

## Family Compositions and Marital Conflicts in Cross-border Remarriages in Hong Kong

Clara Wai-Chun TPh.D.

Justin Chun-Him LAU, MS

Department of Social Sciences

The Education University of Hong Kong

Hong Kong

### Abstract

*This article examines the sources of marital conflicts in cross-border remarriages in Hong Kong among Mainland Chinese women who migrated with their children from previous unions and those who did not. Drawing on in-depth interviews with remarried Mainland mothers, the study compares the ways in which different family compositions, that is, the presence or absence of non-shared and common children, may shape marital conflicts and affect remarital relations in cross-border stepfamilies. Results indicate that although cross-border remarriages with different family compositions may share certain sources of conflicts, each specific type of remarriage is prone to particular sources of conflicts. This study also demonstrates how the migration of Mainland children can greatly change remarital dynamics and stepparent–stepchild conflicts often entangled with disputes over other issues. The research fills a major gap in the literature on stepfamilies and marriage migration that pays little attention to the post-migration marital dynamics of international remarriages.*

**Keywords:** international marriage, remarriage, stepfamily, marital conflict, immigrant children, Hong Kong

### 1. Introduction

Studies have shown that remarriages and stepfamilies are less stable and have a greater potential for conflicts than first marriages, particularly those with the presence of children from previous unions (Teachman, 1986, 2008; Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Pasley & Lee 2010; Whitton, Stanley, Markman, & Johnson, 2013). Disagreements over childrearing or discipline and finance are the primary sources of conflicts among remarried couples (Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002), whereas issues regarding stepparent–stepchild relationships contribute to marital conflicts leading to subsequent divorce (Feinberg, Kan, & Hetherington, 2007; van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2008). Recent studies on marriage migration have revealed that remarried women comprise a significant proportion of foreign brides in international marriages in Hong Kong, Asia, and western societies (Constable, 2003; Fresnoza-Flot, 2017; Hong, Song, & Park, 2013; Lauser, 2008, Le Bail, 2017; Lu, 2008, Tosakul, 2010). However, literature on remarriages and stepfamilies has paid little attention to marital dynamics in international remarriages. In the case of Hong Kong, the proportion of remarried Mainland Chinese women with local bridegrooms in cross-border marriages has increased more than threefold from 10.2% in 1991 to 35% in 2015, according to unpublished data provided by the Census and Statistical Department<sup>1</sup>. However, studies on marriage migration have mostly focused on young women from first marriages, whereas notable exceptions on remarried foreign brides have examined their motives for transnational marriage (Constable 2003, Lauser, 2008), leaving their post-migration remarital dynamics and challenges underexplored. Family structures, such as the presence of children from previous unions, are significant in accentuating the negative effects of marital conflicts on the subsequent possibility of divorce in remarriages (van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2008). However, research has yet to examine in-depth the sources of conflicts in remarriages with different family compositions. Although women very often remarry with their children from previous unions (Coleman et al., 2001; Reid & Golub, 2018) as in the case of Hong Kong cross-border remarriages, certain remarried immigrant women may also bear common children with their native spouse with or without their biological Mainland children migrating with them. This article aims to examine the sources of marital conflicts in cross-border remarriages in Hong Kong among Mainland Chinese women who migrated with their children and those who do not. The research sheds light on the ways in which different family compositions, that is, the presence or absence of Mainland children from previous unions and common children, may shape marital conflicts and affect remarital relations in cross-border families.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Stepfamilies and Remarriages

Studies on remarriages and stepfamilies have shown that second and higher order marriages, particularly stepfather families, are less stable and have a greater potential for conflict than first marriages (Teachman, 1986, 2008; Bramlett

& Mosher, 2002; Pasley & Lee 2010; Whitton, Stanley, Markman, & Johnson, 2013). Family structures, such as the presence of children from previous unions and stepfamily type, have consistently been found associated with major dimensions of marital relationships, such as marital quality, marital conflict, and stability, whereas individual level factors have yielded mixed results (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). In terms of marital conflicts, disagreements over childrearing or discipline are the primary sources of conflicts among remarried but not first-married subjects followed by finance (Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002). Issues about stepparent–stepchild relationships, particularly stepfather–daughter relationships, may also contribute to marital conflicts (Feinberg, Kan, & Hetherington, 2007). The negative impacts of marital conflicts on marital quality over time (Beaudry et al., 2004, Bodenmann, Pihet, & Kayser, 2006) and the subsequent possibility of dissolution are particularly significant among those with children from previous marriages (van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2008). By contrast, remarried couples with only common children experience fewer conflicts than those with stepchildren only over time (MacDonald and DeMaris, 1995). Although these findings attest to the heterogeneous forms of remarriages and how remarried families with various family configurations may operate differently, the types of conflicts pertinent to stepfamilies with different compositions have not been discussed in depth or captured in quantitative studies on stepfamily dynamics. Furthermore, international remarriages have been largely left out of the discussion in this literature. As a result, the ways in which the migration trajectories of remarried immigrant women and non-shared children may impose additional challenges to transnational or cross-border stepfamilies, thereby affecting remarital dynamics, have also been unexplored.

## **2.2 Marriage Migration and Remarriages**

While previous research on stepfamilies and remarriages has underexamined international remarriages, recent studies on marriage migration have shown that remarried women comprise a significant proportion of foreign brides in international marriages among Filipinos and Vietnamese in Switzerland, Thais in Belgium, Chosŏnjok (Korean Chinese) in South Korea, and Mainland Chinese in Taiwan and Japan (Constable, 2003; Fresnoza-Flot 2017; Hong, Song, & Park, 2013; Lauser, 2008, Le Bail, 2017; Lu, 2008, Tosakul, 2010). Albeit limitedly examined, Hong Kong tops these countries in the prominence of cross-border marriages and remarriages among these unions. Unpublished official marriage statistics provided by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region reveal that the proportion of remarried women in registered cross-border marriages of Mainland brides and Hong Kong bridegrooms has increased more than threefold from 10.2% of 590 marriages in 1991 to 35% of 13,123 marriages in 2015. By contrast, cross-border unions of first marriages have declined by half from 84.1% in 1991 to 44.1% of the total registered marriages of Mainland brides and Hongkongers in 2015. Studies have indicated that family conflicts and domestic violence are common in cross-border marriages (Chiu & Choi, 2015), particularly among low-income families in which spouses have a high level of perceived financial stress (Choi & Cheung, 2017). At the same time, the number of union dissolutions between local and cross-border marriages has been on the rise (Center for Suicide Research and Prevention, 2014), which is consistent with the patterns in western societies.

Although remarriages comprise a significant proportion in international marriages, studies on the post-migration marital life of foreign brides have focused on the experience of those in first marriages (Kim, 2013; Lu, 2008; Newendorp, 2008; Tsai, Chen, & Huang, 2011; Wang, 2001). Insights from these studies are helpful in understanding the marital experience of marriage migrants of second marriages, but remarried migrant mothers may encounter additional and specific challenges, particularly those who bring their children into remarriage. These mothers must not only navigate the parent–child–stepparent triangle (van Eeden-Moorefield & Pasley, 2008, 2013) but may also encounter additional challenges due to the diversities and desynchronization in their immigration status, migratory trajectories, and accompanying children. However, few notable exceptions on remarried foreign brides have mostly focused on their motives for transnational marriage with sparse coverage on their post-migration marital relationships (Constable, 2003; Lauser, 2008). Lu (2008) and Tosukul (2010) paid attention to conjugal relationships but did not examine the extent to which the presence of non-shared and common children in international remarriages may illicit marital conflicts and shape remarital dynamics.

This article aims to investigate the sources of marital conflicts in cross-border remarriages in Hong Kong among Mainland Chinese women who migrated with their children and those who do not.

Through a systematic comparison of these groups of women, the research sheds light on the ways in which different family compositions, that is the presence or absence of Mainland children from previous unions and common children, may shape marital conflicts and affect remarital relations in cross-border families.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Data Collection**

Given that most research on marital relationships of remarried subjects is quantitative, and the sources of marital conflicts among different types of cross-border remarriages have not been examined in detail, intensive and in-depth qualitative inquiry is instrumental in addressing the research question in this study. The findings presented below are based on data collected from in-depth interviews in a large research project and its follow-up study, which has explored the marital experience and stability of remarried Mainland Chinese immigrant women in Hong Kong. The present study examines and compares the major sources of conflicts of these two major groups of women with the presence or absence of shared and non-shared children, with a subgroup of women who brought along their Mainland children and have common children with their Hong Kong spouse. Between 2017 and 2019, interviews were conducted with 41 remarried immigrant women recruited with the assistance of local non-governmental organizations mostly serving low-class residents and Mainland immigrants. Thirty-three women have Mainland children from previous marriage(s) migrating with or joining them later in Hong Kong and 10 of them also have shared child(ren) with their Hong Kong spouse. The other eight women migrated by themselves only and have common children with their Hong Kong spouse. The age of respondents with Mainland children or Mainland and common children ranged widely from 31 to 55 at the time of study, whereas that of those without Mainland children migrating with them ranged from 35 to 57. The age range of respondents' husband was larger, from 34 to 84 years old for those with Mainland children, and over half of them aged 55 or above. Six of the eight husbands with common children only aged 55 and above. For those women with Mainland and common children or common children only, the shared children were young children aged 12 or below. Most women with Mainland children only have teenager or adult children. With the consensus of research participants, all semi-structured interviews were audio-taped, lasting between one and a half to three hours. Specific questions relevant to this article inquired about couple relationships and challenges that respondents face, stepparent-stepchild relationships, parent-child relationships, changes in these relationships before and after the migration of women and their Mainland children, and other reasons.

### **3.2 Data Analysis**

Guided by grounded theory, the interviews are then transcribed verbatim and analyzed on the basis of open and axial coding strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) by using research software NVivo Pro12. Examples of categories relevant to this article include "sources of conflicts" under the major themes of "stepfather-stepchild relationships" and "couple relationships," "housing," "finance," "husband's behavior," "role of father," and so on. Other related subcategories under the major themes of "stepfather-stepchild relationships" and "couple relationships" capture the temporal dimension and impact of migration, such as "before migration of mainland child" and "after migration of mainland child" with further subcategories "change" and "challenges and conflicts." Relevant narratives are extracted and translated into English. Emergent themes are identified through double coding and in a process of axial coding by making connections between the codes via a constant comparative method (Stauss & Corbin, 1990). Pseudonyms are used in the following discussion of findings to protect the privacy of the respondents.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

Various types of disagreements can be observed among remarried immigrant women. A careful comparison of the cases demonstrates that although cross-border remarriages with different family configurations may share certain common sources of conflicts, each specific type of remarriage is prone to particular sources of conflicts. The following discussion initially presents the common causes of marital discord in stepfamilies with immigrant Mainland children and those with Mainland and common children. The unique sources of disagreements are then highlighted for stepfamilies with Mainland and common children and for remarriages with common children only.

### **4.1 Housing and use of space**

Cramped living space is one of the most common sources of marital conflicts found in this study. Three-quarters of the respondents pointed out issues such as small living space, application of public rental housing, and high prices of rental flats in Hong Kong as major challenges. Cramped living space engenders discord within families over the problem of resource distribution and prevents open communication with children.

Most Hong Kong husbands come from a lower class background. They live in a tiny unit subdivided in an apartment, a room in their relative's home, or in public rental housing. For stepfamilies with Mainland children, the dependent immigrant and the local parent may face new challenges upon family reunification<sup>2</sup>. Newly-migrated children often have difficulty in adjusting in a new environment because they were brought up in Mainland China where living quarters are spacious, particularly those from rural areas. Hong Kong stepfathers may not only feel inconvenient with the addition of new family members but may also bear increased financial burden with the need to move to a large apartment. The confined living environment cannot simply accommodate the increased number of family members. Family members fight for their own space, precipitating into stepparent-stepchild and remarital conflicts as in the cases of Zhang Qing and Zhou Jie who quarreled with their husband time and again.

*After my three children migrated to Hong Kong, the five of us lived in a subdivided flat with a room, a bed, and a small kitchen. That's all. We argued a lot. My husband picked on my children and criticized them unfairly. (Zhang Qing)*

*He [her local husband] lived by himself before. Even if the flat was small, it was not a problem to him. When we came, the flat was not big enough for four people. (Zhou Jie)*

Before Zhou Jie's two daughters moved to Hong Kong, her husband lived in a subdivided flat of less than 40 square feet, which became too congested upon their arrival. Overcrowding with four people living in the subdivided flat led to frequent bickering between the Hong Kong husband and the children over the use of space:

*We lived in a subdivided flat. It was a small living area. We could only have a small bed. My daughter needed to sleep on the floor. One day, my husband returned home late. He wanted to get some midnight snacks from the fridge, but my daughter was blocking his way. He woke her up and yelled at her. My daughter talked back. They had a huge fight. Conflicts over the use of space between her husband and daughter turned into frequent quarrels between the couple. She argued with her husband about his reckless and impulsive actions toward the child. She also urged her husband to improve their housing condition by moving to a large apartment, which is costly, and apply for public housing. When her husband responded with indifference, their marriage deteriorated and was only reverted when they were allocated a public rental flat.*

Arguments on their rights over space imply a claim for privacy, and the lack of privacy may prevent open communication between family members and aggravate further marital and stepparent-stepchild discord. As Yang Ying indicated, back in China, where they lived in a relatively spacious environment, marital arguments could be contained between the couple because they could avoid having an argument in front of the children, which could affect the children's well-being. She explained:

*My ex-husband would not engage in a fight with me in front of the child. You know the flats on the Mainland are spacious and we have plenty of rooms in the house. When he wanted to argue with me, we always had the arguments in our bedroom and not in front of the child. But it is too cramped in Hong Kong.*

In contrast, because they lived in a tiny unit with a low level of privacy in Hong Kong, arguments happened within the knowledge or in the presence of children. Couples could also not retreat into their own spaces and calm down when conflicts arose. The congested space also prevented private talks behind closed doors with the daughter by either parent. Consequently, stepparent-stepchild conflicts were aggravated because the Mainland child disliked her stepfather who often quarreled with her mother and wanted to leave the family. These conflicts, in turn, led to further marital disputes and compelled the woman to ponder on whether she should stay in the marriage. Although moving to a larger apartment may help alleviate strains in familial relationships, high rental fees place huge financial pressure on the couple, in particular, the Hong Kong spouse, which is another major source of conflicts among these cross-border stepfamilies with migrant Mainland children.

#### **4.2 Financial stress and migration of Mainland children**

Previous studies have reported finance as a major source of conflict for stepfamilies and remarriages (Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002), particularly those from a lower-class background. However, financial stress for cross-border remarried couples did not result simply from mere economic austerity, but rather from the unexpected increase in financial burden and the lack of preparation for this challenge, particularly on the part of the native husband, and constraints on the employment of immigrant wives. While custody arrangement might be shared by the former spouse in the aftermath of divorce in local marriages, thereby alleviating the burden for newly formed stepfamilies (Saint-Jacques et al, 2011), this phenomenon has been rarely observed among remarried Mainland immigrant mothers in this study. A sudden increase in financial expenses places considerable pressure on the Hong Kong spouse with the arrival of the Mainland children of the immigrant wives, particularly among those families in which the immigrant wife was on a visitor visa as a two-way permit holder and thus is ineligible for work.

Thus, conflicts over household finance are usually related to the incapacity of the Hong Kong husband to adjust to the changes in the post-migration period of immigrant wives and children. Most of the Hong Kong husbands were willing to provide for the family and Mainland stepchildren before their migration to Hong Kong because the lower living standards in China made it affordable to raise a cross-border family.

However, experiencing financial stress with new family members joining them, these men often complained about their stepchildren's spending and engaged in verbal and physical violence towards them. Several women with Mainland children cited increased household expenses accompanied by the migration of Mainland teenagers as the major source of familial and marital conflicts. For instance, Huang Lan recalled:

*When my elder son came, the financial status became tighter and we did not have enough money. My husband... he would yell and hit my son.*

Similarly, Zhang Qing never had fights with her spouse regarding finance during her stay in Hong Kong on a visitor permit. However, with the migration of her Mainland teenager children, their high level of food consumption increased the economic burden on the family. The Hong Kong husband felt unable to provide for them. He was also mentally unprepared for the expenses incurred by the arrival of Mainland adolescents because the woman changed her mind and did not want her children to return to China after landing in Hong Kong:

*I thought my husband felt like being hit by a thunderbolt out of a clear sky – suddenly he had several children joining him. It was difficult for him to accept them, really difficult.*

*At that time (before her children joined them) we lived together, it is fortunate that we did not have a child between us and did not argue over money.*

Marital arguments started to emerge due to financial problems and she moved out with her children. The remarriage eventually ended up in a divorce.

### **4.3 Step-relationship conflicts**

The discussions on housing and financial strains show that stepparent-stepchild conflicts over these issues often spilled over to or aggravated marital conflicts and that the marital relationship declined significantly after the arrival of Mainland children. However, biological discrimination towards stepchildren and prejudice against Mainland Chinese went along with these issues as crucial causes of familial disputes.

#### **4.3.1 Biological discrimination against Mainland stepchildren**

Non-acceptance and discrimination against the stepchildren put immigrant women in a difficult position, while unresolved poor stepfather-stepchildren relationship drastically marred couple relations and might even precipitate into marital dissolution. Wang Jing brought along two young Mainland children into her remarriage with a Hong Kong husband. Her husband repeatedly expressed disdain when interacting with the two-year old child he would often disturb him when he was resting. Wang's husband lost his temper and tolerance with his mischievous stepson who was too young to be obedient. Subsequently, poor step-relationship spilled over into marital dissolution. She recalled:

*He told me that he just wanted to stay with me only but not the (Mainland) children. He thought the children were a burden. We finally divorced this year.....the main problem was that he could not accept my children.*

The narrative showed that the immigrant mother felt caught between the stepfather and her own children, Not wanting to abandon her biological child, Wang Jing decided to divorce her husband.

#### **4.3.2 Prejudice against Mainlanders**

In addition to biological discrimination against stepchildren, step-relations might turn sour due to prejudice against their being Mainland Chinese, who are considered to be inferior and a burden to the Hong Kong society by migrating for social benefits. For instance, Zhang Qing's husband, who did not plan to support the migration of his stepchildren, despised them as Mainlanders. Zhang Qing said:

*He grumbles about the children, saying that they are dirty and heavy eaters [...] He also called names, labeling his stepchildren as Mainlanders in a derogatory manner. My children did not see eye to eye with their stepfather.*

Her husband looked down on her Mainland children and he did not get along with his newly-arrived stepchildren. With increased financial pressure, he refused to support the children, which led to marital disputes over finance. Zhang Qing narrated:

*He then told me he could not provide for them. We quarreled about it. We (the informant and her children) moved out finally.*

As Zhang Qing's husband refused to accept her biological children, the unresolved hostile step-relations eventually led to marital dissolution.

### **4.4 Differences in the role expectations and priorities in remarriage**

The above examples show that biological discrimination and prejudice could lead to conflictual step-relations and deteriorating marital relations, differences in the couple's expectations of spousal roles and priorities might also serve as the underlying cause of marital discord. Desiring a couple relationship instead of a stepfamily, some Hong Kong husbands were not expecting or mentally prepared to play the role of a stepfather in the first place. They did not think that they had the obligation to take care of their non-shared children and conflicts escalated when they blamed the latter for increased financial pressure. For instance, Wang Jing's husband did not perceive himself as a father to her Mainland children; all he wanted was to be with her:

*...He asked me repeatedly to send the children to an orphanage because he did not want to live with them. But I cannot do that can I? So, in the end, I divorced my husband even though I did not want to.*

Zhang Qing was in a similar situation and echoed Wang Jing in her decision to give up her marriage for her children. She lamented:

*After they (Mainland children) have migrated to Hong Kong, everything changed. After all, they are my children. Even though I wanted to be with my husband, I cannot possibly give up my child and be with him.*

For the husbands, the adaptation to the new role as a stepfather after the arrival of Mainlanders was overwhelming. While they only aspired to have an intimate relationship with their wives, these remarried immigrant mothers prioritized their Mainland children's well-being over their own and their marriage. These characteristics are common among women who brought their Mainland children with them. Most of these women remarried out of pragmatism and consideration for the well-being of their children with the wish to provide them with better care and education. Although some older working remarried women did not expect their husbands to support their Mainland children financially, acceptance of their biological children was the foremost reason in their decision to remarry and stay in the remarriage. Marital conflicts emerged when the men's expectation of the remarriage did not match women's and a clash over their priorities occurred. When marital and stepparent-stepchild conflicts jeopardized their children's well-being, these immigrant mothers would rather give up their marriage for their children's sake.

#### **4.5 Husbands' favoritism towards the common child**

While biological discrimination against and non-acceptance of stepchildren contribute to marital disputes for women who brought along their children from previous unions, favoritism of the husband toward the common child served as a unique source of conflicts for stepfamilies with both Mainland and common children. Recent research has demonstrated how mothers were often caught between their new husbands and their biological children (Weaver & Coleman, 2010). Similarly, immigrant women reported that they felt caught up in the remarriage in the sense that their husbands held prejudice towards the Mainland children and exhibited favoritism towards the common children. Consequently, this type of remarriage may also experience marital conflicts regarding the differing treatment of the children. While the Hong Kong husband was hostile to his stepchildren, they had a closer relationship with their common children. The husbands seldom pampered the Mainland children but would indulge the common child. Huang Lan's family illustrates well the unique dilemma of cross-border stepfamilies with both Mainland and common children. Her husband originally maltreated the Mainland child by beating him from time to time, leading to intense disputes and conflicts among them, which later escalated to physical violence. At one point, Huang Lan's husband threw the telephone at the stepchild and assaulted him with a hanger. While the husband displayed hostility towards his stepson after migration, he maintained a harmonious relationship with his common child. The husband always talked softly to the common child but would often yell at his stepson. Even when step relations have improved with the immigrant woman's efforts, according to the women, favoritism could still be observed. Huang said, "I think he (the husband) may have changed his attitude toward the elder son. But for the elder son, the attitude of his dad toward the younger son is still better."

#### **4.6 Husband's undesirable attributes and violent behavior**

Although housing, increased financial burden, and stepparent-stepchild conflicts were major sources of marital disputes in cross-border stepfamilies, the arrival of the Mainland women's biological children and the husband's gambling addiction and alcoholism stood out as the major problems for remarried women with common child. These problems often led to conflicts over money issues and financial stress. Many immigrant women in the study reported that their marital conflicts stemmed partly from the husband's volatile behavior and negative attributes. Women who did not bring along their Mainland children to Hong Kong identified these factors as the major source of remarital issues. They complained that these detrimental addictions often induced financial pressure as their husbands gambled away money.

Among families with the presence of Mainland children, around one-third of the husbands engaged in gambling activities right after the arrival of the Mainland children. In contrast, all informants with only common child except the three widowers cited the husbands' gambling addiction as the reason for financial difficulties and the major source of conflict. For instance, in the case of Chen Liang with two common children with her native husband, gambling nearly cost their marriage since Chen did not have enough money to cover all the household expenses and support the family. Subsequently, couple relations deteriorated drastically:

*He (her husband) even gambled away our remaining five thousand dollars! Alas! My son is only six months old. After gambling, we do not even have any money left to buy food. He promised to stop gambling, but he did it again right after the remarriage. He even gambled away my wedding ring and jewelry! In total, they are worth thousands of dollars!*

Chen's family was struggling to make ends meet because of the rising financial stress for the family. However, conflicts stimulated by the husbands are less intense in families without Mainland children than families with Mainland children with one exception. Chen's husband later regretted his actions, quit gambling and gave his wife control over his income, thereby resulting in the gradual improvement of the couple's relationship.

### 5. Conclusion

Through a detailed comparative study of remarriages with immigrant Mainland children and those without, this article illustrates the significance of family composition and the migration trajectories of immigrant children in shaping remarital conflicts among cross-border families. For blended cross-border families with Mainland immigrant children, housing issues, increased financial stress due to migration of children, stepparent-stepchild conflicts stemming from biological discrimination and prejudice, and differences in role expectations and priorities of remarried couples constitute the major sources of remarital conflicts. These factors also induce marital discord for women with both Mainland and common children but the husband's favoritism towards the common child serves a unique source of remarital dispute for this latter group of women. In contrast, common children in remarriages may be more vulnerable to the husband's violent behavior and bad attributes instead of issues around stepparent-stepchild relationships. Apart from the differences in the source of remarital conflicts, this study also demonstrates how the migration of Mainland children could alter remarital dynamics considerably because disputes over housing and increased financial stress often entangle with stepparent-stepchild conflicts. Further research may explore the extent and the ways in which these diverse conflicts may precipitate remarital dissolution and the role of non-shared and shared children and the couple in jeopardizing or stabilizing the remarriage.

### Notes

1. Published official statistics only reported number of cross-border marriages between Hong Kong men and Mainland women and vice versa, and number of remarriages of the total Hong Kong population, but not remarriages among cross-border marriages.
2. Mainland Chinese may join their family through the One-way Permit (OWP) Scheme, a family reunion program established in 1950. It sets limits on the number of OWPs issued each day and has since been modified several times. (see Lam and Liu, 1998) Currently, a maximum quota of 150 people per day was allocated to the OWP Scheme under different categories of family migrants. Applications for OWP status are petitioned for by spousal sponsors or parents who are Hong Kong permanent residents. Dependents of applicants, including those from their previous unions in China, may be granted OWP as accompanying children sponsored by the Hong Kong parent or step-parent, or petitioned for separately after their parent. Depending on the place of origin of the applicants, separated spouses with Hong Kong resident minors awaiting the issuance of OWP are permitted to make multiple visits to Hong Kong on a visitor permit of up to 90 days each, within a one-year validity period (Security Bureau, 2014).

### References

- Beaudry, M., Boisvert, J. M., Simard, M., Parent, C., & Blais, M. C. (2004). Communication: A key component to meeting the challenges of stepfamilies. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 42 (1-2), 85-104.
- Bodenmann, G., Pihet, S., & Kayser, K. (2006). The relationship between dyadic and marital quality: A 2-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20, 485-493.
- Booth, A., & Edwards, J. N. (1992). Starting over: Why remarriages are more unstable. *Journal of Family Issues*, 13(2), 179-194.
- Bramlett, M., & Mosher, W. (2002). Cohabitation, marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the United States. *Vital Health Statistics. Series 23, Data from the National Survey of Family Growth, No. 22*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Center for Suicide Research and Prevention, The University of Hong Kong (2014). A Study on the Phenomenon of Divorce in Hong Kong. Hong Kong: Central Policy Unit, HKSAR.
- Chiu, T. Y., & Choi, S. Y. (2015). Spousal violence and in-law conflict in Asia. In S. R. Quah (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Families in Asia* (pp.318-331). London; New York: Routledge.
- Choi, S. Y., & Cheung, A. K. L. (2017). Dissimilar and disadvantaged: Age discrepancy, financial stress, and marital conflict in cross-border marriages. *Journal of Family Issues*, 38(18), 2521-2544.
- Coleman, M., Fine, M. A., Ganong, L. H., Downs, K. J., & Pauk, N. (2001). When you're not the Brady Bunch: Identifying perceived conflicts and resolution strategies in stepfamilies. *Personal Relationships*, 8(1), 55-73.
- Constable, N. (2003). A transnational perspective on divorce and marriage: Filipina wives and workers. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 10(2), 163-180.

- Feinberg, M. E., Kan, M. L., & Hetherington, E. M. (2007). The longitudinal influence of coparenting conflict on parental negativity and adolescent maladjustment. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69, 687–702.
- Garneau, C. L., Higginbotham, B., & Adler-Baeder, F. (2015). Remarriage beliefs as predictors of marital quality and positive interaction in stepcouples: An actor-partner interdependence model. *Family Process*, 54(4), 730-745.
- Kim, M. (2013). Citizenship projects for marriage migrants in South Korea: intersecting motherhood with ethnicity and class. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 20(4): 455-481.
- Lauser, A. (2008). Philippine women on the move: Marriage across borders. *International Migration*, 46(4), 85-110.
- Le Bail, H. (2017) Cross-border marriages as a side door for paid and unpaid Migrant workers: The Case of Marriage Migration between China and Japan. *Critical Asian Studies*, 49(2), 226-43.
- Lu, M. C. W. (2008). *Gender, Marriage and Migration: Contemporary Marriages between Mainland China and Taiwan*. PhD dissertation, Leiden University, The Netherlands).
- Ma, Z., Lin, G., & Zhang, F. (2010). Examining cross-border marriage in Hong Kong: 1998–2005. In W. Yang & M. Lu (Eds.), *Asian Cross-border Marriage Migration: Demographic Patterns and Social Issues* (pp.87-102). Amsterdam University Press.
- MacDonald, W. L., & DeMaris, A. (1995). Remarriage, stepchildren, and marital conflict: Challenges to the incomplete institutionalization hypothesis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 387-398.
- Newendorp, N. D. (2008). *Uneasy reunions: Immigration, citizenship, and family life in post-1997 Hong Kong*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Pasley, K., & Lee, M. (2010). Stress and coping within the context of stepfamily life. In S. J. Price, C. A. Price, & P. C. McKenry (Eds.), *Families and Change: Coping with Stressful Events and Transitions* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 235–261). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Reid, M., & Golub, A. (2015). Vetting and letting: Cohabiting stepfamily formation processes in low-income Black families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77(5), 1234-1249.
- Saint-Jacques, M. C., Robitaille, C., Godbout, É., Parent, C., Drapeau, S., & Gagne, M. H. (2011). The processes distinguishing stable from unstable stepfamily couples: A qualitative analysis. *Family Relations*, 60(5), 545-561.
- Security Bureau. (2014). *Immigration Arrangement for Entry of Mainland Residents for Family Reunion*. LC Paper No. CB(2)775/13-14(03). Paper Submitted to the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Mainland-HKSAR Families, Hong Kong Legislative Council.
- Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Whitton, S. W. (2002). Communication, conflict, and commitment: Insights on the foundations of relationship success from a national survey. *Family Process*, 41, 659 – 675.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Teachman, J. D. (1986). First and second marital dissolution: A decomposition exercise for Whites and Blacks. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 27, 571-590.
- Teachman, J. D. (2008). Complex life course patterns and the risk of divorce in second marriages. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70, 294-305.
- Tosakul, R. (2010). Cross-border marriages: experiences of village women from northeastern Thailand with Western men. In W.-S. Yang and M. C.-W. Lu (Eds.), *Asian Cross-border Marriage Migration: Demographic Patterns and Social Issues* (pp.179–200). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Tsai, T. I., Chen, I. J., & Huang, S. L. (2011). Motherhood journey through the eyes of immigrant women. In *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34(2), 91-100.
- van Eeden-Moorefield, B., & Pasley, K. (2008). A longitudinal examination of marital processes leading to instability in remarriages and stepfamilies. In J. Pryor (Ed.), *The International Handbook of Stepfamilies: Policy and Practice in Legal, Research, and Clinical Environments* (pp. 231–249). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- van Eeden-Moorefield, B., & Pasley, K. (2013). Remarriage and Stepfamily Life. In G. W. Peterson & K. R. Bush (Eds.), *Handbook of Marriage and the Family* (pp 517-546). US: Springer.
- Wang, H. Z. (2001). Social stratification, Vietnamese partners migration and Taiwan labour market. *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, 41, 99-127.
- Weaver, S. E., & Coleman, M. (2010). Caught in the middle: Mothers in stepfamilies. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27(3), 305-326.
- Whitton, S.W., Stanley, S.M., Markman, H.J. & Johnson, C.A. (2013). Attitudes toward divorce, commitment, and divorce proneness in first marriages and remarriages. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 75, 276–287.