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Raising Understanding of Ethnic Minorities and Asylum Seekers among the Public, NGOs, and Policymakers

Dr. Flora Lau has been conducting research on ethnic minorities since 2014. She worked in 2014-2015 on a project entitled “Breaking through the barriers – ethnic minority success stories and their implications for policy intervention in Hong Kong”, funded by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). In the fall of 2015, Dr. Flora Lau was awarded a competitive two-year research grant to work on a project entitled “People without identity: Exploring the social experiences of asylum seekers in Hong Kong”, by the Research Grant Council (RGC) under the Faculty Development Scheme (FDS).

As a result of these two projects, a report, a journal article, and a book chapter in a peer-reviewed international publication were published. Dr. Lau pinpointed the difficulties encountered by ethnic minorities in education and the workplace in Hong Kong and advocated some remedial measures. She also explored the daily life experiences, social networks and the change of identity of asylum seekers in Hong Kong. She argued that the lack of general knowledge about asylum seekers’ home countries led to slow processing of political asylum applications by the Hong Kong Immigration Department and to the rise in judicial queries and appeal cases. Her research therefore advocates better databases at the Hong Kong Immigration Department regarding each home country.

Arousing public awareness of difficulties encountered by ethnic minorities in education and the workplace in Hong Kong

Dr. Lau’s findings were presented in a press release by EOC on 7 July 2015. The role of positive personal attributes and social network, as well as the presence of ethnic minority role models were particularly mentioned. The report can be accessed on the EOC website: <http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/GraphicsFolder/ShowContent.aspx?ItemID=13157>.

Informing and Influencing an NGO, a statutory body, and a political party in formulating policy recommendations on the issue of ethnic minorities

Dr. Lau’s findings were cited by Unison, a local leading NGO for ethnic minorities in a policy recommendation paper submitted to the Legislative Council of Hong Kong in 2017, with the title ‘Submission on “Employment support services for ethnic minorities” to the Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities’ (LC Paper No. CB(2)562/16-17(01)). A research finding is particularly mentioned in the paper concerning language being a common barrier for integration into the community and the workplace. The research has also been cited by the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong in August 2018 in their report on the difficulties faced by ethnic minorities.

Influencing the perspectives of commentators on asylum-seeking policies

The research findings on asylum seekers were disseminated by four major local media, i.e. South China Morning Post, HK01, Ming Pao and Apple Daily in December 2017. In particular, Dr. Lau’s arguments to remedy insufficient knowledge and to aid the subsequent enhancement of the chance to judicial appeals were cited in Kung Kao Po, the Catholic Hong Kong Diocese weekly newspaper, issue 3899 in November 2018, which is sold among Chinese Catholics worldwide and circulated online.

Publications:

Lau, P.Y.F. and Gheorghiu, I. (2018) ‘Vanishing Selves under Hong Kong’s Unified Screening Mechanism’, *Cultural Diversity in China*, 3(1): 21-29.

(中文譯本) 劉珮欣, 尤莉亞 • 喬治烏 (2018) 「香港免遣返聲請者在統一審核機制下消失的自我」, *Cultural Diversity in China*, 3(1): 30-35.

Lau, P.Y.F. (2015) ‘Personal merits and social capital: The experiences of getting ahead among South Asians Minorities in Hong Kong’, Johnson, C. (Ed.) *Social Capital: Global Perspectives, Management Strategies and Effectiveness*. New York: Nova Science Publisher, pp.145-56.

Lau, P.Y.F. (2015) *Breaking through the Barriers – Ethnic Minority Success Stories and their Implications for Policy Intervention in Hong Kong*. Final Report for Funding Programmes of Research Projects on Equal Opportunities 2013-14. Hong Kong: Equal Opportunities Commission.