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THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MASTER OF MEDIA, CULTURE AND CREATIVE CITIES

SOCI 8030 CAPSTONE PROJECT

**“EXAMINING THE IDENTITY OF THE POST-80s GENERATION IN HONG KONG
THROUGH CANTOPOP”**

submitted by

DOROTHY NIEH

31 JULY, 2016

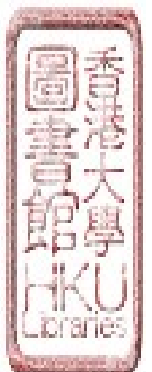


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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to find out and examine the identity of the Post-80s generation in Hong Kong through Cantopop, and more importantly, the impact of Cantopop to the formation of the identity of the Post-80s generation in Hong Kong.

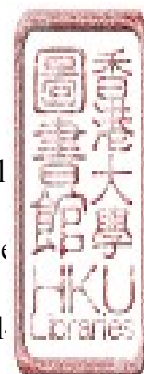
Originating in the 1970s, Cantopop reached its height of popularity in the 1980s and 1990s. It slowly declined in the 2000s due to the effect of illegal downloads and piracy of copyright. Even so, the impact of Cantopop throughout different generations is still strong.

Similar to other literature creations, the lyrics of Cantopop reflected not only the social sentiment and personal emotions, it is also a spiritual part of the culture of Hong Kong, which made this city more human and three-dimensional, and shaped the identity of the people in the city, through different generations.

It is worth to look into how Cantonese, the mother dialect of most Hong Kong people, plays an important role in shaping one's identity and self-realisation, through different forms of media, particularly in the form of Cantopop songs.

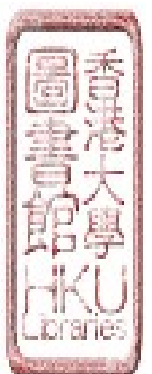
By the upward economic development and social changes in the 70s, the sense of Hong Kong identity had begun to emerge in Hong Kong. Hong Kong identity should not only refer to the ethnicity or nationality which most people would automatically take this objective trait into account, but also comprised the social and cultural dimensions of the experience of daily life by the people living in Hong Kong (Turner, 2003).

As an inhabitant living in Hong Kong, where is an international city with multicultural autonomous, dynamic and energetic elements rooting in society, would you simply describe yourself as a Hongkonger? If the answer is Yes, do you mean you embrace or adopt the val



ues, heritage, or collective memory which are commonly shared within Hong Kong community? If the answer is opposite, does it mean the person living in Hong Kong whom upholds resistance to the Hong Kong Identity? The answer is not just a dimensional reasoning of identity but a multi-faceted reasoning of how people categorise themselves in a complex society nowadays. Identity is always an interesting topic to talk about because it covers many perspectives including ethnical, philosophical, psychological, sociological, cultural, political and morphological, and popular culture plays an important part in the formation of one's identity.

This research aiming to use Cantopop as a medium to examine the formation and positioning of the identity of Post-80s generation of Hong Kong, and to study the impact of Cantopop on this unique generation of Hong Kong. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with participants born between 1980 - 1989. Despite the small sampling, it is found that Cantopop did play an important role in shaping the identity of Post-80s generation in Hong Kong. It is a common language and self-reflecting medium of this generation. It is also discovered that among the Post-80s generation, there are two cohorts (1980-1984 & 1985-1989) which have different views against the Cantopop and identity issues. This research topic is worth to further develop with larger sampling data and may extend to comparison among different generations of Hong Kong in the future.

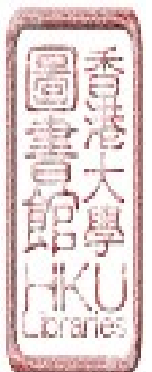


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate my most sincere gratitude to Dr. Travis KONG for his continuous guidance, patience and coaching through this Capstone Project. As a part-time student, I was always occupied by daytime work and could not dedicate myself to the study wholeheartedly. However, Dr. Travis KONG never gives up on me. Instead, he coached me like a father and inspired me the right direction of conducting this research. I would like to thank him for his support in the first place.

My sincere gratitude has to be dedicated to Mr. Douglas YOUNG, the CEO and founder of Goods Of Desire. He is a very interesting and open-minded person and it was so enjoyable to have a Community Partner as Goods Of Desire, which allowed us the utmost flexibility and at the same time provided us as much as assistance as possible. This research could not be completed without his valuable inspiration and guidance.

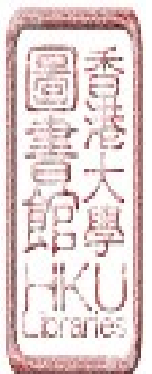
My thanks shall also go to all other professors and lecturers of Master of Social Sciences in Media, Culture & Creative Cities, including Dr. Au-yeung Shing, Dr. Tom McDonald, Dr. Victor Shin, Dr. Carmen Tong, Dr. Tommy Tse, Dr. Gary Wong, and two heavy-weighted supreme guest lecturers, Dr. Lui Tai-lok and Dr. Ng Chun-hung. Thank you for your kind advices and guidance on my presentations. I would always remember the happy memento on 25 June 2016, during the final presentation of our Capstone projects - when I was singing a Cantopop to demonstrate its importance in shaping one's identity, Dr. Gary Wong rang the bell on the table to indicate the time was up - the timing could not be more perfect and laughters were all around the classroom. It ended my presentation in the highest note and that was definitely one of the best memories of the class.



This research project would not be made possible if it was not supported by the participation of my participants. All of the eight participants voluntarily spare their own time to facilitate this research with precious and valuable insights. Although the interviews were long and exhaustive, none of them raised any complain and all of them were so helpful and encouraging.

Thank you my parents, my mentors and my precious friends, for having faith in me and encouraging me to take up the challenges in studying a Master Degree in Media, Culture & Creative Cities. Thank you the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences and The University of Hong Kong for taking me as a postgraduate student in Sociology. It is definitely true that the course offers me a way of seeing myself, my community and society more broadly, creatively and critically.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my fellow classmates of Master of Social Sciences in Media, Culture & Creative Cities, especially my beloved group mates: Mon Leung, Eddie Ng, Angela Pang and Vien Tsang. I shall never be able to complete this long journey without your love and support. Thanks for your friendship, advice, laughter and accompany, which made this postgraduate study journey so remarkable and enjoyable.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

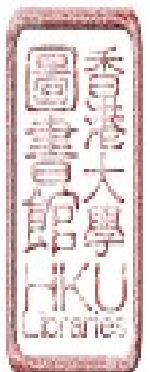
1.1 Background of This Research

(Photo source: NOW.com)

It all started with a soft drink promotion campaign in the summer of 2015, Hong Kong.



By that time, I just finished my first year programme of Master of Social Sciences in Media, Culture & Creative Cities and I had to start thinking about my Capstone Project. As the social atmosphere of the city was so suffocating and some of my friends around started to question about their identity issues, I want to do a research relating to identity, about the Hong Kong Pop culture and Hong Kong identity of a generation. I went into a convenience shop and saw that new Coca-Cola promotion campaign, which involved 72 well-known Cantopop lyrics (covering love, family, motivation and encouragement through the 80s to 00s). It is collective memory across different generations of Hong Kong. Those well-known lyrics of Cantopop were printed on Coca-Cola cans and it became so unique that people are hunting those specially designed cans from one shop to another. From the social media platform, you could see people were collecting those lyrics cans and used those lyrics to represent / expres:



themselves. It made me realised that Cantopop is not only part of the Hong Kong Pop culture, it is also a collective memory, a common language, and an identity.

Originating in the 1970s, Cantopop reached its height of popularity in the 1980s and 1990s. It slowly declined in the 2000s due to the effect of illegal downloads and piracy of copyright. Even so, the impact of Cantopop through out different generations is still strong.

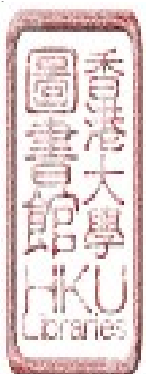
Similar to other literature creations, the lyrics of Cantopop reflected not only the social sentiment and personal emotions, it is also a spiritual part of the culture of Hong Kong, which made this city more human and three-dimensional, and shaped the identity of the people in the city, through different generations.

It is worth to look into how Cantonese, the mother dialect of most Hong Kong people, plays an important role in shaping one's identity and self-realisation, through different forms of media, particularly in the form of Cantopop songs.

Hence, I decided to set put the focus of my Capstone project in examining the identity of Hong Kong people through Cantopop. I want to examine the correlation between one's identity and the Cantopop lyrics. It is not an easy task, and I am very lucky that my Community Partner, Goods of Desire, agreed and supported my research direction.

1.2 My Community Partner

The beauty of Capstone Project is that we have the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with the Community Partners, who are experienced practitioners and non-governmental bodies in the fields of media, culture and creative cities. It allows us to integrate and apply the knowledge and skills we had acquired through the two-year study of Master of Social Sci

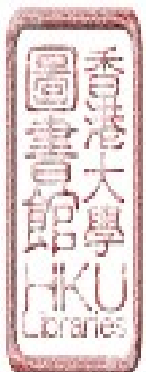


ences in Media, Culture & Creative Cities programme to real life, perform down-to-ground researches and creates an all-win situation.

My Community Partner is Goods of Desire (G.O.D.), a quintessential Hong Kong life-style brand found by CEO Mr. Douglas YOUNG in 1996, featuring homeware, fashion and premium gifts with a distinct Hong Kong flair. The Chinese name of G.O.D. “住好啲” means "to live better" in Cantonese and it phonetically resembles the characters“G.O.D.”. As introduced in G.O.D.’s website, since 1996, G.O.D. was once a small retail space in Ap Lei Chau. Under the leadership of Mr. Douglas YOUNG, it develops into a well-established, multi-faceted local brand, remixing and representing Hong Kong culture, providing a sophisticated image of the city for all the international audience. Proudly flying the flag of Hong Kong, their designs are uniquely made and are inspired by the vibrant culture of this energetic city where east meets west, and remixed the old Canton traditions with nowadays technology. With humour and creativity, they turn everyday subjects into truly extraordinary objects. Their award-winning and highly acclaimed products may be found throughout Hong Kong and are also available in many of the world's finest stores (Goods Of Desire, 2016).

Three meetings were held with Mr. Douglas YOUNG, my academic supervisor Dr. Travis KONG and my fellow classmates respectively on 4 Aug 2015, 5 Oct 2015 and 9 March 2016 to explore the topic and to report the progress for the Capstone Project.

During the first meeting, Mr. Douglas YOUNG shared a lot of his views and we had a thorough discussion on various cultural issues, including generation differences, cultural identity and the value of Cantonese in Hong Kong’s culture. Douglas mentioned, "Cantonese is a treasure and Hong Kong people deserves Cantonese.” The spirit of G.O.D. is the spirit of

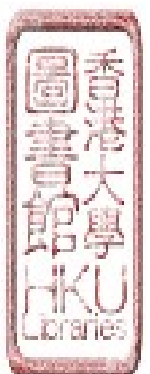


Hong Kong culture, and one of the most shining elements of Hong Kong culture is Cantopop. Hence, I decided to propose my intention to examine the identity of Hong Kong people through Cantopop for this Capstone research.

During the second meeting, my fellow classmates and I prepared the research proposals and explained our ideas to Mr. Douglas YOUNG in the presence of our academic supervisor Dr. Travis KONG. Mr. Douglas YOUNG showed his full support to our ideas and endorsed our research directions. After further discussions, we decided to go for this research direction, and agreed to lock the research targets at the Post-80s generation in Hong Kong because of its uniqueness and complexity. Mr. Douglas YOUNG shared some of his view towards the new Hong Kong generation, and agreed to arrange one of his staff (who is a Post-80s generation of Hong Kong) to be one of my participants.

The third meeting was held on 9 March 2016 with my fellow classmates. We updated Mr. Douglas YOUNG the progress of our Capstone Projects, and I took that opportunity to conduct an in-depth interview with Adrian, one of the G.O.D. product designers, who is a Post-80s generation of Hong Kong. The interview was successfully conducted and the result is fruitful.

The final finding of this research maybe able to provide my Community Partner, Goods Of Desire, a new angle of the characteristics of the Post-80s generation in Hong Kong. In a long run, it may assist the management to set the marketing directions and strategies, and assist the designers to create tailor-made products for different generations of Hong Kong.



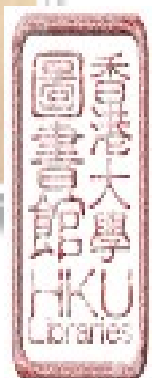
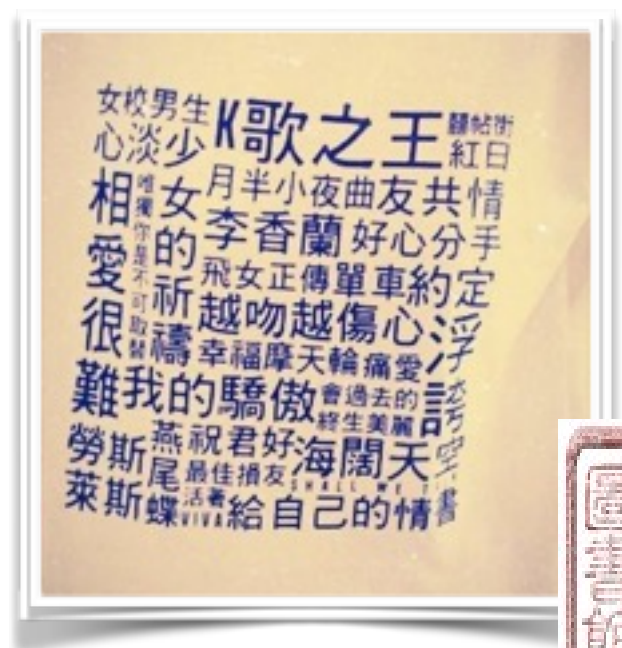
1.3 Research Objectives

This Capstone project aims to find out and examine the identity of the Post-80s generation in Hong Kong through Cantopop, and more importantly, the impact of Cantopop to the formation of the identity of the Post-80s generation in Hong Kong.

To start off, it will first outline the definition of “identity”, “Post-80s generation” and “Cantopop”. In the methodology session, the methodology used in this research, nature and number of participants involved, procedures of the research, limitation of the research and qualitative analysis will also be discussed. Last but not least, key research findings will be summarized, followed by a conclusion of the research.



(Photo source: cafepress.com)



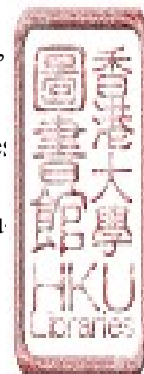
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Music is always a powerful media to implement or spread the idea of social norms, political values or traditional customs. It invariably composes in a pleasurable rhythm with infectious pattern and catchy lyric with abundant pathos in which national anthem is a good example to manifest the power of music. Taking the medal award ceremony in Olympic game to explicate the relation between music (national song) and national identity (nationalism), those athletes on award-winning stage are inevitably arousing the feeling or passion toward their country when playing their national song because the anthem is a symbol of their nation where they are thoroughly devoted. By depicting this emotional phenomenon, K. R. Minogue states that “flags and anthems can be used to create members of a nation by developing new habits and emotions” (Minogue, 1967). In the other words, a national song is undoubtedly as a tool to reinforce the national identity or nationalism.

With the perception of identity formation by music, I am curious the possibility of developing Hong Kong identity with the popular music in Hong Kong among the Post-80s. Therefore, this research will engage with the literature on identity formation, Hong Kong popular music studies and the features of Post-80s generation.

2.1 Identity

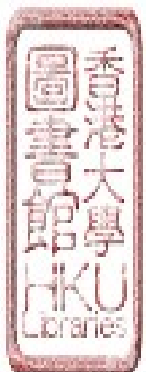
According to Hall (2002), “Identities are not fixed but subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Identities, rather than ‘identity’, are a matter of ‘becoming’ ‘unstable points of identification’ of which we are ‘positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past’”. Identities are a flowing and living concept, which influences one’s thinking, behaviour, and responses in his/her everyday life.



The foundation of this research is inspired by the “Hong Kong Four Generations” (四代香港人) (Lui, 2007). In his book, Dr. Lui categorised of four generations of Hong Kong people, namely the first generation (1920s-30s), the second generation (1946-1965), the third generation (1966-1975) and the forth generation (1976-1990). Each generation is distinguished from the others with its own characteristics. The first generation is quiet and hard-working, and they created the liberal-minded environment in which the second generation was free to develop. That second generation, formed by the post-war baby boomers, gave the city its current shape. Those born between 1966 and 1975 belong to Lui's third generation of Hongkongers, while his fourth generation was born between 1976 and 1990, including the Post-80s.

By the upward economic development and social changes in the 70s, the sense of Hong Kong identity had begun to emerge in Hong Kong. Hong Kong Identity should not only refer to the ethnicity or nationality which most people would automatically take this objective trait into account, but also comprised the social and cultural dimensions of the experience of daily life by the people living in Hong Kong (Turner, 2003).

As an inhabitant living in Hong Kong, where is an international city with multicultural, autonomous, dynamic and energetic elements rooting in society, would you simply describe yourself as a Hongkonger? If the answer is Yes, do you mean you embrace or adopt the values, heritage, or collective memory which commonly sharing within Hong Kong community? If the answer is opposite, does it mean the person living in Hong Kong whom upholds resistance to the Hong Kong Identity? I guess the answer is not just a dimensiona reasoning of identity but a multi-faceted reasoning of how people categorise themselves in a complex society nowadays. Identity is always an interesting topic to talk about because it is



covering many perspectives including ethnical, philosophical, psychological, sociological, cultural, political and morphological etc.

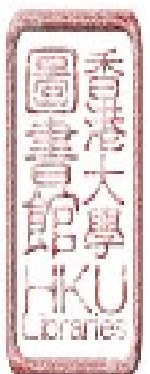
2.2 Post-80s Generation

The term " Post-80s" originally emerged in Mainland China referring to the generation who was typically spoiled by the one-child policy and behaved much self-centred comparing with earlier generations. Nowadays in Hong Kong, Post-80s is usually depicted as an aggregate who is very keen on social issues and takes part actively in public affairs.

I adopted the concept that Post-80s as a generation whose age, when operationalised in empirical studies, refers to the people who was born between 1980-1989, ranging from 27-36 years-old today (Chiu & Leung, 2010; DeGolyer, 2010; Wu, 2010; Yip, 2011). Using their biological age as a cut off, I adopted the traditional birth cohort analysis as they differentiate one generation from another entirely based on the individual's birth year, with which the dividing line is usually drawn every 10-year (Glenn, 1977; Ryder, 1965).

Some traits shared by the Post-80s generation:

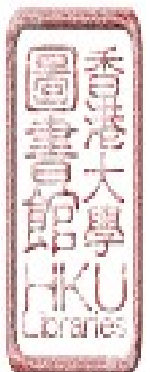
- The post-80s generation in general has a higher education level comparing to the same age group in earlier years due to the more sufficient educational opportunities;
- However, higher education is no longer a guarantee in pursuit of career with job security in terms of salary, welfare, development, or prosperous future;
- Some research found that this generation participates actively in social affairs and even more concerned with the local interests (such as the preservation of culture, heritage, en



vironment and the demand for a democratic government) rather than personal interest (Cheng, 2014); and

- Moreover, other studies also suggested that the post-80s generation is quite devoted to pursuing a sound political system in which the existing functional constituencies should be cancelled and aimed to implement a universal suffrage. (Chiu & Leung, 2010)

As time goes by, Post-80s generation no longer represents the youngest generation as it was replaced by the raise of Post-90s and Post-00s generations. However, the uniqueness of Post-80 generation is irreplaceable. This unique cohort is aged from 27-36 nowadays. They are now the upraising generation of the society. Throughout their lives, they went through the handover (1997), the 500,000 people march against Article 23 on 1 July (2003), the SARS outbreak (2003), the resignation of Chief Executive (CE) Tung (2005), two CE elections (2008 & 2012), and the Occupy Central Movement (some called it “The Umbrella Movement”)(2014). Unlike the Post-70s generations who have a longer time of experience under the colonial governance of the British government (before 1997) and the Post-90s generations who proportionally experienced longer under the governing of HKSAR government (after 1997), the Post-80s generation have a half & half situation - about half of their lives are before the handover and half are after the handover. It increases the exposure and complexity of the Post-80s generation. In addition, they also experienced the raise and decline of the Cantopop and hence, I decided to conduct this research exclusively with this unique generation cohort.



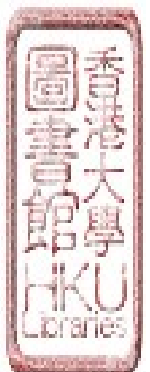
2.3 Cantopop

The term, Cantopop, literally means the Hong Kong popular music performing in Cantonese. This term can be tracked way back to 1970s and was labelled by Billboard. Cantopop had developed a rapidly growing market by the end of the 1970s and spread widely and successfully from local market to the market of south east Asia for more than decade.

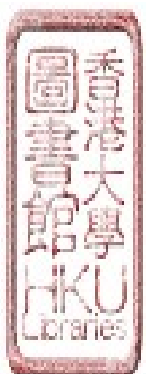
Cantopop to me is not just a song or kind of entertainment, but also the channel for expressing my emotions and thinking, as well as serving a medium for sharing any unspeakable value or feelings toward some social issues among peer.

Some scholars had conducted researches on the analysis of the relationship between Cantopop songs, the local cultural environment and its relationship to a broader global framework. Witzleben (1999) examined the role of Cantopop throughout critical period of Hong Kong - before, on, and after the hand-over of Hong Kong to China, while another examined how the production of Cantopop was influenced by the processes of globalisation and localisation (Ho, 2003).

Such studies assisted me to understand how Cantopop has been affected by various regional, national and international currents. These studies also direct the attention to the issues of identity formation in the development of Cantopop. Further, Witzleben suggests that it is crucial to understand the social and cultural dimensions of Cantopop by looking into the problems of the ambiguity of “readership” and “multiple interpretations” in the construction of meaning and value in music. (Fu, 2008).



This research, therefore, would use Cantopop as a medium, to examine the formation and positioning of the identity of Post-80s generation of Hong Kong, and to study the impact of Cantopop on this unique generation of Hong Kong.



3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted to capture and produce in-depth knowledge by collecting data on Post-80s generations' personal perspectives and experiences on the research question, such as impact of Cantopop in their lives, the forming of their identity and the co-relation between their identity and Cantopop. By conducting a non-standardised interview, the research will be able to “elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis. Its objective is to find out what kinds of things are happening that researcher already believes can happen.” (Fielding & Thomas, 2001; Lofland, 1971)

In order to “encourage respondents to communicate their underlying attitudes, beliefs and values” (Fielding & Thomas, 2001), the research technique of conducting an in-depth interview was chosen so as to provide a set of open-ended questions for the participants to share their own insights or views based on their experiences and opinions. The aim is to collect textual data for analysis and coming up with the findings based on the collected information.

As Kok (2014) mentioned, “to study the complex configuration of one’s social identity, a construct that is almost intangible, abstract and bodiless, researcher can only rely on the narratives of the targeted research subject throughout the process of examination.” (p.35). As Mcdams and Janis (2004) said, “the central idea animating narrative based approaches to theory and research in the behavioural and social sciences is that human beings make sense of their lives and their world through stories” (p.160). Hence, the way gather the utmost information of the participants’ inner self would be inviting them to do qualitative interviews, so



they would have the opportunity to reflect their own experiences, and examine their identity through Cantopop in an interview setting.

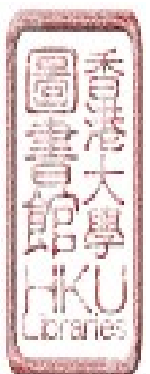
3.2 Nature and Number of Participants

As mentioned in the previous session, the terms “Post-80s” was firstly adopted in China, widely used to describe the first generation born under the one-child policy enforced in Mainland China (Chen, 2008). It was later adopted and popularised in Hong Kong through a wide coverage of media as a frame to organise any topic related to the younger generation who were born between 1980-1989 (Wu, 2010; Yip 2011).

In order to cover the broadest demographic variations of the Post-80s generation within a limited number of research participants, the same principle of sampling used by Kok (2014) was applied in this research . The profile of the participants was diversified with a view to ensure that there is a relatively equal proportion of male and female with different class, education and occupational backgrounds (Kok, 2014). Eventually, three male and five female who spending majority of their life time in Hong Kong and are ethnic Chinese have been recruited. They were recruited through indirect referrals by acquaintances from different social circles and life stages.

3.3 Procedures

During the interview, the participants were asked about 30 questions with some follow up questions if necessary. All the interviews of this study were conducted face to face for over one hour. Most of the questions were open-ended type of questions and participants only need to answer the questions based on their own opinions with inferences drawn from their own background and experience. The study aims to gather a wide range of information



which would definitely provide useful data to analyse the formation of the identity of Post-80s generation through Cantopop.

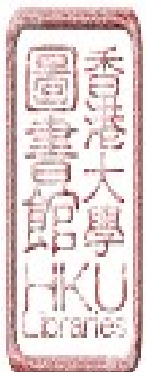
A detail data analysis of this research began once after all eight interviews was conducted. Audio recordings and hand written notes were used to recreate the content for detail data analysis. The findings are listed at the “Research Findings” session.

3.4 Research Limitation

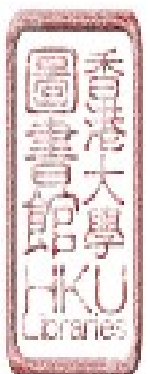
Since the sample population is relatively small, this could be considered as an incomplete research and the result may not be conclusive. As a methodological balance, although the sample population is relatively small, the participants are from different job industries, with a view to minimising the effect of this limitation.

3.5 Qualitative Analysis

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with three male and five female of the Post-80 generations who spending majority of their life time in Hong Kong and are ethnic Chinese. Out of the eight participants, six were born in Hong Kong and two were born in Mainland China but resided in Hong Kong before the age of four. All of them were born between 1980-1989. Their education background ranges from secondary school, higher diploma, bachelor degree and master degree, with diversified subject choices and institutions. Among the eight participants, two of them are married in which one is already a mother. Their monthly income varies from HK\$20,000 - HK\$80,000 per month. They are working in different fields of the society, including product designer (of Goods Of Desire), journalist, civil servant (AO of the government), freelance graphic designer, investment banker, public relations manager, construction industry worker and secretary.



Before the interview started, the content of the informed consent forms were well explained to all participants and all of them gave their consent to take part in the interview. The interview was conducted in a semi-structured and open-ended manner, so as to gather a wide range of information to allow an appropriate analysis on this research question without any bias. All eight participants were well briefed of the wished not to be identified, therefore a code name was assigned during the interview and hereafter I would use the code names to identify them.



4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 The Importance of Cantopop

One of the objectives of this research is to evaluate the importance of Cantopop among Post-80s generation in Hong Kong. From the eight interviews conducted, all participants (100%) expressed that Cantopop have an important role in shaping their personal and societal identities. The participants frankly shared their grow up experiences, how they realised the forming of their personal and societal identities, the impact of Cantonese lyrics to them and their personal experience, emotional attachment, views and feeling towards local and national identities through Cantopop.

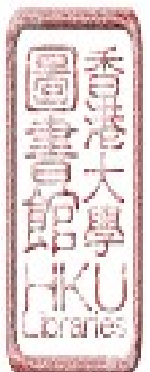
As mentioned by one of the participants Janice,

“I cannot imagine another kind of music could best suit my feelings as Cantopop. When it comes to relationships, there always at least one Cantopop song fits the feeling at that moment (no matter for the tastes of sweet, sour or bitter). None can do - not English songs, not Mandarin songs, or Korean songs. Although nowadays Cantopop is not as popular as the golden days of Cantopop, my heart is still with it.”

- Janice, aged 32 (1984), freelance graphic designer

Samuel also shared the same view in his interview,

“Cantopop is empathetic - it echoes my feelings, help to release or enhance my thoughts. I was deeply affected by the Cantopop culture. It is so amazing that I still remember the lyrics of Cantopop after nearly 20 years - together with the feeling and the stories at that time. I believe they were secretly stored in somewhere of the brain and once the melody



is up, they will be released automatically. It is so magical; it is a memory that you can never erase.”

- Samuel, aged 29 (1987), construction industry worker

The experience of Janice and Samuel showed that the power of Cantopop - a popular culture of one's mother dialect - how it became an irreplaceable medium for one to establish the identity and used to express oneself even though there are so many different forms of popular culture in the market.

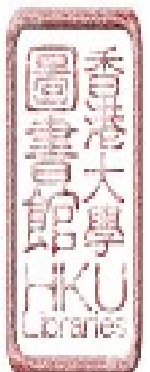
4.2 The Impact of Cantopop On the Forming of Hong Kong Identity

During the interviews, two Cantopop songs were quoted by four participants: The recently produced “Cantopop” (廣東歌) by Jan Lamb and a Cantonese rap song “Hong Kong-land” (香港地) by Edison Chen (the Cantonese lyrics of both songs are listed at Appendix III). They expressed that the former song honestly describes the linkage of Cantopop and the Hong Kong identity, while the latter song truly reflects the value and believes of Hong Kong.

Bonnie, a public relations manager, expressed that:

“I can find myself in Cantopop. It is about who I am, where I belong to, and my values. It is not about personal - it is about the society. It is about the values of Hong Kong, about what we believe. I like Jan Lamb a lot and I love his new song “Canton Song”. It is about all of us - even John Tsang (the Financial Secretary of HKSAR government) said on his Face book “I want you Cantopop”! it is sad to see that we are losing it but we must protect it - it is who we are.”

- Bonnie, aged 27 (1989), Secretary

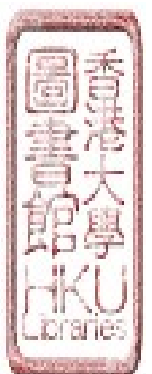


As mentioned by Bonnie, John Tsang, the Financial Secretary of HKSAR government, published the below post after attending Jan Lams's concert on 8 July 2016. He openly supports Cantopop, and the post received 7,824 likes (as at 30 July 2016). From the comments, most welcome the act of Mr. Tsang and some complimented Mr. Tsang for embracing the Hong Kong identity and defending the core value of Hong Kong.



Source: <http://www.facebook.com/johntsangofficial/posts/1618374601811911>)

When asked about the impact of Cantopop on the forming of Hong Kong identity, all eight participants (100%) expressed that Cantopop has its societal meaning and have an im-



impact on sharing their identities. Four of them (50%) also mentioned that particular Cantopop (e.g. the Cantopop produced by Beyond, Denise Ho, etc) were also used to energise and motivate the crowd during social movement. Beside the personal identities, Cantopop also has a close relation with the societal identities of the Post-80s generation.

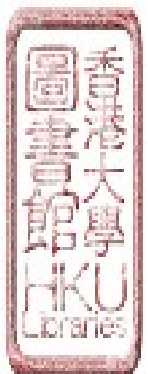
4.3 The Cohorts Within Cohort - Senior Post-80s and Junior Post-80s

Beside the above two findings, this research also revealed an interesting finding - there are two cohorts within the Post-80s generation cohort. When analysing the data collected from the eight interviews, despite that all eight participants in the Post-80s generations expressed that Cantopop is an important element of their lives and it does have an impact on the forming of their identities, I discovered that there is a separation between senior Post-80s generation (who were born between 1980-1984, now aged 32-36) and junior Post-80s generation (who were born between 1985-1989, now aged 27-31) as they have different views toward Cantopop and identities. The differences will be discussed as below:

I. Attachment to Cantopop: decreasing (senior Post-80s) vs. increasing (junior Post-80s)

For the senior Post-80s generation, they reflected that Cantopop is not only an entertainment, but a necessary food for thought accompanying them through their teenage period. As one of the senior Post-80s participants Karen shared,

“To me, Cantopop is a very important part of my life. It was the common language among peers during my teenage - we used the lyrics to express ourselves. At my time, it was very common that we would rewrite the lyrics by hand and gave it to someone special as a gift to express oneself. (Did you do that as well?) Of course I did! (laugh). It was a good memory. It helped to ease our feelings out - I bet this was history as teens nowadays only listen to K-pop. Too bad that I did not get hold with the Cantopop industry nowadays.”



- Karen, aged 34 (1982), journalist

However as they grown up, they did not have time to listen to Cantopop and they seldom pay attention to Cantopop nowadays. Another senior Post-80s participant, Adrian mentioned,

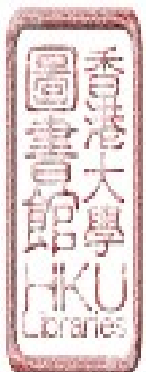
“During my teenage, my mother prohibited me from watching television. All I had was a radio and I listened to it all the time. Cantopop became my best friend. Some of my friends were into Japanese and foreign music, but I have a connection with Cantopop as it is my mother tongue. The songs would be played in the radio day to day, you could easily memorised the lyrics without paying any effort. But it ceased after I graduated from the University I became too busy and have no idea about the Cantopop nowadays.”

- Adrian, aged 36 (1980), product designer

Not only Adrian and Karen, the other two participants from the senior Post-80s generation (Ronald and Janice) shared the same views. Compare to the junior Post-80s, the attachment to Cantopop of the senior Post-80s is **decreasing**. They are more attached to the old Cantopop, rather than the new ones and they have a strong linkage of the personal (emotional) identity with it.

The views from Mavis, one of the junior Post-80s, are different:

“When I was small, I spent most of my time browsing the internet. There were so many forms of entertainment and Cantopop was just one of them. I was not too attached to it until I went to University. At there I started to pay serious attention to Cantopop and I still keep i



on nowadays. Even now I would use the mobile app to listen to new Cantopop songs, and I would share the songs with my friends through social media to express our feelings.”

- Mavis, aged 30 (1986), Public Relations Manager

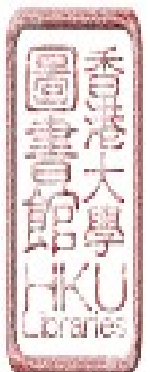
Not only Mavis, the other three participants from the junior Post-80s generation (Chloe, Samuel and Bonnie) shared the same views too. Compare to the senior Post-80s, the attachment to Cantopop of the junior Post-80s is **increasing**. They are more attached to the newly produced Cantopop, rather than the older ones and they have a strong linkage of the societal identity with it.

II. Attachment to identity (Chinese identity): acceptance (senior Post-80s) vs. refusal (junior Post-80s)

When it comes to identity issues, all eight participants answered that they are Hongkonger without any hesitations. However, when the questions went deeper and they were asked about the local and national identities, difference were observed between the senior Post-80s and junior Post-80s.

For all four participants from the senior Post-80s generation (Adrian, Karen, Ronald, Janice), they are more willing to admit themselves as Chinese. As Ronald told me,

“I will say I am Hongkonger but at the same time I am a Chinese. It is like someone telling you that he is a New Yorker and at the same time an American. I did not see any contradiction among these two identities. When I was a kid, my parents took me to the 4 June vigil and I still remembered the songs we sang. I still attending the vigil - I feel like I have to - as I am a Chinese and I do wish of the best of China.”



- Ronald, aged 33 (1983), Civil Servant

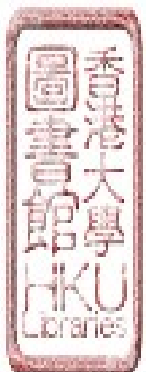
Not only Ronald, the other three participants from the senior Post-80s generation more or less expressed similar views. They embrace the identity of Hongkonger, and at the same time welcome the identity of Chinese as well. Compare to the junior Post-80s, they **accept** the attachment to the identity of Chinese. In accordance with Kok's research on negotiating Hong Kong identity in the Post-80s generation (2014), they could be classified in the "active inclusive" category as their nominal identification is the same as "Hongkonger and Chinese" (Kok, 2014).

For all four participants from the junior Post-80s generation (Mavis, Chloe, Samuel and Bonnie), they are more unwilling to admit themselves as Chinese. As Chloe said,

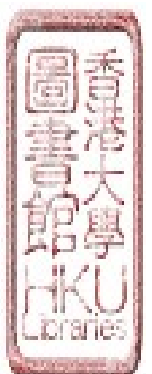
"I am just a Hongkonger - I am not Chinese. Personally I do not see any linkage between China and me except we do have same skin colour. We use HKSAR passport, not PRC passport. We speak Cantonese; they speak Mandarin. We use traditional Chinese characters, they use simplified Chinese characters. We share the common values with the World and they don't. No matter where I go, I will tell people that I am not Chinese, I am a Hongkonger."

- Chloe, aged 31 (1985), Investment Banker

Besides Chloe, the other three participants from the junior Post-80s generation more or less expressed similar views. They embrace the identity of Hongkonger, but refuse the identity of Chinese. Compare to the senior Post-80s, they **refuse** the attachment to the identity of Chinese. In accordance with Kok's research on negotiating Hong Kong identity in the Post-80s generation (2014), they could be classified in the "antagonistic" category as the



concrete examples of cultural difference found between Hong Kong and China form a strong basis for their physical and psychological disassociation from the nation (Kok, 2014).



5.0 CONCLUSION

This research paper aims to find out examining the identity of the Post-80s generation in Hong Kong through Cantopop, and more importantly, the impact of Cantopop to the formation of the identity of the Post-80s generation in Hong Kong.

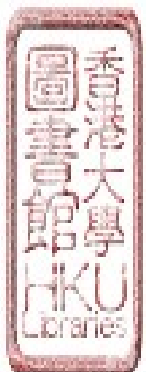
Similar to other literature creations, the lyrics of Cantopop reflected not only the social sentiment and personal emotions, it is also a spiritual part of the culture of Hong Kong, with made this city more human and three-dimensional, and shape the identity of the people in the city, through different generations.

It is worth to look into how Cantonese, the mother dialect of most Hong Kong people, plays an important role in shaping one's identity and self-realisation, through different forms of media, particularly in the form of Cantopop songs.

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with three male and five female of the Post-80 generations who spending majority of their life time in Hong Kong and are ethnic Chinese.

All participants endorsed that Cantopop has an important role in shaping their personal and societal identities. In addition, Cantopop, as a form of local popular culture in the mother dialect, is an irreplaceable medium for the Post-80 generation to express himself/herself, to enhance and embrace the identity of Hong Kong and to defend the core value of Hong Kong.

Beside the above two findings, this research also revealed that there are two cohorts within the Post-80s generation cohort: Senior Post-80s generation (who were born between

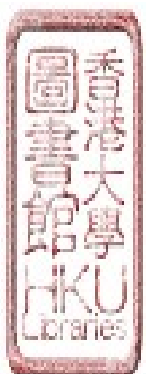


1980-1984, now aged 32-36) and Junior Post-80s generation (who were born between 1985-1989, now aged 27-31).

One of the differences among these two cohorts is the attachment to Cantopop: **decreasing** (senior Post-80s) vs. **increasing** (junior Post-80s). The attachment to Cantopop of the senior Post-80s is **decreasing**. They are more attached to the old Cantopop, rather than the new ones and they have a strong linkage of the personal (emotional) identity with it. On the other hand, the attachment to Cantopop of the junior Post-80s is **increasing**. They are more attached to the newly produced Cantopop, rather than the older ones and they have a strong linkage of the societal identity with it.

Another difference between these two cohorts is the attachment to identity (Chinese identity): **acceptance** (senior Post-80s) vs. **refusal** (junior Post-80s). All eight participants answered that they are Hongkonger without any hesitations. The senior Post-80s embrace the identity of Hongkonger, and at the same time welcome the identity of Chinese. Compare to the junior Post-80s, they are more willing to **accept** the attachment to the identity of Chinese. On the other hand, the junior Post-80s embrace the identity of Hongkonger, but **refuse** to accept the identity of Chinese on the base of concrete cultural difference found between Hong Kong and China form a strong basis for their physical and psychological disassociation from the nation.

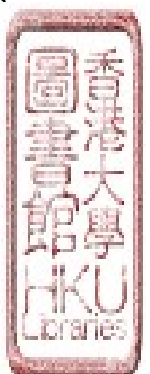
As Kok mentioned in her Hong Kong identity in the Post-80s generation research “There is a long tradition for sociologists to feature the subject of Hong Kong identity in their research, either as the core topic of investigation or a subsidiary factor to be considered within a broader analytical framework. Spanning from the colonial period to the post-handove



Hong Kong, studies with various research designs were being carried out and some are still continuing. However, this does not mean that the field has already been exhausted.” (Kok, 2014). Following her footprints, I dare to explore this field and this research was attempted to understand the impact of Cantopop (local popular culture) on the nominal identification of Post-80s generation.

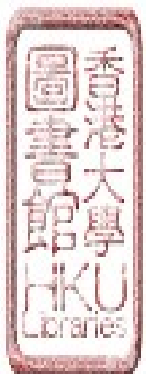
Through in-depth interviews, the participants frankly shared their grow up experiences, how they realised the forming of their personal and societal identities, the impact of Cantonese lyrics to them and their personal experience, emotional attachment, views and feeling towards local and national identities through Cantopop.

Although the sampling size was relatively small, the findings are impressively interesting and worth to be further explored in the future. This research is conducted nineteen years after the handover, findings from this research particularly point out that the younger generation (e.g. junior Post-80s) has the intention to walk farer away from accepting the national identity. The Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme (1997-2016) show that in December 2011, 18.1% of participants over the age of 30 and 11.8% of people between the age of 18-29 admitted his/her ethnic identity as Chinese. Four and a half years later, when the same survey was conducted in June 2016, 20.5% of participants over the age of 30 admitted his/her ethnic identity as Chinese (2.4% increase was recorded), but only 3.8% of people between the age of 18-29 admitted his/her ethnic identity as Chinese (8% decrease was recorded). It is an existing truth that all of us have to admit, face and resolve, and Cantopop may have a role to play in resolving the situation.

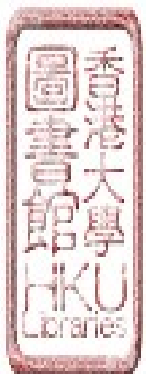


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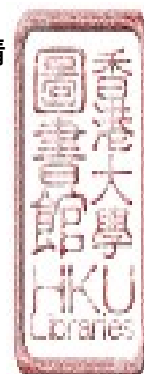
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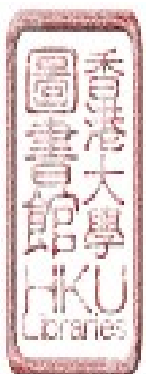
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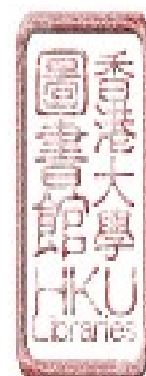


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Detailed demographic profiles of the participants

| | Name | Year of Birth | Age | Place of Birth | Gender | Education level | Occupation | Income/month | Marital Status |
|---|--------|---------------|-----|----------------|--------|------------------|------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | Adrian | 1980 | 36 | Mainland China | M | Bachelor | Product Designer | \$30,000 | Single |
| 2 | Karen | 1982 | 34 | Hong Kong | F | Bachelor | Journalist | \$28,000 | Married |
| 3 | Ronald | 1983 | 33 | Hong Kong | M | Master | Civil Servant | \$40,000 | Married |
| 4 | Janice | 1984 | 32 | Hong Kong | F | Bachelor | Freelance graphic designer | \$33,000 | Single |
| 5 | Chloe | 1985 | 31 | Hong Kong | F | Master | Investment Banker | \$80,000 | Single |
| 6 | Mavis | 1986 | 30 | Hong Kong | F | Bachelor | Public Relations Manager | \$35,000 | Single |
| 7 | Samuel | 1987 | 29 | Hong Kong | M | Secondary School | Construction industry worker | \$22,000 | Single |
| 8 | Bonnie | 1989 | 27 | Mainland China | F | High-Diploma | Secretary | \$20,000 | Single |



The Interview Guide of SOCI 8030 Capstone Project

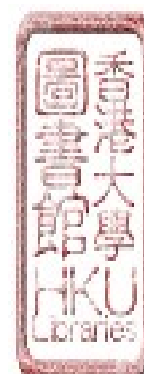
**EXAMINING THE IDENTITY OF THE POST-80s GENERATION IN HONG KONG
THROUGH CANTOPOP**

Background information

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Name of Interviewee | |
| Year of Birth /Age | |
| Place of Birth | |
| Gender | |
| Education level | |
| Occupation | |
| Income/month | |
| Marital Status | |

Questions for interview

- 1 Please introduce yourself such as your core family, family history, place of birth, brought up, education, school life, career, marital status, living environment, income etc.
- 2 What are your hobbies? What would you do in leisure?
- 3 Do you enjoy listening music? If yes, what kind of music you are fond of (e.g. Classical music / Cantopop/ J-Pop / K-Pop / Western Pop Music)?
- 4 Any favourite song(s)? Any favourite singer(s)?
- 5 Please tell the reason(s) you love the song(s) or describe the feelings towards the favourite song(s)/ singer(s).



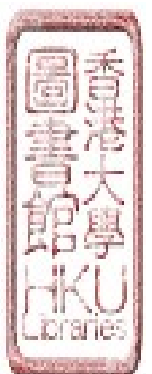
- 6 How often you listen to music? Which media (Concert/Live performance/TV/Radio/Internet/Social Media/APPs) you prefer more to listening music?

Hong Kong Identity and Cantopop

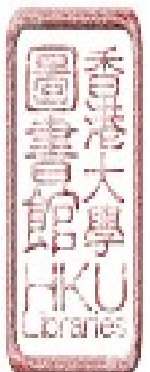
- 1 What do you think about the Cantopop market nowadays?
- 2 Can you name a song or more to represent the image of Hong Kong? Why do you think it can project HK image?
- 3 Do you ever have the feeling towards Hong Kong Identity while listening the song(s) you just mentioned?
- 4 Can the song(s) reinforce / enhance / associate your belongings to Hong Kong?
- 5 How do you feel/think about Hong Kong?
- 6 How do you feel/think about China?
- 7 How do you define your identity? Chinese / Hongkonger?
- 8 What is your perception of Hong Kong Identity? Any specific characteristics or traits can be defined towards Hongkongese?
- 9 Do you carry the features you mentioned before? Do you appreciate those traits?
- 10 Are you proud of being a Hongkonger? Why? Do you emotionally attached to Hong Kong?
- 11 There are some " core values" sharing among Hong Kong people such as the rule of law, freedom, equality, openness and a corruption-free, what do you think? Do you also share those values?
- 12 Do you think those values are essential part of constructing Hong Kong Identity?

The Post-80s generation and Cantopop

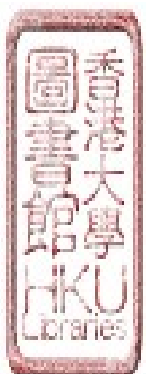
- 1 Did you hear the term "Post-80s generation"? Do you understand/agree the underlying meaning of this term?



- 2 Do you belong to this generation? Can you describe some characteristics / traits / spirits / values sharing within this generation?
- 3 What social issues you pay the most attention on it? The conflicts between Chinese and Hongkonger? The imperfect political system?
- 4 What personal issues you concern most at this moment? Marriage? Continuous higher education for professional qualification? Family issue? Occupational issues? Children's development?
- 5 How do you enjoy your private time? Still developing the interests/hobbies in leisure?
- 6 How often you hang out with friends and talk with them about the personal issues or discuss the social issues?
- 7 Can you recall some notable incidents that you consider are important to Hong Kong? (e.g. historical moments, memorable incidents, financial crisis, cultural development of Hong Kong, or mega events like Olympic game)
- 8 Do you think there is any remarkable life experience or incident or social issue that only your generation has encountered?
- 9 Any collective memories you shared with friends in same age group in terms of music/song?
- 10 Do you think the political events or social issues could shape the development of Cantopop?
- 11 Do you keep updating yourself with the ongoing Cantopop market?(If negative - Can you determine when did you stop listening to Cantopop? Why?)
(If positive - Can you compare the Cantopop nowadays with your favourite time of the Hong Kong Pop? In your view, why it changed and why did it take place?)



12 How do you value Cantopop in your life? Did it play an important part of your teenage years?



【廣東歌】

主唱：林海峰 & SENZA A Cappella & 熊熊兒童合唱團

作詞：林海峰

作曲 / 編曲：Edward Chan / Cousin Fung

監製：Edward Chan

勵志歌 獅子山鼓舞我
跳舞歌 能忘情跳出我
粵語歌 每首歌詞 叫好叫座
金鐘道 呼吸聲 和音今天我

斜陽裡氣魄更壯 有沒有堅決唱這歌
求其合唱 我支飲歌

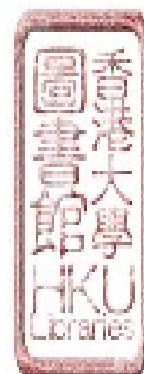
I want you 廣東歌 放聲地唱出我係我
唱吧無敵副歌 延續這歌 維港每一個
I want you 廣東歌 就算會有一點肚餓
唱首廣東歌代表我

熱播歌 K房哭聲散播
惡搞歌 貼民情笑死我
我的歌 我的語言 互相拍和
改歌詞 加粗口 代表真的我

紅潮裡氣魄更壯 再沒有觀眾太坎坷
完場亦要嗌聲安歌

I want you 廣東歌 放聲地唱出我係我
唱吧無敵副歌 延續這歌 維港每一個
I want you 廣東歌 就算會有一點肚餓
唱首廣東歌代表我

I want you 廣東歌 發千分熱千分光
I want you 廣東歌 為你照前方
I want you 廣東歌 為你衝破前途路障
獻出千般愛心與痴情 一切都奉上



【香港地】

主唱：陳冠希 Featuring Hanjin Mc仁

作詞：Mc仁/陳少琪/陳奐仁

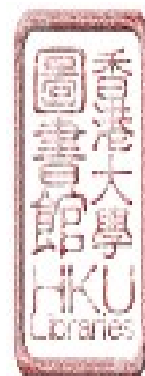
作曲 / 編曲：陳奐仁

呢首歌 送俾我既香港
唔理事情有幾困難 環境有幾亂
你都仲係我屋企 之前係 而家係 將來都係
同熱愛這片土地 大家刻骨銘記
愁或喜 生與死 也是香港地

對於呢個地方 我同你同一個同感
同一個諗法 我同你同一種人
雖然你有你忙 我有我忙 佢有佢忙
各有各行業 但係用緊同一本黃頁
灣仔海旁尖東海旁 中間都係同一個海港
大街小巷串埋就係 我地呢一個香港
以前有好多工廠 宜家有好多銀行
就算點變 都係屬於我地呢一個香港
經過幾多風暴有d野仍然屹立不倒
太平山頂大帽山頂 依舊一樣大霧
新機場唔再新 但係呢度多左一個島
舊車站唔再用 但係個鐘樓仍然係度
新作風 新人事 新公司 新董事
邊個話事我唔懂事 基本上都仲係白紙黑字
經過幾多谷底香港仔仍然係香港仔
見過幾多風浪香港人仍然係香港人

同熱愛這片土地 大家刻骨銘記
愁或喜 生與死 也是香港地

雖然不是這裡出生 我來自新加坡
這裡的恩怨 多多少少見過
那麼多的是非 來不及解脫
只不過為了看到自己星星閃爍
說甚麼民主社會 也只不過看你腦子裡要甚麼
若覺得自己受困 我又能教怎麼
怎麼幫你 突破大聲說 到底要怎麼才能知道心裡要著甚麼



想呼吸 莫非是周圍的環境真的沒了空氣
要出息 除非你上面的上司伸手成立
三二一 就喊到沒甚麼公平
無論在做甚麼事情 都固定只能把你搞到你失去了誠意
但... 人還在這裡 我並沒徹底放棄
好朋友在我身邊 好事情在我懷裡
我知你不斷維持鎮定 願你也知道我在支持你

同熱愛這片土地 大家刻骨銘記
愁或喜 生與死 也是香港地
同熱愛這片土地 大家一句到尾
由自己 生與死 也在香港地

係得呢個地方出世 就預左係呢個地方度死
有人會睇到黃金片地 呢度係一塊福地
有人會睇到唔一樣 樣樣野一敗塗地
有人會識得設身處地 有人會選擇逃避
有人會認為呢個係環境同人既問題
呢度既文化一潭死水點會居安思危
七百萬隻螞蟻 唔容易走埋一齊
向住同一個方向睇 一定會搵到大前題
係同一種人 點解要將人睇低
係同一種人 可以學埋同一種語文
講第二種語文唔表示你係第二種人
I Rap the Police I Rap the Government
跌得起輸得起 搵塊鏡照下自己
香港人至叻 唔駛靠人個個靠自己
唔怕攞住一齊死 駛乜怕從頭做起
要有訂企 首先要企硬自己

同熱愛這片土地 大家刻骨銘記
愁或喜 生與死 也是香港地
同熱愛這片土地 大家一句到尾
由自己 生與死 也在香港地
同熱愛這片土地 大家刻骨銘記
愁或喜 生與死 也是香港地
同熱愛這片土地 大家一句到尾
由自己 生與死 也在香港地

