members may be present or absent, so family function theories ignore the changes in the family at the temporal level and require qualitative and tracing research from the perspective of the family life cycle. Because of the influence of traditional Chinese culture, Chinese families have different developmental characteristics from foreign families, and the scales used to assess family functioning abroad are not necessarily applicable to the Chinese cultural context and therefore need to be based on Chinese family development assessment tools.<sup>[26]</sup>

Family relations refer to the relationships between family members. The main family relations are marital (husband and wife) and blood (parent-child) relations, as well as the rest of the relations derived from these two — intra-generational and inter-generational.<sup>[27]</sup> Family relationships are influenced by cultural constraints and their changes. In China, for example, before the modern era, family members had different status depending on generation and gender. The eldest was superior to the youngest, the male was dominant and the female was subordinate to the male. Each parent-child relationship had a dominant parent (usually the male) and the wife was subordinate to the husband in the couple relationship.

In modern times, especially since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the legal system has advocated for the equal status of family members and the influence of social progress on individual family concepts. Chinese family relations have undergone obvious and positive changes: the dominant relationship between parents and children has changed to a relationship between husband and wife; equal relationships between family members and parents and children have been formed; children of either gender enjoy the right to inherit from their parents; and children's marriages are freely chosen by the couple themselves. The social security system has made the parental generation less dependent on their offspring for support—parents and their adult offspring are economically independent, and family conflicts are reduced.<sup>[28]</sup>

Family intergenerational relationships have always been the focus of academic attention, which mainly adopt a rational choice perspective to explore intergenerational living arrangements and interaction patterns and analyze the flow and distribution of resources between generations.<sup>[29]</sup> There are significant differences in intergenerational relationships in different cultural situations. In traditional Chinese society, intergenerational family relations follow a "feedback model." That is, parents raise their children and children provide care to their elderly parents when they become adults, and family resources are balanced through a two-way intergenerational flow. This contrasts with countries that emphasize individual independence and employ a "relay model" with a liberal bias: parents have child-rearing obligations to their children but children have no support responsibilities to their elderly parents, and family resources are passed to younger generations.<sup>[30]</sup> However, recent research has shown that with the rise of individual liberalism in China and the return of familism in developed countries, intergenerational interactions now involve both the "feedback mode" and

“relay mode,” which means two-way family intergenerational interactions are weakened in Chinese families and two-way family intergenerational interactions are strengthened in developed countries.

Intergenerational relations characterized by resource flows include both support and exchange, as well as solidarity and conflict, making them both complex and diverse. In the process of industrialization and modernization, family forms in developed countries have not followed the inevitable trend of smaller families and nuclearization, as family modernization theory predicted, but have become more diverse. At the same time, intergenerational ties, exchanges, and support have not diminished.<sup>[31-33]</sup> Studies have been conducted to typify intergenerational relationships in an attempt to outline their characteristics. For example, drawing on the paradigm of Hogan and other scholars<sup>[34]</sup> to analyze potential categories of intergenerational exchange, Silverstein and Bengtson obtained five types of intergenerational relationships based on a theoretical framework of intergenerational solidarity: close, amicable, responsible, close but distant, and estranged.<sup>[35]</sup> Zeng Xuhui and Li Yifeng suggest that there are four potential types of intergenerational relationships in Chinese families: close, instrumental, independent, and supportive.<sup>[36]</sup> Their study points to the emergence of instrumental as the main type of intergenerational relationship and the emergence of independent and supportive intergenerational relationships, reflecting the changing trend of intergenerational relationships in Chinese families.

The types of intergenerational relationships are significantly influenced by the socioeconomic status of the offspring and the parental generation, and can reproduce social inequalities. In fact, some argue that the changes in Chinese families during the modernization process have not led to a decline in intergenerational support functions, and that parent-child relationships between adult children and their parents have shown strong resilience and elasticity<sup>[37]</sup> which is reflected in both urban and rural families. These studies suggest that the development of intergenerational relations in Chinese families does not negate the traditional feedback model, and that although traditional close intergenerational relations are no longer dominant, effective intergenerational connections are still maintained through instrumental exchange or parental support, allowing for the retention of support and feedback relationships, which reflects the continuity of intergenerational relations in Chinese families.

In contrast to the fact that in developed country's societies generations are independent of each other, the relationship between family members in China (e.g., mutual assistance, support, etc.) is a continuum. Family relationships face many challenges. Low fertility levels, large-scale and frequent migration flows, the postponement of marriage, the increase in cohabitation, and the decoupling of marriage and childbearing all make family relationships increasingly complex.<sup>[22, 38, 39]</sup>

Family development theory suggests that families have their own process through which they come into being, develop, and come to a natural end — the family life cycle. Classical family life cycle theory divides the family life cycle into five stages—formation, expansion, completion of expansion, contraction, completion of contraction—and argues that families have different tasks at different life cycle stages.<sup>[11, 40-42]</sup> The family life cycle has a very wide application as a method for researchers to recognize, identify, differentiate, and categorize. It is not just a concept, but can also be measured and demonstrated using empirical methods such as empirical studies.<sup>[43, 44]</sup> Although there is no fixed criterion or model for dividing the family life cycle, and any researcher can refine and segment it to make it applicable to explain the requirements of various

cultural and social contexts, depending on the content of the study, the purpose of the study and the subject of the study, all are based on the same assumption of the different features of the family (such as the family size and the life cycle) .<sup>[43, 44]</sup>

In the 1970s, it is recognized that there is an increasing complexity of the family life cycle,<sup>[45]</sup> with more young people choosing to delay marriage and cohabitation as their choice, and more scholars attempting to reason out adaptive models for a variety of different family structures.<sup>[46, 47]</sup> However, scholars critical of family life cycle theory argue that this theoretical framework is based on the premise of nuclear families and stable marriages, which is often not valid, especially in countries with a high proportion of extended families, such as India, where the nuclear life cycle model isn't relevant.<sup>[48]</sup> This theoretical framework also cannot explain distinctive family patterns, such as the double-income-no-kids (DINK) family.<sup>[46, 49, 50]</sup>

Family life cycle change has a direct impact on family size, structure, and relationships, including a reduction in family size and an increase in the number of families. The number of single households and empty nesters will increase, the relationship between husband and wife in the family becomes the longest lasting family relationship, the number of births decreases, and the older population increases.<sup>[45]</sup> The low fertility rate, low mortality rate, and the prevalence of population migration and mobility, as well as the delay in the age of first marriage and the increase in marital instability, have made the definition and division of the family life cycle in China more ambiguous and unclear.

#### **4. Families and Older People**

Intergenerational support becomes increasingly important for older people. As their average life expectancy increases, their family life extends later in life. The transition from work to retirement requires them to adapt to changing roles and adjustments in the distribution pattern of family resources and power.<sup>[51-54]</sup>

When older people return to family life after leaving the workforce, they find themselves playing new roles. The transition between roles is often difficult for them people to adapt to.<sup>[55]</sup> Social role theory provides an analytical framework for studying individual behaviour and social interaction. For older people, the success of role playing and transitions in later life is a matter of physical and mental health related to the quality of social interactions in old age.<sup>[56]</sup> Jiang Chongqing concluded from interviews that older people's roles within the family have increased and those outside the family have shrunk,<sup>[57, 58]</sup> with older people valuing the roles they can play and expecting themselves to play a role in intergenerational support. However the multiple role transitions of older people also involve conflicts regarding expectations, competence, time, and behaviour.<sup>[56]</sup> The decline of traditional filial culture in the social environment and the lack of social inclusion for older people, the lack of family policies for old age and childcare, the lag in social service support, and the compromise of family sacrifices by older people themselves have shaped older people's postretirement role conflict in China.<sup>[59]</sup> Both urban and rural seniors need different degrees of role adjustment.<sup>[60, 61]</sup>

Olson and Cronwell define family power as family members' ability to change the behaviour (including thoughts) of other members of the family.<sup>[62]</sup> The distribution of family power reflects not only the pattern of interaction between family members, but also the division of labour and status within the family. Beginning with Blood and Wolfe, the study of family power has focused on the distribution of power between husbands

and wives in family decision making.<sup>[63]</sup> However, marriage is not the same as family power.

Compared to marital relationships, parent-child relationships are more stable and durable over the family life cycle. Because women are at the intersection of marital and parent-child relationships, they have more power in the family. As modernization progresses, family relationships show a shift in the father-son axis toward the husband-wife axis, with family power being more dominated by the offspring and the family power of older people gradually weakening. However, some empirical studies suggest that modernization does not necessarily result in a reduction in the status of older people in the family. Palmore found that the relationship between the status of older people and modernization showed a J-shaped change, that is, first going downward and then back up again.<sup>[64]</sup> Ye and Yang found that modernization may lead to an increase in social and cultural support resources for older people. It can also introduce a modern, egalitarian, and negotiated concept of the family, which sometimes leads to a return to a higher family and social status for older people.<sup>[65]</sup>

The traditional Chinese extended family practises a patriarchal system of absolute authority in which blood and economic ties are closely intertwined, and older people have absolute family power and higher family status due to their control of the family's economic resources. As long as the family was not divided, sons had no right to the distribution of family property.<sup>[66]</sup> In urban area, a more complete social security system and public service system is conducive to safeguarding the power of the elderly in the family at both the material and institutional levels. For example, a much larger proportion of urban seniors in China have pensions, are not dependent on their children, and have greater household decision-making power than ever before.<sup>[67]</sup> Overall, there is a multidimensional complexity to older people's household power, with region, urban and rural areas, and their own material and nonmaterial resources all influencing older people's household power, but we still know relatively little about it.

Current theories explaining intergenerational support in Chinese families include the "dependency-support" feedback model, the "wealth flow theory," and the "cooperative group model. The "dependency-support" feedback model suggests that, unlike the "relay model" typically seen in European societies, intergenerational relationships in Chinese families are characterized by a two-way "feedback model,"<sup>[30]</sup> in which offspring have the obligation to support their father. The Chinese feedback model involves "raising children for old age," so the father's generation can live on its own without the support of the children during its young adulthood, though it needs the support of others in its old age. The feedback model involves two types of relationship—intertemporal reciprocity (the maintenance-support relationship) and common-time exchange—which combine to explain family intergenerational relationships and intergenerational interactions.

Some scholars have argued that the model takes into account intergenerational relationships at different stages of the family life cycle, but does not reflect the emotional exchanges in intergenerational interactions. J.C. Caldwell's "wealth flow theory" suggests that the flow of wealth between children and parents differs across the life span, and that the shift from high to low fertility is associated with a reversal in the direction of wealth flow.<sup>[68]</sup>

The "cooperative group model" suggests that the behaviour of family members and their interactions are based on the motivation to maximize individual interests and that there must be an impartial member of the family to lead, control the allocation of family

resources, and maximize individual and family interests.<sup>[72]</sup> Zimmer and Kwong argue that this theory best explains intergenerational support in Chinese families.<sup>[71]</sup>

Intergenerational support, and its associated income transfers, savings, and consumption behaviour, remain long and stable. Merrill developed the concept of social capital and proposed a “support bank” in intergenerational support, suggesting that parents build a support bank by investing time, money, and affection in their young children early in the family life cycle.<sup>[117]</sup> These invested resources create a sense of obligation in the children, which they return in kind when the parents encounter challenges later in life.<sup>[35, 69]</sup>

Since the 20th century, the rise in average life expectancy has prolonged the time that older people need care, and family caregiving has become an increasingly common activity for adult children.<sup>[51]</sup> China’s current social security system is not well developed, and the family pension model is still the main choice for older people.<sup>[124]</sup> Under the family pension model, children take on the important role of providing financial, emotional, and instrumental support for older people. For example, in the digital era, the elderly is often dependent upon the children to help them using all kinds of Apps ranging from shopping, calling taxi and even accessing bank accounts. As a result, much of the research has focused on the relationship between intergenerational support from children and older people’s health, generally acknowledging that support from children plays a role in older people’s health, but not reaching a consensus on its degree of influence.

One argument is that intergenerational support improves or enhances the physical and mental health of older people. For example, older people who receive financial support have better health than those who do not.<sup>[125-127]</sup> In terms of emotional support, which has a greater impact on the health of older women,<sup>[129]</sup> and in terms of instrumental support, the adult children’s care helps to reduce levels of depression and improves mental health and life satisfaction.<sup>[130]</sup> The gender of the child can lead to a preference for different types of support. Sons are more inclined to provide financial support, while daughters are more inclined to provide emotional and instrumental support.<sup>[130]</sup>

A contrasting view is that intergenerational support can have a negative impact on the health of older people.<sup>[133;134]</sup> That is, too much intergenerational support and assistance can reduce older people’s sense of self-efficacy, leading to feelings of guilt and incompetence and lowering their psychological well-being.<sup>[135]</sup> A few scholars have also concluded that intergenerational support does not have a significant impact on older people’s health at all.<sup>[136]</sup>

Intergenerational support for parents also varies across the lifecycle of children. The younger the child, the more likely they are to provide multidimensional support, and as they get older, there is a gradual shift from providing financial support to providing instrumental support.<sup>[137]</sup> Factors such as the child’s level of education, relationship with the parent, and the number of times the child sees the parent also have an impact on the type of intergenerational support. Older people’s individual endowments, cultural attitudes, whether or not they live with their children, and the number of living children can influence patterns of intergenerational support.<sup>[137]</sup>

While existing research has focused on the impact of intergenerational support in the family on older people, it has been less concerned with mobile older people and has focused more on unidirectional intergenerational support, particularly bottom-up intergenerational support, so the bidirectional nature and complexity of intergenerational

support needs to be fully considered for a more comprehensive validation. There are few systematic empirical analyses of intergenerational support research in China, and the data samples used are relatively small and unrepresentative.<sup>[73]</sup>

## 5. Family and Migration Flows

Theories on population migration can be divided into two main categories. One involves the study of individuals, mainly including the neoclassical economic theory of population migration, the “dualistic economic structure” theory,<sup>[74]</sup> the “expected income theory model,”<sup>[75]</sup> and Schultz’s cost-benefit model, which focuses on the individual level and emphasizes that migration is a rational choice of individuals to obtain higher pay for their labour or to improve their living conditions. The other category takes the household as the object of study, such as the new economic theory of migration and the social network theory of migration. They assert that migration decision makers are not isolated individuals, but families or households.

In fact, family migration is very complex in China, and there are diverse forms of family relocation behaviour and influencing factors.<sup>[76, 77]</sup> For example, migration distance can be divided into heterogeneous migration and near-local migration. Migration subjects involve either solo or family migration<sup>[78]</sup> though some studies further divide migration into nonfamily migration (only one spouse in the family moves), semi-family migration (at least one spouse moves with their children or only the spouses move), and complete family migration.<sup>[79]</sup>

Duan and colleagues categorized the migration process and pattern of China’s migrant population into four stages: individual inflow stage, joint migration stage, nuclear family stage, and family migration.<sup>[80]</sup> After completing the first stage of “migrating alone to the city for work” and the second stage of “migratory bird migration” with core family members, China’s migrant population is now moving to the “family migration” stage where all family members move together.<sup>[81]</sup> To understand the extent of family-based migration, Zhai Zhenwu and colleagues, Hou Jiawei, and Zhang Wenjuan all use data from the 2006 Beijing migrant population survey and conclude that the proportion of migrant people who migrate as a family is above 70 percent.<sup>[82,83,84]</sup>

In family migration, personal, family, and social security factors in the place of migration have a significant influence on family migration decisions, while the nature of the household registration<sup>1</sup>, farming land, and social security factors in the migration destination have a smaller influence. The family’s willingness to stay is more influential.<sup>[85]</sup> For example, in China, household registration controls inhibit household-based migration among low-skilled and “short-mobile” migrants, and this negative effect is more pronounced in cross-provincial migration. Social benefits such as education and health care attached to the household registration system are its main tools to restrict joint migration of migrant spouses and, in turn, children and the elderly.<sup>[86]</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> China’s hukou system (hukou zhidu 户口 [household registration system] or huji zhidu 户籍制度 [residential registration system]) is a key sociopolitical and economic institution in China. This system requires every Chinese citizen to be officially and constantly registered with the hukou police from birth. One cannot acquire a legal permanent residency or numerous community-based rights, opportunities, benefits, and privileges in places other than the locality of one’s hukou. Additionally, hukou in China is classified with urban and rural ones. Inherited from socialist history, residents with urban hukou are entitled with better social, education, medical care. For more information, please see Chan, K. W., and W. Buckingham, Is China abolishing the hukou system?. *The China Quarterly*, 2008, 195: 582-606.

Most current studies on familial migration have studied nuclear families and families with rural-urban mobility as the main objects of research, with fewer studies on other family types, which has much to do with the current predominance of nuclear family migration types in China and the country's stage of social development. However, in general, the focus on family migration in China still remains at the stage of descriptive research, so the research needs to be further expanded and deepened.

The few studies that have analyzed the process of household migration decisions in China have been summarized into five stages: negotiation, allocation, decision making, following migration, and the outcome of migration.<sup>[87]</sup> The decision to move begins with intra-household negotiation through which family members decide whether to move and determine the number of people and locations to move to. In this process, Chinese families are more likely to negotiate with each other. The fundamental purpose of moving is to obtain a higher income or to obtain the best overall income-cost satisfaction for the family at a relatively low cost. When a household makes the decision to move, the household regroups and reallocates its internal labour resources — this is the allocation period.

After the “pioneers” have left, the whole household becomes an interoperable and coordinated functioning whole. By redistributing the work of family members, the outwardly mobile population has to live and work successfully to maintain the stability of the whole household. During the decision-making period, households choose the number of people to move by weighing the expected income and costs of mobility, the stage of the family life cycle, and other factors. They also choose the place to move according to the structure of interpersonal relations in the villages where people move— that is, the first choice would be to live near to direct relatives (i.e. parents and children) and then next of kin.

In the period following the move, households make decisions about whether to move the remaining family members and the time interval between the remaining family members and the first people to move. Economic criteria are the most important factor in determining the interval between moves. Generally, only when the first people to move meet certain economic criteria will they bring other family members to the city. During the resultant period of migration, mobile households make decisions about settlement or return.

The main decision maker of the household is usually the parents or the male head of the household<sup>[88, 89]</sup> and the husband and wife will weigh the economic gains and losses of the whole household after relocation and decide to relocate the household when the increase in the husband's income after relocation can compensate for the loss of the household.<sup>[90]</sup> Wang Chunchao and colleagues argue that the economic decision-making pattern of rural Chinese households is of the “male-female consultation” type<sup>[91]</sup>. However, Tan Shen<sup>[92]</sup> also argues that the complexity of household migration decisions and motivations cannot be explained by a single household economic goal, and that power relations and interactions between members of the household are more important in the formation of household strategies, but this has received significantly less attention in current research.<sup>[91]</sup>

Familial migration's effect on improving social integration and enhancing the well-being of individual migrants is more pronounced for mobile populations with large families as well as for females, young adults, and people with high levels of education. Mobile populations with lower levels of income, those who migrate first or who have been on the move for a longer period of time, and those who migrate over shorter

distances also benefit from their families being with them.<sup>[93]</sup> However, integration is a long and sometimes painful journey, and not all mobile individuals are willing or able to integrate into the place they move to. The effects of forced or coerced migration are often negative and detrimental to the development of one's career and quality of life. Voluntary migration is often the result of a trade-off between the advantages and disadvantages. Migration can help individuals to gain access to employment opportunities, increase their income levels, and improve their quality of life. It can also increase their opportunities for contact and communication with the outside world, expand their social networks, and enhance their social and human capital.

The impact of migration on families has both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, the remittance from migrating family members leads to a corresponding improvement in the family's standard of living, thus increasing the family's ability to withstand risks and develop. On the other hand, the migration of some family members directly causes changes to the structure of the family, which affects the performance of various functions such as emotional communication and exchange among family members, education and socialization of children, and support and care of the elderly, thus limiting the family's healthy and harmonious development. Future research needs to further examine the impact of migration on families, focusing on family structure and functions, family members' interaction patterns, and adaptive strategies at different stages of migration to reveal the impact of migration on families in greater depth.

## **6. Older People and Migration Flows**

Theoretical research on the migration behaviour of older people has lagged far behind empirical research. Wiseman attempted to construct a theory of migration at both the behavioural and typology-of-migration levels.<sup>[94]</sup> The former treats the migration process as a set of stages and interrelated roles, attempts to develop a systematic behavioural model detailing the residential changes of the elderly, and assumes that all people are potential migrants and that individuals constantly reassess their residential status in relation to their needs, desires, resources, and perceptions of potential outcomes. The typology of migration's motivations, characteristics, and outcomes assumes that each type of migration has different motivations and accompanying characteristics associated with facilitating or inhibiting factors or migration outcomes. The two perspectives complement each other in the construction of migration theory.

The Life Course Model (LCM) provides a new theoretical framework for the migration of older people. Based on the fact that everyone experiences similar life events in old age, such as retirement, declining income, and physical illness, the Life Course Model of older people's migration seems to be common to every country. For migration in later life, Everett Lee argued that an increased propensity to migrate at certain stages of life can be considered as one of the main characteristics of migration at this stage.<sup>[95]</sup> Empirical studies have also found a general increase in migration rates of older populations after retirement. Earlier theoretical research was devoted to identifying the events most closely associated with geographic mobility in later life, classifying and describing the individuals most likely to migrate, and identifying and assessing the local characteristics most often associated with the mobility of each migrant group.<sup>[96]</sup> For example, Warnes found that the phenomenon of postretirement migration (migration in search of leisure facilities) was prominent in only postindustrial societies. More recently, conceptual studies based on the life course model have



expanded the age range of older migrants to include older premigrants between the ages of 50 and 60.<sup>[97]</sup>

There has also been a greater focus on exploring life course effects such as disability and return migration, as well as comparative analyses of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan migrants.<sup>[96]</sup> However, the studies have been based more on individual perspectives on older people's migration and mobility behaviour, and generally lack an examination of it from the perspective of the family as a whole. In other words, it does not reveal the role of the family on older people's migration.

Seniors move for different reasons.<sup>[98]</sup> Compared to younger people, older people are less likely to move for occupational reasons, and although postretirement re-employment exists, it is not common. The motivations of older people to migrate are highly differentiated based on differences in age levels and personal needs.<sup>[99, 100]</sup> In developed countries, rising retirement incomes and increasing life expectancy have led to an increasing incentive for younger seniors to move for better life. At the same time, declining health sometimes forces older people to move to their children's homes or to live closer to their children or other relatives.<sup>[101]</sup> Based on this differentiation, studies have found that there are two migration peaks for older people at the peak of retirement and at older ages, with the motivation to move being related to personal needs and age.<sup>[102, 103]</sup> Older adults often migrate for caregiving assistance, often due to physical or financial problems, or driven by the death of a spouse.<sup>[104]</sup> Migration can be either voluntary or a survival choice.<sup>[105]</sup>

According to statistics from the seventh census of the National Bureau of Statistics of China, China's population aged 60 years and above was 264.02 million, occupying 18.70 percent of the population. Compared to 2010, the growth of the aging population was accelerating. Along with changing family support systems and diverse retirement options, the proportion of aging migrants increases rapidly.<sup>[106, 107]</sup> The reasons that older people migrate across China are diverse, with both voluntary and involuntary reasons, forced migration due to public policy, and migration motivated by medical care needs.<sup>[108]</sup>

External forces are the main reason for rural seniors' mass migration. That is, involuntary migration results from public policy changes, or massive developments like the Three Gorges Dam Project, dam on the Yangtze River in middle China which involves resettlement of at least 1.3 million people. Seniors are typically deeply rooted in their communities but are forced to relocate during government-planned urbanization or other demolition and development.<sup>[139, 140]</sup> Although relocation may bring about an improvement in the quality of public service provision as well as quality of life for older involuntary migrants, it can also increase the risk of depression when the migrants can't successfully integrate socially into the new place.<sup>[139]</sup>

Because of regional differences in economic and social welfare, Chinese older people are more likely to move to places that have full coverage by the health and social welfare systems.<sup>[109]</sup> The social welfare system is based on an urban-rural dual system that further exacerbates the differences between urban and rural migrants. Urban residents mostly get to keep their pensions and subsidies during the migration process, but the rural elderly lose their benefits when they move, which of course affects their incentive to migrate.<sup>[107, 110, 111]</sup>

Growing urbanization and traditional perceptions of older people supporting their children has led to a special group of accompanying migrants that has emerged in China. Approximately 8 million older people leave their hometowns each year to care for

their grandchildren in their children's locations or to seek emotional support. Older people who migrate with their children are typically 50 to 70 years old, do not change their household registration status, and share similar migration patterns with their children: they move from small to large cities and from less economically developed to more economically developed regions.<sup>[112]</sup>

Unlike older people in developed countries who move based on comfort or cost of living, Chinese accompanying older people are more likely to make self-sacrifices for the overall benefit of the family.<sup>[26]</sup> The interaction and influence of housing attributes, intra-household needs, and regional development imbalances have created a unique pattern of population migration in China.<sup>[111]</sup> We therefore need more studies that compare elderly migrants' motivations in China with seniors in other countries, in particular the migration motivations in different geographical areas and in elders with different economic status.

Following the gradual elimination of barriers to rural-urban migration in the late 1970s and early 1980s, China experienced the largest urban-rural migration in its documented history, with people flocking from rural to urban areas in search of job opportunities.<sup>[142]</sup> Although they are allowed to move freely between urban and rural areas, most are deprived of permanent urban residency and the social benefits that come with the Hukou system, and are in a circular flow pattern.<sup>[141, 143]</sup> The Hukou system is the urban-rural dual structure in China which is the main institutional barrier to the floating population's social integration. Various public services and social welfare arrangements are divided into urban and rural systems.<sup>[144]</sup>

Limited reform of this dual system has enabled "floating people" to move with their family members to cities, but these reforms have not changed the roots of the dual system.<sup>[145]</sup> Rural migrants usually have lower incomes and receive far fewer social benefits. They are deprived of formal urban membership and substantive rights, and their children are largely barred from attending urban schools.<sup>[146]</sup> Because of the restrictions of the Hukou system, elderly migrants are not entitled to the same social benefits as local seniors, which leads to inequality in living conditions and benefits between migrants and local older adults.<sup>[144]</sup>

The floating population is entitled to pension and medical insurance. Li Fen suggests that the procedure of receiving pension is complicated and cumbersome for elderly migrants.<sup>[150]</sup> To prevent fraudulent pension claims, China adopted the "Notice on Assisting in the Certification of Pension Eligibility for Retirees Living in Different Places," which attempts to reduce the difficulties of receiving pensions for mobile elderly people by certifying their current residence and prevent fraudulent claims at the same time. It requires seniors to go through cumbersome bureaucratic procedures which delay or even prevent the receipt of their pensions in inflow places.

Since the reform of New Rural Cooperative Medical Scheme (NRCMS) in 2009, China has gradually established a basic medical insurance system that unified multiple previous systems. Senior migrants now have a degree of choice and can participate in the medical insurance at the place of household registration or choose to join the local medical insurance system at the place of inflow.<sup>[149]</sup> Seniors' health vulnerability increases their demand for healthcare services, but the instability they experience in migration reduces their compliance with services, making them vulnerable to the vicious circle of "sickness due to poverty and return to poverty due to illness."<sup>[151]</sup> Since the floating population, especially elderly migrants, has a lower level of education and attaches less importance to basic public health services, they may not pay for medical

insurance in inflow places even with more comprehensive policy guidelines. The relatively low reimbursement rates and cumbersome reimbursement procedures for medical treatment in inflow places have reduced elderly migrants' willingness to migrate.<sup>[151, 148]</sup>

Current studies have mostly examined the impact of social policies on the willingness to migrate from the perspective of labour floating which ignores elderly migrants. Fewer studies consider the impact of policies on seniors' willingness to migrate. Some scholars have examined the social dilemmas and urban integration of elderly migrants<sup>[152, 153]</sup> but failed to examine the relationship between household registration type and the migration intention of the mobile elderly population from the policy perspective. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how the long-standing policies have affected their migration decision-making.

Regarding the migrant population's willingness to migrate, most of the existing studies focus on individual characteristics and the impact of social policies on migrant workers. Chen suggests that existing studies consider the Hukou system and related social welfare and security systems as a barrier to the social integration of the floating population, and the "pendulum round-trip" mobility pattern of migrant workers as an abnormal phenomenon.<sup>[154]</sup> Abolishing the Hukou system will lead to labour settling in the inflow place. However, Zhu suggests that even without the barrier of the Hukou system, the majority of migrants still do not consider settling in the inflow area as their ultimate goal, and their willingness to settle is closely related to a series of non-Hukou factors such as their ability to survive in the inflow area, family strategies, market demand fluctuations, and business employment strategies.<sup>[155]</sup>

Xie Donghong, in an exploratory study of the 2015 China Migrants Dynamic Survey, suggests that Hukou has a more significant impact on the migration intention of elderly migrants compared to the reasons for mobility, though there are significant gender and age differences in this impact.<sup>[156]</sup> Jing also suggested that the location of participating in pension insurance would have a significant impact on older adults' willingness to migrate. Those insured in their hometown tend to return back home, while those insured in the place of inflow were more likely to stay. As a result, the status of medical insurance also played a significant role in the migration of mobile older adults.<sup>[157]</sup> Li also argued that the improvement of public health services in the inflow area can significantly improve the social integration of this group and increase their willingness to settle, while the reimbursement difficulties of NRCMS in urban or foreign areas may be an important obstacle for them to remain.<sup>[158]</sup>

On the whole, research on social policies' impact on migration of the elderly in China is insufficient. Most existing studies have explored the migration flows of elderly migrants from cross-sectional data, and few have explored changes in influencing factors at particular times using panel data, which is a major shortcoming because policies constantly change.

When they analyze migration types, foreign scholars note that migrants and floating populations cannot be considered as a homogeneous group. Wiseman was the first to propose a typology of older people's migration,<sup>[94, 105]</sup> attempting to integrate gerontology and migration theory to examine the whole process of seniors' migration. Based on the main objects of migration choice decisions and the dichotomy of long and short distances, he distinguished between local and long-distance migration. Local migration includes suburban migration, inner-city migration, "apartmentization," community migration, migration to care facilities, and migration to kin, while long-

distance migration includes comfort-seeking “migratory bird” migration, homecoming migration, and migration for kinship.

Looking at older people’s physical condition after retirement in the U.S., Litwak and Longino hypothesize that three types of migration may occur after retirement: immediate, comfort-related migration after retirement, migration to the vicinity of the primary caregiver when moderate disability occurs, and finally, migration to an institution when the primary caregiver no longer carries the burden of care.<sup>[112]</sup> They argued that those who took the first action tended to dominate the migration stream leaving the North for Sun Belt destinations, while those who took the second and third actions dominated the associated reverse stream. Walter then proposed the classic classification of migrants based on the purpose of migration: amenity migrants, assistance migrants, and severely disabled migrants not living with a spouse.<sup>[96, 114]</sup> However, this classification, which relies mainly on observational studies of the migration of older people in developed countries, does not explain the movement of China’s older population very well.

As a basic idea of the new migration economics, household resource endowments and family arrangements have been shown to influence labour migration.<sup>[115]</sup> The older population is more likely to choose to migrate because of family ties rather than economic interests and senior migrants tend to place great importance on the entire family’s living arrangements.<sup>[116-118]</sup> Traditional Chinese culture is oriented to family and people tend to migrate to raise families. The migration of older people is also influenced by family factors.

Fewer domestic articles have been written on classifying the migrant elderly population.<sup>[118]</sup> Ren and his colleagues summarized the purpose of population mobility and proposed that the migrant elderly population can be classified into three types: work and business, child care, and elderly care.<sup>[119]</sup> The classification criteria for the three types mainly involve the individual life course, family arrangements, and the influence of institutional factors. [However, given a lack of data, it is still not possible to explore in depth the impact of institutional support on the elderly population’s mobility, nor is it possible to analyze whether the acquisition of household registration by children has an impact on seniors’ migration. The analysis of the types of seniors’ migration flow in China is still at a preliminary stage and more in-depth research is needed.

Migration of older people brings about regional differences in the numbers of aging people. Regional levels of aging may increase as a result of aging in place, but they may also increase as a result of older migrants. Research has identified intra-US migration as a major contributor to regional differences in population aging.<sup>[121]</sup> Walters summarizes existing research on the advantages and disadvantages that post-retirement migration of the older population may bring to destination communities,<sup>[96]</sup> with retired long-distance migrants more likely to have high incomes and expenditures. In the U. S., Longino and Crown noted that retirement migration boosts private spending, broadens the tax base, and improves the economy, especially in the service sector.<sup>[121]</sup> Retirement migrants may also demand improved public facilities such as upgraded pavements, hospitals, and amenities. The growth of the senior population can also generate a potential number of volunteers and residents with community leadership experience, bringing greater support to local service organizations.

At the same time, older migrants put unpredictable pressures on the places they move to.<sup>[96]</sup> For example, “snow birds” in developed countries migrate seasonally to places with suitable environments. Retirement migration can put greater pressure on

local public facilities and lead to higher rental prices. By contrast, financially disadvantaged seniors migrate to reduce the cost of living, so the economic benefits to the place of migration may be lower than the investment in amenities there.<sup>[113]</sup>

The concentration of the elderly population in China puts more pressure on public services and facilities in the incoming areas, such as health care. Eastern coastal cities—the main in-migration areas—already face significant population aging so the massive in-migration of seniors undoubtedly puts extra pressure on these areas.<sup>[112]</sup>

Influenced by Confucianism and traditional filial piety, a reciprocal parent-child relationship exists in Chinese society,<sup>[123]</sup> with older people providing support to younger people by caring for their grandchildren and then in turn they receive care from their children. However, through a systematic review of 38 papers on the mental health of older Chinese migrants, Wang and Lai suggest that migration imposes heavy mental stress on older people,<sup>[123]</sup> including high levels of depression, low quality of life, and negative experiences of emotional, psychological, and social well-being. For example, older migrants can suffer from a sense of rootlessness, loneliness, poor self-acceptance, a perceived lack of quality family and neighbourhood relationships, a lack of belonging, and difficulties in socially integrating in the place they move to. Wang and Lai compared the mental health of older migrants with that of native older people and found that migration led to a higher prevalence of depression among mobile older people and postmigration cultural maladjustment, while the lack of social programmes particular to them (such as programmes helping them to get to know the city and the local language) contributed to mental health problems.<sup>[123]</sup>

In general, research on the impact of older people's migration and mobility in developed countries is relatively mature, but relatively few studies have been conducted on China's migrant elderly population. The few that exist mostly focus on the impact of older people's motivation to save for old age on their migration and mobility behaviour. These studies not only lack a macro perspective on the impact of elderly migration on regional economic and social development—they also lack a micro perspective on the social integration and adaptation of the migrant elderly. Stronger research is necessary to support the implementation of relevant policies and interventions.

## **7. Implications for Future Research on Seniors' Migration**

Given changes in the form and structure of the family, such as cohabiting families, different definitions of family need to be explored specifically. Studies on family structure have typically been based on foreign models of family development, ignoring the specificities of Chinese family structure. The dynamic and diverse changes in Chinese family structures require more attention to improve the understanding of family changes.

When evaluating the function of families, current theory focuses on only one perspective of family functioning so it cannot provide a comprehensive discussion of family function. At the same time, family function theories ignore changes in the family at the temporal level and require qualitative and tracing research from the perspective of the family life cycle. The scale for evaluation should be localized based on Chinese realities.

The family life cycle in China presents unique characteristics of change. We therefore need to re-examine the theoretical basis, division, and stages of the family life cycle in light of China's cultural context and demographic, economic, and social

development to systematically analyze family relationships and functions at different stages.

It is important to consider elderly adults' distribution of power in Chinese families. There is a multidimensional complexity to older people's family power depending on region, urban and rural areas, and their own material and nonmaterial resources which all influence older people's family power, though we know relatively little about it. There are few systematic or empirical analyses of intergenerational support in China, and the data samples used are relatively small and unrepresentative. Researchers should fully consider the bidirectional nature and complexity of intergenerational support.

Researchers should look beyond the focus on nuclear families and families with rural-urban mobility, and focus on other family types. The literature also suggests the focus on family migration in China still remains at the stage of descriptive research, so research content needs to be further expanded and deepened. Power relations and interactions between members in the family are crucial in the formation of family strategies, but current research has paid little attention to this point.

Future research needs to further refine the impact of migration on families, focusing on family structure and function, family members' interaction patterns, and adaptive strategies at different stages of migration, to reveal the impact of migration on families in greater depth.

Research on the impact of migration and mobility on older people in developed countries is relatively mature, while relatively few studies have been conducted on China's migrant elderly population. Most focus on the impact of older people's motivation to save for old age on their migration and mobility behaviour. They lack both a macro perspective on the impact of elderly migration on regional economic and social development, as well as a micro perspective on the social integration and adaptation of the migrant elderly.

## **8. Summary**

Givens the gaps in the established research, our current collaborative study is dedicated to two main areas. Based on a large database of random samples, we will use descriptive statistical analysis and regression analysis to reveal the general patterns of migration and mobility of the elderly population (social characteristics of the population, family characteristics, migration types, spatial distribution, etc.) and their survival and social integration in the inflow areas. Through in-depth interviews with representative elderly migrants and their families, we seek to understand the migration process and the negotiation and decision-making mechanisms of family members and use relevant software to categorize and analyze the interview data and refine theories on the migration of the elderly.

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