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**Return Migrant or Diaspora:
*An Exploratory Study of New Generation
Chinese-Canadian Youth Working
in Hong Kong***

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RETURN MIGRANT OR DIASPORA: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF NEW GENERATION CHINESE-CANADIAN YOUTH WORKING IN HONG KONG

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ABSTRACT

The circular movement of migrants between their homeland and adopted country has problematized the previous understanding of the linear pattern of return migration. However, the concept of circular migration tends to apply to migrants whose movement is made possible due to their extensive pre-migration connections with their homeland. In this paper, we report findings of a study on a group of new generation Chinese-Canadian youth working in Hong Kong. Although, like many return migrants, this group of young people decided to move to Hong Kong largely for economic reasons, they do not position themselves as return migrants. Instead, they have kept a strong Canadian identity by keeping a unique friendship circle and perceiving Canada as a home that they will one day return to. We highlight in this paper some implications of their experience on transnational migration studies and government policies.

Return migration, once overlooked in research on migration, has become a growing concern in the field. As late as 1980, Gmelch (1980) observed that studies on international migration were largely based on an assumption of a one-way movement of migrants from the developing world to industrialized countries. The idea of return migration in Gmelch's day was still in its infancy. The sporadic studies on return migrants tended to focus on a small group of migrants returning to their rural hometown where they started their migration journey. Today, scholars face far more complex migration patterns caused by a set of intertwined factors (e.g., Hatton and Williamson 2008; Sassen 1998, 2007): demographic crisis of many industrial countries, rationalization of immigration policy, technological improvement in communication and transpor-

tation, and a flexible flow of economic and human capitals at a global level, just to name a few.

Immigrants no longer move linearly from one country (underdeveloped) and settle in another country (developed) for good. Instead, researchers find a circular pattern as migrants commonly move between countries of origin and settlement (e.g., Ley and Kobayashi 2005; Ong 1999). Very often, the circular movement has been understood and explained by the concept of transnationalism, which is described by Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton (1994, p. 6) as a process through which immigrants strategically “forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” This is also a strategic process to meet certain economic (e.g., Ong 1999) and human capital (e.g., Kang 2012) accumulation needs of the migrants, which are closely tied to the specific tasks of different stages in the life cycle (Kobayashi and Preston 2007; Lauer and Wong 2010; Ley and Kobayashi 2005).

In the circular migration process, the idea of return migrants becomes problematic, as Ley and Kobayashi (2005) note. One of the major problems is their political identity, particularly for countries like Canada, which officially recognize dual citizenship of its members. Does returning to the “old” home country, where they were originally from, make the transnational migrants a returnee to the “old” home country, or a diaspora of the “new” home country to which they are still politically and socially connected? The Asian Pacific Foundation estimates 2.7 million Canadians are living abroad (Zhang 2009). Among them, many returned to the countries from which they first migrated to Canada. For instance, it is estimated that one-third of male immigrants who arrived in Canada at the age of 25 to 45 left Canada within 20 years of arriving (Michalowski and Tran 2009). The back and forth movement between

the “old” and “new” home countries becomes a continuous journey for many transnational migrants.

Among all immigrant groups in Canada, the transnational migration patterns of Hong Kong Chinese have always been of particular interest. The Chinese immigrant community in Canada experienced a vast influx of immigrants (over 380,000) from Hong Kong from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s (Ley and Kobayashi 2005). Since then, the Hong Kong Chinese have become a major subject of transnational migration studies in Canada. They first generated the “astronaut family” and “satellite kids” phenomenon (Tsang, Irving, Alaggia, Chau, and Benjamin 2003; Waters 2005). Young families with small children migrated to Canada to seek political stability and a better education for their children. In these families, the breadwinner, usually the father, commuted transnationally between Canada and Hong Kong while the mother stayed behind to take care of the children. In some situations, both parents may spend most of their time in Hong Kong while their children are under the care of other relatives, friends, or by themselves in Canada.

Although migration decisions are always complicated, the primary motivation for Hong Kong Chinese to move to Canada is the political stability of Canadian citizenship and providing a better education for their children (Ley and Kobayashi 2005). However, the unfavourable economic conditions that most immigrants face in Canada have encouraged the return of many Hong Kong Chinese from Canada, not only the “astronaut families”. China’s improved political stability and blooming economy have drawn a significant number of Hong Kong Chinese immigrants back to their “old” home, where they have strong human and social capital connections to the local labour market. Unsurprisingly, they constitute the majority of the so-called Canadian diaspora in Hong Kong (Kunz and Zhang n.d.). It is conservatively estimated

that there are close to 300,000 Canadian citizens living in Hong Kong, 67% were born in Hong Kong, and 83% hold dual citizenship. A vast majority returned to Hong Kong after 1997 (Zhang and DeGolyer 2011). Indeed, consistently found in different studies, economic and job opportunities have been the dominant reason for the decision to move back to Hong Kong (e.g., Ley and Kobayashi 2005; Salaff and Arent 2004; Zhang and DeGolyer 2011).

According to Zhang and DeGolyer (2011), among the Chinese-Canadians residing in Hong Kong, most (80%) are of working age, and 18% are in the 20 to 29 cohort. As Salaff et al. (2004) describe, many of these young people were teenage migrants when they first arrived in Canada. They already had substantial cultural adherence and familiarity with Hong Kong, as well as proficient Cantonese language skills that they rely on when seeking economic opportunities in Hong Kong. They may follow their parents to return to Hong Kong. As indicated in their sample, seven of the nine young people, who have already returned to Hong Kong, have at least one parent there; whereas, among the six young people who have no plans to return to Hong Kong, their parents are all in Canada. In other words, for most young people, moving back to Hong Kong may largely be a family decision.

However, recently, there is a growing number of new generation youth from Hong Kong Chinese immigrant families in Canada that have "moved" to Hong Kong. These youth were either born in Canada or arrived to Canada at a very young age. Many of them may speak Cantonese, but cannot read and write Chinese, and their parents are still residing in Canada. However, their stories have been blended into the 300,000 Canadian diaspora in Hong Kong. Perhaps it is surprising that these young people have decided to return to Hong Kong. Very often, studies on settlement and integration assume that the second generation will be integrated in the host society through educa-

tion and better mastery of English. Likewise, a prevailing assumption is that the new generation (including the 1.5¹ and 2nd generation) youth from immigrant families tend to be more successful in the labour market than their parents (Hagan, MacMillan, and Wheaton 1996; Isajiw 1999; Tsui and Sammons 1988).

However, having parents that are first-generation immigrants and being a visible minority can be a double jeopardy that hinders new generation youth from social and economic mobility (Yan, Lauer, and Chan 2012). These youth from immigrant families tend to have a higher level of education (Statistics Canada April 4, 2006), which unfortunately does not necessarily land the youth in an appropriate job. Instead, about one out of five university graduates in the labour force are overqualified for their job (Statistics Canada April 4, 2006). In other words, even with higher educational aspiration, new generation youth from immigrant families may not find a desirable job, even in a growing economy. New generation youth, particularly those with high qualifications, second language skills, and foreign social ties, have gradually joined the massive human mobility by extending their job search from their local community to the global market. Coming from immigrant families, it is relatively easy for new generation youth to follow their parents' migration path back to Hong Kong (Jones 2000).

Canada adopts an economic-driven immigration policy which intends to keep its economic growth by using immigrants to replace the aging labour force. The outward mobility of new generation youth may not only forfeit its immigrant policy, but also drain its resource invested on training these youths. So far, the discussion of return migration is largely and informally confined to

¹ There is no clear definition of the 1.5 generation. In this paper, 1.5 generation is used to signify youth from immigrant families who immigrated to Canada at 12-years old or younger. In other words, they should have completed their junior high, high school, and college education in Canada.

the Chinese community. Voices from the mainstream society are sporadically heard speaking against this kind of outward mobility and questioning the loyalty of Chinese immigrants to Canadian society. In turn, it cautions the Chinese community to further avoid talking about this phenomenon. In addition, the leaving of young members may impact the immigrant families, most of which tend to have a small household size. Some parents may choose to uproot the whole family to follow their younger members to return to their homeland, but many may decide to stay in Canada. Both may have demographic, economic, and service impacts on the local community. Without understanding the logic behind the out-migration of new generation youth from immigrant families, the invisibility of this phenomenon may further hamper a policy response to both the positive and negative consequences of this phenomenon. In terms of migration studies, the out-migration of the new generation youth from immigrant families also raises a conceptual problem for the concept of "return" migrant. Unlike their adult migrant counterparts, this group of young people, who were either born or grew up in Canada, has only a minimal connection with Hong Kong, their parents' old homeland. Are they returnees to Hong Kong or a diaspora of Canada?

To fill this research gap, we conducted an exploratory study of new generation youth from Chinese immigrant families with a series of interrelated questions: *Is the search for better economic opportunity the motivation of their relocation to Hong Kong? If so, then why did they choose Hong Kong instead of other countries such as the USA which is geographically closer to their family? How do they perceive their connections with Hong Kong and Canada?*

METHODOLOGY

Based on a triangulated approach, this exploratory study sought answers to the research questions through the lenses of three different groups of participants in Hong Kong, Vancouver, and Toronto.

First, in the summer of 2010, we conducted semi-structured interviews of parents in Vancouver (n=6) and Toronto (n=5), who have at least one child living and working in Hong Kong. We also interviewed a parent in Hong Kong who relocated there after her son returned. These parents were recruited through referrals from the partnering community organizations and the researcher's personal contact.

TABLE 1: INFORMATION OF PARENT PARTICIPANTS

NAME	CHILD'S AGE UPON ARRIVAL	CITY
DQ*	13	Toronto
EH*	9	Toronto
JL	12	Toronto
CY	8	Toronto
EL	12	Toronto
VF*	2	Vancouver
IL*	9	Vancouver
CC*	12	Vancouver
MM	Local Born	Vancouver
DY*	13	Vancouver
IC*	Local born	Vancouver
CW*	<1	London

* indicates that their child also participated in this study.

The interviews focused on:

- i. their understanding of how their child(ren) decided to work in Hong Kong;
- ii. what concerns they have of their child(ren)'s future;
- iii. how they perceive their child(ren)'s connections with Canada;
- iv. how the family deals with the leaving of a young member.

Second, in Vancouver and Toronto, we also conducted one focus group (N=8, Toronto; N=6, Vancouver) with Chinese community leaders (service providers, media, churches, and ethnic organizations) to understand how they perceived the causes and impacts of the new generation of Chinese-Canadians seeking employment in Hong Kong.

Third, from September 2010 to March 2011, we conducted semi-structured interviews in Hong Kong with 18 Chinese-Canadian émigrés aged 23 to 32. Six of them were born in Canada, and the rest arrived in Canada at ages 1 to 15 and spent at least 10 years in the Canadian education system. All but one has a university degree. When being interviewed, 10 had worked at Hong Kong SAR for two years or more, and fifteen were working with companies that have international business components. These participants were recruited by word of mouth and referrals through different sources including the personal network of the researchers and research assistant. Recognizing the local differences in labour markets, we tried to seek participants coming from the Vancouver and Toronto areas, the two urban centres in which most Chinese-Canadians settle.

TABLE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

	AGE	AGE ARRIVED IN CANADA	YEARS IN HKG	EDUCATION	JOB NATURE	CITY
Judy	24	8	1.5 yrs.	University	Merchandising in Japanese department store	Toronto
Jackie	24	9	1 yrs.	University	Part-time tutor	Toronto
Frank	25	14	4 yrs.	BBA	Operation assistant	Toronto
Sam	26	11	2 yrs.	University	Bank	Vancouver
Cindy	33	15	2 yrs.	University	Exec admin.	Vancouver
Joan	24	2	2.5 yrs.	University	Fashion PR	Toronto
Ben	25	Born in Van	1 yr. 2 mos.	University	Finance	Vancouver
Linda	25	12	9 mos.	University	Insurance	Vancouver
Mimi	26	9	3 yrs. 2 mos.	BA	Investment Banking	Vancouver
Jane	24	Born in Van	3 yrs. 2 mos.	BA	Public relations	Vancouver
Betty	25	Born in Van	2 yrs.	BA	Flight Attendant	Vancouver
Shauna	28	9	3.5 yrs.	BA	Teacher/Law student	Toronto
Tom	23	Born in Van	<1 yr.	BA	English teacher/ Law student	Toronto
Bill	<25	Born in Van	< 1 yr.	BA	Stock analyst	Vancouver
JeF	23	6	< 1 yr.	BA	Retail banking	Vancouver
Allan	24	1	2 yrs.	BA	Investment fund	Vancouver
Kathy	28	10	3 yrs.	Dip	Flight Attendant	Toronto
Tim	25	<1	3 yrs.	BA	Mass Transit Railway	London

The interview focused on the following issues:

- i. factors that they consider when deciding where to work;
- ii. actual process of moving to Hong Kong in terms of job search and settlement;
- iii. perception of their Canadian identity and connections with Canada;
- iv. perceived roles in connecting Canada with Hong Kong/China;
- v. future plan of returning to Canada, if any.

All interviews and focus groups were conducted in either Cantonese or English, according to the preference of the participants, as well as audio-taped and transcribed. Interviews conducted in Cantonese were selectively translated into English for report writing purposes; back translation was used to ensure accuracy. A thematic approach was used to analyze the data with the assistance of NVivo, software that assists the management and analysis of qualitative research data. As a university-based research team, procedures of this study were approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of UBC.

FINDINGS

Growing up as New Generation Youth

The stories of this group of new generation youth's migration perhaps should start from how they grew up in Canada. The twelve parent participants consistently reported that they have kept a Hong Kong style of living at home including speaking Cantonese, watching Chinese TV, singing Chinese Karaoke, and watching Hong Kong news. Almost all of them sent their children to Chinese school to learn Chinese. However, many felt that the presence of grandparents was the major influence on their children's Cantonese. Although most of the children can speak fluent Cantonese and even read Chinese, only

a very few reported that their children can write Chinese well. Eight out of the 12 parents reported that they did not visit Hong Kong very often, perhaps once every few years. Some even reported that at the point of the interview, they had not been to Hong Kong in over 10 years.

Similar stories were reported by the 18 youth participants. Most reported growing up in a Hong Kong style household. Even for those who lived outside of Chinese neighborhoods, watching Chinese TV, having Chinese meals in Chinese shopping malls and going to Chinese schools were their family's routine activities. Only five youth reported that they and their family visited Hong Kong frequently (once every one or two years). The majority (n=12) reported that they seldom (less than four times) visited Hong Kong; for example, Allan first visited Hong Kong at age 16, and Joan had been to Hong Kong twice before her relocation to Canada. In terms of language ability, not all of them have mastery of Chinese reading and writing skills. Many of them, particularly those who were born in Canada or moved there when they were very young, cannot read or write Chinese. Four reported that their poor Chinese did later affect finding a job in Hong Kong.

While many of these 18 youth reported that they grew up with a multicultural group of friends, interestingly a majority of them (n=11) reported that when getting older they tended to hang out more with Asian and Chinese friends (not necessarily with a Hong Kong background).

At first, I still hung out more with the mainstream people, or maybe we call it CBCs, like the Canadian-born... so we used English still as our medium for communication, and so I did still hang around... the English-speaking, although some of them were of similar background as me... They were either born in Canada, like Chinese that were born in Canada, or they moved over when they were young. (Shauna)

Their Chinese friendship network was very often formed during the high school and college period.

It wasn't until high school and university when I started to meeting a lot more Chinese and Asians. (Bill)

Some of them explained this tendency because of the cultural proximity that they have with people like them.

I guess, the Asians like, you know, Asians into my college, even go to university, in my field So yeah, after a while, because of cultural and you know the Asian idea like people in university... Asian people start to hang out more, or Asian person like me, I guess, you call me a CBC or Canadian... so yeah, more Asians after.. (Allan)

But I mean, I do relate better with people who are CBCs rather than all Caucasians, 'cos I mean, they are white. You hang out with them, they are fine right, but then like culture wise, you don't really, you can't really relate to them as much... They were like, what's Chinese New Year, whatever, right, oh, red packet, like what's that? Blah, blah, blah, right, like when you're with your Chinese friends, like they can relate to this, also relate to other things, so they can relate to everything. (Betty)

Later we also found out that their Chinese peer network has been a major force that pulled them to Hong Kong.

Decision to Move to Hong Kong

Eight parents told us that their child had a job before moving to Hong Kong. To a few of them, their child moving to Hong Kong was a big surprise. For instance, MM told us that her daughter was travelling in Asia. She stopped by Hong Kong to visit some relatives and friends. In less than two weeks, her daughter called to tell her that she decided to stay in Hong Kong. Among the eighteen youth we interviewed, only two said that they had the plan of moving to Hong Kong before they graduated from universities. Most of them (n=12)

did enter the Canadian labour market after graduation. While many only had part-time or contract jobs, some did work in big corporations such as Toronto Dominion Bank and Chase Security. So, what are the factors that cause them decide to move?

Push Factors

First and foremost, the lack of opportunities in Canada is the key factor that turned the attention of most (n=15) of these young people to Hong Kong. We can further break this factor into two different dimensions: lacking promotion opportunities, and lacking a suitable job that fits their education and interest.

Perhaps the story of JL's son is the most striking example of the lack of promotion opportunities. At the age of 30, JL's son was already a manager of an internal unit of one of the major banks. According to JL, his son told him that his current position was the highest and unfortunately the ultimate appointment that he would have at this bank. His anticipation of his promotion limit was shared by a younger youth participant, Tom. He told us:

Then I stayed at XX (one of the major banks), 'cos I see some people working in my division, they are 40 years old and 50 years old, they are doing the same job as me. You know, some people, they graduated five years ago and they got into XX and then worked the same job, they didn't get promoted once in five years. So, I didn't want to stay in that kind of work. I wanted to go up and up and up. So, Canada would not provide that kind of opportunity for me. (Tom)

The experience of JL's son and Tom also indicate some systemic discrimination that this new generation of youth faces. A parent in Toronto has this observation:

Here we do not have many opportunities because I always feel that Asians seem to be doing worse in terms of senior management. It seems that the Caucasian moves up faster. In other words, we, people of yellow skin, are more difficult here in terms of promotion to senior position. (DQ)

This observation is shared by Shauna, who was working in a big accounting firm in Toronto before relocating to Hong Kong.

Um... they won't say it explicitly, right, because I mean there're laws and stuff against it. But I think if you have two people that have the same qualifications, they may experience ... I think it would be... the chances would be higher for um... like non-Chinese than a Chinese, yeah, yeah. (Shauna)

To many new generation youth who just started working, the idea of promotion was still remote. However, many of our participants did feel that Canada does not have many jobs that fit their interests, training, and ambition. Participants from Vancouver are particularly critical of the lack of opportunity in Vancouver:

To me, Vancouver is a nice city, but it's not really for [a] career. It's more for enjoyment, for pleasure, for hanging out maybe. (Linda)

I just, they [her friends] feel that it lacks job opportunities, and if they don't see the future, the job opportunities, the career in Vancouver, they'll just leave. (Jane).

Then, why not move to Toronto which is the financial centre of Canada? Many participants from Toronto did not see Toronto as any better.

Like I work in fashion and just it interests me ... I would consider my options in Toronto and there weren't many. (Joan)

Like Toronto, in terms of like uh... finance job, there're, there are not that much opportunity to fulfill the um... potential. (Frank)

To many young people who are ambitious in their careers, Canada is just not big enough for them.

I mean there's only two, three major like city centres in Canada where there's a lot of opportunities... but, I mean, if you look at the ratio, the population, or the job, job opportunities to population, it's getting low compared to..., to places like in the States or Asia. (Bill).

In brief, the nature and systemic discrimination of the Canadian job market have pushed many new generation youth to seek alternative job opportunities to fulfill their ambition. Then why did they choose Hong Kong, but not other countries such as the United States?

Pull Factors

In a few other studies on Canadian living in Hong Kong, the vibrant, dynamic, and rich opportunities of the Hong Kong labour market were reported as a major factor that drew Chinese immigrants back to Hong Kong (Ley and Kobayashi 2005; Zhang and DeGolyer 2011). Our youth participants confirm this factor. Fifteen of them explained their move due to better career and job opportunities in Hong Kong, which is a major world financial centre. To some (n=9) of these youth with cosmopolitan outlooks, Hong Kong also offers them exposure to the world, particularly Asia.

I wanted to explore the world. I want to, I mean,... before I start my family, I want to see the world. And Hong Kong was the first stop for me. (Tom)

I felt that there was just more... for me...outside of Vancouver. I wanted to explore the world a little more and see what other opportunities are out there, and... that's why I kind of made the decision to... to leave and explore Asia a bit. (Bill)

These are particularly attractive to participants who are interested in pursuing their career in the financial sector and studies in the area.

I stayed because the career opportunity is better and I am looking towards in the... the financial world, and Hong Kong is a financial centre, so that's why I decided to stay. (Ben)

Um, Hong Kong, there's a lot you can do, like Hong Kong, there's so many companies, there's like all for Asia, and then there's a lot of small firms, you can um... and looking at, if I look at that in Hong Kong and I compare it to Canada." (JeF)

It is not just the work opportunities but also promotion opportunities.

In terms of opportunities, I think, um, there is more...if you're just staying in Hong Kong, not in the country, but in Hong Kong I think there may be more prospects or opportunities here for people like Chinese-Canadians to move up as opposed to in Canada. (Shauna)

Although a few of them (n=4) did express difficulties getting a job in Hong Kong, most of them found their first job within three months. Nine of them reported that they have changed jobs at least once since they moved to Hong Kong.

The versatile environment and the fast pace of work also makes Hong Kong a challenging place for some who want to gain experience.

In Hong Kong you get everything, you get ... wealth management, if it doesn't manage professional banking experience, you get hedge fund, you get fund house in Hong Kong, you get international branded, you know, corporations in Hong Kong as well, because they usually headquarter in Asia, either in Hong Kong or Singapore, right, so that's why. I felt that I wanted to try the experience. (Mimi)

So I really enjoy this, and if I worked the same in Vancouver, I highly doubt I would have got to the same experience. So, only Hong Kong could afford something like this for me, other than maybe UK or America which are the other major hubs globally for finance because that's why I studied, right." (Sam)

Compared to the structural barriers in the Canadian job market, being Chinese from Canada seems to be a competitive advantage for them in Hong Kong. At least 11 of them expressed that their Canadian identity, language skills, and a foreign degree seem to make them more competitive than local Chinese youth.

...Because there's the perception that westernized people might be a little better because they have the advantage of their language skill, as they know how to speak well in English, and maybe they graduated from a westernized university or western university, which is maybe more prestigious or something. I am not sure, but... if you speak English, then it's, you have a more advantage over the people who don't speak it well. (Judy)

I think it does though, just because I am from overseas and the people would look at... I don't know, sometimes they look at people from overseas differently than the locals, 'cos they can speak English,... they have different perspectives and things... So like, it might give me opportunities (chuckles) and job if that's what you're asking. (Jackie)

This is particularly useful for them to compete for jobs in international corporations.

Hmm hmm, yeah...I mean, I speak a bit of French... obviously for maintaining friend sharing now. So, they were... quite happy that I speak French... 'cos it's obviously a French company... Yeah, so it definitely helps... most of... I noticed that most of the high, like the senior-level management in both companies that I work for are usually westerners, they are not generally like local or you know, or educated elsewhere, so. (Joan)

Yes, um, well, compared to... in terms of job hunting, it's a lot. We are more competitive than a local-born Chinese just working in Hong Kong, like they have to work a lot harder than us in order to achieve the same position. But in terms of like foreign study students are a lot easier to find a job, in terms of at least in corporate companies. (Jane).

In this study, we found that being young is also an important factor bridging the pull and push factors. Thirteen of them told us that it is a “worth a try”. It seems that being young, they wanted to try it out before they may regret not doing so, like Mimi said: I felt that I wanted to try the experience. I feel like if I didn’t try this when I am young, I would regret it.

Networks Capital and Relocation

Wong and Salaff (1998) find that network (or social) capital is critical for making migration decisions. Like one of our youth participants, Jane, said, “I wouldn’t mind working in New York, but... I have no friends there, and I have no relatives there.” Meanwhile, in the youth employment literature, it is often noted that parents and their personal networks play an important role in their early career. However, only one of our 18 youth participants had a parent in Hong Kong upon arrival. Learning from the parent participants, they may also have very limited social capital from their parents to connect them with job. All the 12 parent participants reported that they no longer have the social capital that they could use to help their child find work there, because they themselves had left HK over 10 years ago, and their previous networks are not functional anymore. So, how helpful are parents in their relocation process?

Most parent and youth participants reported that they have extended family in Hong Kong. This is the major social capital that most parents have tried to mobilize to support their child’s relocation. Practically, their extended family could solve the major challenges for their settlement in Hong Kong, like housing.

In terms [of housing], I was lucky because with my relatives here..., we have a, you know, place to stay, so I didn’t have to fret about, you know, finding

a place to rent or whatever, like it was already kind of settled when I came back. (Shauna)

Indeed, most of these participants stayed with their relatives at least once when they arrived in Hong Kong. Since housing is extremely expensive in Hong Kong, this did help many of them to get settled. Meanwhile, according to almost all the parent participants, they have provided financial support so their child could rent a place during the early stages of their settlement in Hong Kong. As parent CY reported: "I transferred a sum of money to Hong Kong but not to her. I gave it to my relative (with whom her child stayed). And then sometime[s], my child will also contribute some money to them".

Emotionally, relatives also provide them with a feeling of home.

Relatives, like having relatives here, that would make it nice, I guess, because as a kid, I was growing up, I didn't really have a chance to meet so many of them so often and now I mean, in front of the dinner every so often itself where I would, as I was in Vancouver, I did it once a year or once every two years, right. So, I think it's really nice, yeah, especially during the holidays, it's like, like Chinese New Year, it's like you get here everyone, it's like it makes me feel like it's like home. (JeF)

I have all my family here. Only my parents were...they emigrated to Canada, so when I came to Hong Kong, I was very welcome to the, into the family that live here. So, adjusting wasn't too bad. (Tim)

Compared to family, our participants reported that friends have significant impacts on the relocation decision of many young people. Six parents reported that their child found their first job in Hong Kong through friends, and 11 youth participants told us that their friends were the reason why they chose to relocate to Hong Kong.

I think another major drive is that my friends who also studied in similar subjects...most of them are my high school friends and, you know, the high

school friends kind of like your best friends for the whole life, not, not elementary school, not university, but high school friends, 'cos that when you grow up, you share the same values, same secrets, same stories. You know, they all studied similar subjects and most of them came back to Hong Kong. So, that, that's a major drive ... (Sam)

For me, a lot of my university friends, like uh, a lot of them actually came back, like those who didn't go to big firms, they're accountant, they came back to Hong Kong, it's actually for the... who went to finance, they all came back. I mean, there's a large majority of my friends, so it's like when I go back to Canada. (JeF)

Their friends are not limited to those returnees who moved to Canada from Hong Kong at an older age. Some of their friends are also new generation youth who were also born in Canada.

A lot of my friends came back from Toronto as well. They were like born there as well. (Tom)

However, those friends are not a major source of help for finding a job. Only seven of the 18 youth participants mentioned that they found a job through their social network. Most of them found their job online.

Living in Hong Kong: A Sojourn Experience

Most youth participants enjoyed the vibrant and cosmopolitan lifestyle in Hong Kong and, to some of them (n=8), that is another factor that pulled them to Hong Kong.

There's a whole bunch of fun place[s], everything is open until whenever, right. It's not like Vancouver, going to study, and things are open until... seven would be like late already, okay, and then you have to go home and that's all you do. ... I guess so much going on, the things in Hong Kong... (Mimi)

In Toronto, it's kind of boring, like all you do is probably go to work and then at night you just go home and you just come out for dinner and that's it. But like... like there's no shopping malls are open till eleven, when like shopping here is probably closes at eleven or even later. And then there's... bars and everything, everywhere. So that's why I want to come here. (Jackie)

Although they enjoy the vibrant and dynamic side of Hong Kong, most of them try to maintain a "Canadian" lifestyle. This includes drinking in bars, watching hockey, reading Canadian newspapers, and drinking Starbucks coffee.

I love hockey. Actually I love hockey. I try to like, you know, I still work in a break...like uh [a] Canuck game through my I-Phone [laughs]. ...Yeah, I... that's what I do, I, you know, I, sometimes I try to like watch hockey...at work. (Allan)

News, I usually check uh, when I do check news... I do check more our western news ... If I go on Google news, I usually check the Canadian news section. (Tim)

As Frank summed up, they tend to search for Canadian connections:

But then like sometimes, like after I come back here, you would know that like... doesn't make sense, your mind is like searching through the Canadian style.

Concentric Friendship Circle

Their desire for Canadian connections is manifested in the pattern of their social circle, which also shows their detachment from Hong Kong society. It seems that there is a pattern of friendship networks developed among these participants. Canadian-Chinese, who are mostly former classmates, friends, and friends of friends, particularly from the same city, form their core friendship circle, and then they are surrounded by Chinese from other English-speaking countries or those who have studied abroad.

I mean I know a lot of friends here who are Canadian as well, who have similar background as me, uh... who didn't grow up here. Um, so I mean I am here with them a lot, I guess. (Joan)

That'd be a mix from everywhere. I don't really have a group of friends from one place, but surprisingly or coincidentally like probably 60% are Canadian. (Allan)

At the outer margin, they tended to first extend their friendship network to English-speaking expatriates before local Chinese. Indeed, only three youth participants explicitly reported that they have significant local Chinese friends. Most reported that they do not hangout with local Chinese very often.

So, a lot of them are actually from the States, like LA, or ... some of them are from Australia, some are just local, I guess Hong Kong citizens. But I say the majority of my friends right now in Hong Kong are from overseas. (Ben)

Colleagues that I hang out with, uh, where they either have more foreign exposure, they are not as Chinese as they normally are. (Mimi)

The one that relocated back, like I think it's easier to connect with them and hang out with them versus with the local people too. (Shauna)

Many of them reported some difficulties in making friends with local Chinese youth. Cultural difference seems to be a key factor.

I won't say difficult, but it will take longer because I think they'd have a, they have a thought that... they have a strong feeling that I am not a local, or maybe the way that I think is not local. (Cindy)

... the local kids actually grow up in Hong Kong, those ones I think people like me have actually [a] hard time talking to because [of] a large cultural difference. Yeah, it is different. Education and the culture, standard of living, everything is a lot different, eh... It's hard to be friend[s]; it's not impossible, but then [there's] less stuff to talk about. (Allan)

Other than daily cultural differences, such as language and activities, their attitudes towards work are also different too.

They're [local Hong Kong youth], they don't like sports. Apparently they don't like outdoor stuff. Uh, they are not as... I think it's... the education system is different. They take instructions...more. And we would challenge instructions when they don't make sense to us. So, I think we are more um... because of education environment that taught us to be... to have a stronger critical thinking, and to challenge things... when you don't agree to it. So I think we are in that position more than Chinese people in Hong Kong. (Mimi)

Comparing it to like say a Chinese person, you know, their culture is very different as well, right. They're more focused on uh... like I would say a majority of Chinese who are really focused on obtaining wealth, wealth, wealth, wealth, right or something, just different values, right, maybe, maybe even, even uh, when you socialize with the Chinese versus Canadian, you kind of see the difference. (Bill)

Their social network indicates that, unlike the general sense of return migrants who tend to have an extensive local network, this group of new generation youth seems more like a sojourn from Canada. Their connection to local society is limited to their work life.

Cultural Shock

Many have also experienced the cultural shock of working and living in Hong Kong. The notorious crowded, noisy, and polluted environment of Hong Kong is tough on some of these youth.

It's noisy, it's... yeah, that was the culture shock. It was too noisy when I first came back. Everything's too noisy, even when I wanted to sit down and enjoy just a very simple meal. That was not possible... People speaking loud, noise coming everywhere, from people, from, from, from ... even people facing down like to make a loud sound, right. That's terrible. Um, um, cars

honking everywhere, honking for no reasons, um... traffic lights making tick, tick, tick, tick, tick noise, yeah, that's really annoying. Everything is annoying. Um, too much light. Look at this, it's... counting number of lights in this room you see... So... not just sound pollution, but even light pollution. That's, that's also, that's also very annoying. Um... uh people stay up late, yeah. And I remember when I first came back, people, people made compliments about how I looked. (Sam)

Meanwhile, the reserved attitude and the nasty office politics in Hong Kong are also a shock to them.

Culturally, uh, I wasn't so used to the crowds, and so... I am not so used to people not smiling on the street... I just think that a lot of Hong Kong people are really, they're really... they are not too open about themselves, right. I don't know how to describe, they are too reserved ... I think a lot of Hong Kong locals are too reserved. They don't look happy all the time, and they look stressed out, and a lot of them are really, really tired. (Tom)

In Vancouver, a boss or a team leader and a teammate doesn't really matter. I mean, we have a really equal side. In Hong Kong, since a boss is a boss, and... when he says, you'd better shut up (chuckles)... but I think I like more this... I mean, still there's some traditional stuff that I don't understand... (Cindy)

Many of these youth participants reported that they (n=11) have to work long hours every day, and they are expected to stay late.

I have to be okay, because working in Hong Kong is like that. It's all overtime. (Jane)

No, not much actually because I have to work long hours here and sometimes four hours, sometimes 14 hours a day. (Sam)

Indeed, adjusting to the work culture in Hong Kong can be very stressful to many of them.

But I just leave on time, right. So, basically, they would just think that I am not working hard, right, but from my perspective, I just want to have my

own life, you know. Like that's the majority Canadian would think of, with that thinking, you know. But then they just don't confer about my thinking, so I would think that, oh, that's really traditional Chinese thinking. (Frank)

After a while, a few of them noticed that they were changed by the Hong Kong culture.

They've noticed also and they, a lot of my other friends who moved here, they have noticed that, you know, they are more like, you know, when things aren't... 'cos Hong Kong is very efficient, when it's not, up to that level elsewhere like when you go back to Toronto, everything is so slow, like you know, why isn't it happening, like why is the subway not fast, why isn't there something for... like that type of thing and yeah. (Joan)

Coming from Canada, I would say, oh, please or thank you. Very simple, in Hong Kong, please and thank you, they don't know what you are talking about, right. You have to be a little bit... rude to them, right. And I said, well, that's uh... you know, that's a big difference what I'm used to in Canada, right. Um, but I mean, I guess it's a culture here, everybody is stressed all the time, a lot of people work so hard, they work for a long, long time for themselves. That's why they said it's understandable why Hong Kong locals would be very... like a lot ruder and a lot, a lot less, a lot less friendly, right... than the westerners, Canadians. (Tom)

"Canada is My Home"

Their cultural shock experience also raised the issue of the perception of their status in Hong Kong. Being Canadian, many felt that they came with a Canadian perspective that differentiates them from local Chinese. They also tended to use Canadian cultural values and practices to distinguish themselves from local Chinese.

I guess I consider myself [more] Canadian than Hong Kong. Like, Canada is my... in my mind. ... It's just my bond toward Canada as opposed to my bond toward Hong Kong. I may.. I.. for example, if Hong Kong versus Canada

was in a certain sport match, I would definitely be cheering for Canada.

(Tim)

In Hong Kong, I am still Canadian. I refuse to speak Cantonese, sometimes.

(Betty)

To many of them, their Canadian identity is important. It defines who they are.

... It's a, I mean, it has some importance to me because I think Canadians...

I mean, I grew up being Canadian, so, I think that means Canadian is uh important to me... (Bill)

I say Canadian-Chinese, but not Chinese-Canadian because Canadian first and then Chinese comes second. (Tom)

We also approached this question by asking them where their home is.

Consistently, we hear from them that "Canada is my home." (Tom)

I mean, even until now when I come back to Hong Kong, I still want to go back to Vancouver. I miss it a lot, because it's honestly my home. I mean Hong Kong is my second home, but initially Vancouver is always my home. I grew up there, I studied there, I lived there all my life. (Jane)

I feel nothing HK is home for me like home for me is Toronto. (Joan)

To many of them, their connection with Canada is not through formal channels such as the Canadian Consulate. Most of them did not report any contact with the Consulate. Instead, their immediate family still residing in Canada is their key connection with Canada.

I call my mom at the other day, and then I asked her, oh, what's going on in Canada, how's the weather, how's everything in Vancouver and so, I mean, I still get to know everything in Vancouver. (Betty)

Canada to them is also a place that they will seek refuge if anything goes wrong in Hong Kong.

If anything fails, I can go back to Canada. (Tim)

...'Cos you can always, you know, if you have anything, or if you have any problems with yourself, you can always go back to Canada, you'll be entitled to it. (Jane)

Indeed, almost all of them are planning to return to Canada one day, either to raise their own children or to retire.

I might look at having a family... Like I would go back to Canada because it's just more relaxed over there, and it feels like it has a sense of home. (JeF)

Well, hopefully like when I retire, go back to Vancouver. (Betty)

However, when they were interviewed, none of them had any plans to return to Canada soon.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Under the banner of Canadians abroad, the 300,000 Canadians residing in Hong Kong have diverse reasons for moving to Hong Kong. The undesirable labour market in Canada and the economic and career opportunities in Hong Kong are the dominant push and pull factors that are shared by many of them. To many Chinese-Canadians who were born in Hong Kong and moved to Canada at an older age, their move to Hong Kong can easily be justified by their familiarities with the city, family bonds and social networks, and recognition of their education qualifications and work experiences. If they also obtained a certain qualification from Canada, their foreign degree and proficiency in English privileged them in the local job market.

The 18 youth participants of this study share some of these reasons. However, unlike the "returnee", these young people are unique in a few different ways. First, they have no immediate family in Hong Kong. Second, although 11 of them were born in Hong Kong, their connection with Hong Kong is largely based on their family's Hong Kong style of living and a few occasions

of visiting Hong Kong in person. Third, many only have minimal language skills to get by in Hong Kong. Fourth, their sense of belonging in Hong Kong is minimal judging from their friendship circle and sense of home. To many of these young people, going to Hong Kong is “worth a try”; it’s an adventure. So, one day, they will go home, i.e., return to Canada.

Their uniqueness also raises a conceptual question for transnational migration studies: how do they fit in the migration circle? Are they “returnee”? We can understand these questions from a life cycle perspective. Being young and ambitious in career development, the relocation of these youth can be understood as seeking economic opportunity transnationally to achieve a major development task of early adulthood. This group of new generation youth is equipped with higher education qualifications from a Western country, proficient English language skills, and substantial living experience in a multicultural society. These have already made them a valuable human resource in the global labour market. Coming from immigrant families (Jones 2000) and having experience, albeit minimal in this case, of childhood transnational travel to their parents’ homeland (Lauer and Wong 2010) may help ease the dilemma of leaving home to seek better opportunities transnationally. Their intention of raising a family and/or retiring in Canada certainly fits their transnational migration as well as their life cycle. It also suggests that they are not “returnee” but the first-generation transnational migrants starting a circular transnational movement.

However, the life cycle perspective can also be applied to the family. From this perspective, these youth are following a continuous transnational migration started by their parents. Their relocation to their parents’ homeland cannot be disconnected from their parents’ transnational migration history. Returning to the definition of transnationalism provided by Basch, Glick-Schiller, and

Blanc-Szanton (1994, p. 6), what this group of youth has done is to continue the process of strategically “forge[ing] and sustain[ing] multi-stranded social relations that link together the [immigrant family’s] societies of origin and settlement.” Some immigrant families may one day cut their ties with their ancestor’s society of origin. But many have kept a very active transnational connection with both societies for many generations. From this perspective, the stories of these 18 new generation youth may just be another version of “returnee”.

Finally, will this be a temporary phenomenon of a particular immigrant group, or a possible trend of many other groups that may follow in the future? The experience of the Hong Kong Chinese community is not an isolated phenomenon. For instance, with the rise of the information technology industry in India, will youth from the South Asian immigrant community follow the same pattern? Answers to these questions may point to various policy implications. Without understanding the logic behind this migration, the invisibility of this phenomenon may further hamper policy response to both the positive and negative consequences of this phenomenon. Certainly the loss of this highly educated group of young people implies a brain drain issue. This is particularly critical to Canada, a country which has tried hard to solicit highly talented and skilled labour globally. To keep these young people in Canada, we will need better policies to improve and diversify the economic structure, as well as to ensure a fair labour market and minimize systemic discrimination against the visible minorities. Meanwhile, as a country respects people’s right of mobility, Canada also needs to better engage the Canadians living abroad. They are transnational resources that, so far, have not been properly connected and mobilized for local economy in Canada. As Zhang (2006) summarizes,

Canadians living abroad can have tremendous contributions to their home country if the right policies are in place to include them.

To conclude, this exploratory study has shed light on the transnational migration of a group of new generation youth from Chinese immigrant families. Their stories present some challenges to both conceptual and policy understanding of transnational migration. Due to the technical difficulties of keeping track of the actual size of this group of Canadians living abroad, more studies will be needed to improve the picture of their situations and the implications for Canadian society. Echoing Portes's (1994) suggestion that new generation youth are being neglected in immigration studies, there is a great need to understand the new generation youth from immigrant families who are now a major force in the local labour market in many immigrant countries.

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