



The Construction of Cultural Citizenship of
Chinese Female Migrants in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

This study is partly inspired by an earlier study carried out by Aihwa Ong, on citizenship as a cultural process of “subject-ification,” that is, in the Foucauldian sense, a process of self-making and being-made by power relations. The focus in this study is on the ‘self-making’ of cultural citizenship by female migrants who come from Mainland China for family union, and who are still not permanent residents in Hong Kong. It is found that their identities are always multiple and contesting in nature, subject to negotiation and re-negotiation under different conditions for attaining different purposes.

In-depth interviews were conducted with a group of informants who have not applied for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, and are members of so-called ‘intact families’ in the conventional sense (Group 1). The second group is composed nearly entirely of CSSA recipients, who have lost their husbands either through divorce or because they have been widowed (Group 2).

Through their reconstruction of their in-group and out-group, as well as their narrations about Hong Kong people, Hong Kong society and the Mainland, it is found that they actively engage in offering different narrative accounts of themselves to ward off the enforced and dominating portrayals of the time. The bargaining chips employed by Group 1 to negotiate their subjective identities are the specific socio-economic and political context in Hong Kong, the changing power relations

between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and/or their Mainlander identities constructed during their formative stage.

While Group 1 borrowed the general cultural repertoires available to them to generate a sense of superiority and dignity for themselves; Group 2 always stressed their own inwardness and their characters, their role of being caretakers and the contributions they make.

Interestingly, they do not have any obvious sense either of estrangement from, or 'affective attachment' towards Hong Kong or China, as they view the identities they claim instrumentally.

Looking behind the façade of their narrations, I suggest that their perceived ethnicity, and their socio-economic status, in particular their sense of class awareness are the explanatory factors accounting for why they construct their subjective identities in certain ways, and for the way they patrol the borders of their in-group and out-group. Their positive self-identity, that is, their own sense of dignity, personal worth and honor, are built through these lines. Because of their different personal background and experiences, they manifestes themselves in some different ways. Yet, both of them are being empowered or empowering one another when constructing their narratives.

撮要

這研究是啓發自人類學家 Aihwa Ong 早期對於文化公民身份之研究。引用 Foucault 對於公民身份建構的概念，這是一個自我建構及被建構的權力互動關係。這研究的對象，是從大陸來港與家人團聚及未住滿七年的婦女。研究的對象主要分兩組。第一組婦女沒有領取綜援，以及擁有一個「完整」家庭。第二組婦女以領取綜援為生，而且因與丈夫離婚或丈夫去世，而成為單親家庭。

Chapter One

研究發現，她們的身份是多樣性及爭議性的。透過她們對於「自己人」和「外人」，以及對於「香港人」、香港社會和中國大陸的論述，可觀察到她們主動地刪除主流社會對她們負面的、扭曲的及刻板的印象和論述，從而開拓發言空間去確立一種有價值的身份認同。

Summary of the

第一組婦女以香港的社會、經濟及政治情況、中國與香港改變中的關係，以及她們在內地成長期所建構的經驗作為籌碼，去開拓改變負面身份形象及發聲的可能，論述不同於主流強加於她們身上的眾主體性 (subjectivities)。有別於第一組，第二組的婦女所強調的是她們自身的特徵、個人的道德、以及她們作為家中唯一照顧者之角色，去肯定自己的意義和作出的貢獻。有趣地，兩組的婦女也沒有明顯對香港或中國大陸有深厚的感情。她們只把「身份」當作一種工具。

Chapter Two

分析她們的論述，我認為她們的出生地、社會經濟地位，特別是她們對自己所屬階層的認知，及對國家的認知，都直接影響著她們怎樣建構其眾主體性，以及怎樣劃分「自己人」和「外人」。這些受訪者對自己身份認同的正面態度和論述，也是透過以上幾項要素而建構出來的。從她們論述其眾主體性的過程中，可看到她們成功地為自己充權。

Conclusion

Chapter Three

Methodology

My Epistemology

Topic

Definition of Core Terms

Research Questions

Purpose of My Research

Data Collection Methods

Validity and Reliability

Limitations

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the past few decades, more and more Chinese migrated from the Mainland to Hong Kong. In fact, many people hold that Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city constituted by migrants since almost half of the population originated from the Mainland. During 1976 to 1980, about 50 million Mainlanders came to Hong Kong by either legal or illegal means¹. Before 1980, there was a “touch base” policy allowing Mainland Chinese who managed to enter the city of Hong Kong through whatever means to become Hong Kong residents. In 1980, in view of the drastic growth in the number of migrants, the colonial government announced to abolish such policy.

From then onward, a quota system was adopted which granted 75 one-way permits to Mainlanders per day. Due to the increasing number of inter-marriage between Mainland and Hong Kong residents, the number of quota was increased to 105 in 1993. Later on, it was further increased to 150. Among the increased quota, 30 are allocated to those qualified children aged twenty or below, and 15 are allocated to the spouses of Hong Kong residents who have been separated for more than 10

¹ 李健正。(1999)「第17章：新移民問題與社會政策」。李健正... [等]編。《新社會政策》。香港：香港中文大學。270頁。

years². As a result, there are now about 54,000 new migrants coming to Hong Kong by one-way permit annually³. With the growing cases of inter-marriage between the Mainland and Hong Kong and the right of abode granted to offsprings of Hong Kong permanent residents in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law, it is anticipated that the number of new Mainland migrants will be further augmented. Among the new arrivals, most of them are young children and young women married to Hong Kong men.

Many of these inter-marriages are the natural outcome of increasing interactions between Hong Kong people and the Mainlanders. At the same time, it is popularly believed that the huge economic gap between the two places have attracted some mainland women to marry Hong Kong men as a way to improve their economic well-being.

From the interviews that will be presented in the following chapters, many of these female migrants recalled their perceptions on Hong Kong and Hong Kong people before residing here in a very positive way. Many of them thought that the life in Hong Kong was wonderful and it was relatively easy for them to make money. Together with some of the real contact with Hong Kong people, they were eager to

² 周永新著。(1998)。「增加新移民配額對民生的影響」。《香港社會福利發展得失》。香港:天地圖書有限公司。176頁。

³ 洪雪蓮。(1997)。「社區工作與新移民」。《社區發展:挑戰與蛻變》。香港社會服務聯會社區發展部編。12-13頁。

leave their hometown through marrying Hong Kong men.

1.2 The Issue

There have long been problems associated with new migrants from the Mainland, such as the trafficking of Mainland children to Hong Kong or illegal mothers who come to Hong Kong for family reunion and the like. However, the right of abode case after the handover and the government's announcement that as many as 1,675,000 Mainlanders may be qualified for permanent residency in Hong Kong⁴ instigated public discussion and worries about the financial impact of new migrants⁵. The government further preyed on such public phobia and sought for the interpretation of Basic Law Articles 22(4) and 24(2)(3) by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to reduce the number of Mainlanders qualified for permanent residency. More than that, in subsequent welfare cutback debates in 1999 and 2002-03 respectively, new migrants from the Mainland were portrayed as the

⁴ Johannes MM Chan, H.L Fu and Yash Ghai eds. 2000. "Part II: Public Debate – Impact Assessment of the Government". In *Hong Kong's Constitutional Debate: Conflict Over Interpretation*. Hong Kong University Press. pp. 265-66.

⁵ In 1999, for instance, the Director for Social Welfare Andrew Leung Kin-pong had once said that, if the Court of Final Appeal granted the right of abode to those children who born out of wedlock, there would be increasing pressure on social services and the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. He further suggested that the massive coming of Mainland migrants would inevitably thinned out the total share of welfare services and financial assistants of Hong Kong people. You may refer to 新報。一九九九年二月二十八日。「福利開支不因新移民增撥 五萬新移民申領綜援 逾九千人居港未滿七年」。for details.

culprit of mounting welfare expenses and financial burden. The issue was thus politicized and Mainland migrants were further stigmatized.

In fact, Hong Kong has never been a welfare state since the colonial period because the government wanted to pursue the minimal government model. Welfare provisions were viewed as charity bestowed by the government to its people. The colonial government had put a lot of efforts in glorifying and promoting the so-called traditional Confucian Chinese doctrines of filial piety, familial obligations, self-reliance and mutual help to facilitate such welfare policy. In the postcolonial era, such “colonial mental apparatus” is still dominating the mindset of the government under the leadership of Tung Chee-Hwa⁶. The role of the government in welfare provision is still residual. The official ideology still emphasizes self-reliance and familial support.⁷

Moreover, the official discourse constructs the myth of Hong Kong’s success as based on a hardworking and self-reliant population. After the Asian financial crisis, the public budgetary situation and the economy deteriorated. Confronted with financial austerity and a high number of cases of social assistance (termed the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme, or CSSA), new migrants, along

⁶ Wong, Thomas W.P., *Colonial Governance and the Hong Kong Story*, March 1998, Occasional Paper No. 77. The Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, the Chinese University of Hong Kong Press. pp. 19.

⁷ Hodge, P. 1981. “The Politics of Welfare”. Ed. by John F. Jones. In *The Common Welfare: Hong Kong’s Social Services*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press. pp.1-20.

with the unemployed, single-parents, and other socially marginalized groups were blamed by the government for the undue burden they caused to society.

1.3 Research Problem

In searching for information and references about new migrants, it is found that a particular image about them is shared among the general public and delineated by the media and government. In most occasions, the government did not single out female migrants in her narrations, but the common knowledge that many of the new migrants are women married to Hong Kong men implies that they are the object of stigmatization.

1.31 Images of new Chinese Female Migrants in the Eyes of the General Public

Quite a number of local researches have outlined the perception of Hong Kong people towards new female migrants from the Mainland. The findings of those emblematic researches are selected and summarized in the following section. The rationale for focusing on the researches conducted after the late 1970s is that, scholars generally agree that the “Hongkongese identity” has crystallized incrementally during the 1960s. Graham Johnson, for instance, holds that the so-called “Hong Kong identity” was invented in the 1970s because of the the “vibrant manufacturing economy” developed during the 1950s and 60s. After the death of Mao Zedong and

the economic reform brought by the Chinese government afterward, economic opportunity of Hong Kong became more and more. Thus, the economic gap between the two places became wider. This did not only affect the development of Hong Kong economically, but also brought about changes in political, social and cultural aspects⁸.

In addition to the above, because of the massive influx of Mainlanders due to the “political prosecution and turmoil” in the Mainland, a strong sense of sentiment against the Chinese government was generated among the Hong Kong people and those who flee to Hong Kong. This is another important factor contributing to foster the Hongkongese identity vis-à-vis the “Mainlanders”⁹.

The late 1970s was a time when a large number of Mainlanders were migrating to Hong Kong through either legal or illegal means. In 1982, a survey was conducted by the Social Service Team of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to investigate the perception and attitude of Hong Kong people towards “Green Card holders”(「綠印者」), that is, Mainland arrivals who have been residing in Hong Kong for less than seven years¹⁰. 510 successful interviews were conducted. It is found

⁸ Johnson, G.E.. 1997. “Links to and Through South China: Local, Regional, and Global Connections”. In *Hong Kong's reunion with China: the Global Dimensions*. Postiglione, G. A. and Tang, T.H. (eds.). Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe. Pp.124.

⁹ Lau, S.K. 1998. *Hongkongese or Chinese: The Problem of Identity on the Eve of Resumption of Chinese Sovereignty over Hong Kong*. Occasional Paper No. 65. Hong Kong : Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong

¹⁰ “Green card holders” is the translation of the Chinese term used by the original report itself. It refers to those new migrants who lived in Hong Kong for less than seven years, and had not obtained

that the majority of respondents held negative perceptions toward them. In the survey, 39% of the respondents said they were unwilling to make friends with Green Card holders; and only 15.1% of them said they were willing to do so (「你是否願意與綠印交朋友?」)¹¹.

Here are some examples of the negative imageries held by the respondents: 40.4% of the respondents construed that the majority of serious crimes were committed by Green Card holders(「大多數的嚴重案件是綠印者犯,你同意唔同意?」)¹². When asked if they think being lazybone is a serious problem among Green Card holders, 10.8% of respondents thought that it was quite serious and 4.7% of them said it was very serious; while only 5.7% of them held that it was not serious(「你認為大多數綠印者好食懶做的情況是否嚴重?」)¹³.

Moreover, the research revealed that most Hong Kong people viewed these Green Card holders as troublemakers. For instance, 68.8% of them agreed that Green Card holders would lower the salary level of Hong Kong people(你認為綠印者來港後,會唔會「令香港一般工人實質工資下降」?)¹⁴. 75.7% of them assented

permanent residency yet. 新移民：香港市民對新移民之觀感：調查報告書 / 舉辦單位香港中文大學學生會, 中大社工隊, 香港中文大學新亞書院學生社會服務團。香港：該社, 1982。第三頁。

¹¹ 同上。第十六頁。In answering this question, 39.4% said “so-so” (「普通」), 3.2% chose “others” (「其他」), 1.2% said “they don’t know” (「不知道」) and the remaining 2.1% said they “have no answer” (沒有答案)。

¹² 同上。第十一頁。In this question, 29.9% disagreed with the question, 21.3% chose “so-so”, 1% said “they don’t know”, and 2.9% said they “have no answer”。

¹³ 同上。第十六頁。8.1% of respondents held it is “a bit serious” (「有一點」), 15.3% said “so-so”, 7.6% said “they don’t know”, and the remaining 47.8% said they “have no answer”。

¹⁴ 25.9% of the respondents said “no”, 3.5% chose “they don’t know”, and 1.8% said they “have no

that Green Card holders seized Hong Kong people's working opportunities(你認為綠印者來港後,會唔會「令香港一般工人就業機會減少」?)¹⁵.

It is interesting to note that 47.4% of the respondents claimed that they gained the impression of Green Card holders from real contact with them, as many as 43.7% got their impression merely from newspapers and televisions, while 33.7% got such impression from their friends or relatives (「你對綠印者的印象是來自(可選多一個)」)¹⁶.

Another important time for studying the perception of Hong Kong people towards Mainlanders was in the year 1997, when Hong Kong was handed over to China, and when it was anticipated that more and more Mainlanders would come here for family reunion. The Hong Kong Psychological Society conducted a research asking their respondents to describe the culture and characters of Hong Kong people and Mainlanders. 532 respondents were interviewed. Analysis was made for those respondents who were born in Hong Kong or have permanent residency here and aged 15 or above. Thus, the actual sample size is 415. It is found that among those traits used by the respondents to describe Mainlanders, 49% were bad and 30% were good; while in putting forward the traits of Hong Kong people, only 29% were bad

answer”.

¹⁵ 21.1% disagreed with the statement, 2% said “they don't know”, and 1.2% of them “have no answer”.

¹⁶ 同上。第十八頁。

and 53% were good (「請受訪者分別列舉五個新移民和五個香港人所擁有的文化和性格特質,並評定每一個特質的好壞程度。」). Respondents generally held that Mainlanders were ignorance, illiterate, impolite, unhygienic and greedy¹⁷.

In the following year, another research was carried out by the Caritas Hong Kong. Structure questionnaire was used. The sample size is 301 and among which 291 were used for analysis. It tried to uncover the implicit stereotypes embedded in Hong Kong people's mind through structure questionnaires. Most of the findings coincided with the one done in 1982, with some new perspectives discovered. It is concluded that most of the respondents agreed with the statement that the quality of the "new arrivals" were low, and this lowered the quality of Hong Kong in every aspect". They also had the tendency to exclude Mainlanders. For example, 40.2% of them thought that the government should reject offering the right of residency to those Mainlanders who did not have working ability(「政府應拒絕接收無工作能力的新移民來港定居。」)¹⁸.

Due to the changing economic landscape, particularly after the financial turmoil in 1997, Mainlanders were believed to be the group of people that intensified the financial burden of the government due to their high reliance on social assistance, or

¹⁷40.2% of respondents agreed that government should reject offering right of residency for those new migrants who do not have working ability. But 42.3% of the respondents disagreed with this. The remaining respondents did not have any opinion. 香港心理學會心理學推廣組編輯。(1997)。 <新移民的平等機會>。八至九頁。

¹⁸ 本地人對新來港人士觀感調查報告書 / [荃灣明愛社區中心]。1998。第二十五頁。

the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme.

The last research chosen here is the one conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong right after the re-interpretation of Basic Law by the National People's Congress on the right of abode controversy in 1999. They successfully interviewed 2050 respondents by telephone interviews. It is revealed that 43.1% of the respondents agreed that they felt disgusted by those Mainlanders who actively fought for their right of abode in Hong Kong (「你對目前在港積極爭取居港權的內地人有乜野觀感呢?係反感、同情定係有乜特別感覺?」)¹⁹.

It is found that much of the perceptions held by the Hong Kong people years ago were still prevalent among them. For instance, the majority of respondents, i.e., 58%, believed that their employment opportunity was being snatched by Mainlanders (「內地新移民會搶走本地人既飯會,你同唔同意呢?」)²⁰. An overwhelming majority, that is 79.5%, thought that Mainlanders were thinning out local people's share of welfare(「內地新移民會分薄本地人既社會福利,你又同唔同意呢?」)²¹.

Negative cognizance of Mainlander was quite strong among the respondents.

¹⁹ 41.8% of the respondents did not have any feeling, 14.7% said they were sympathetic towards the new migrants who actively fought for their right of abode, while the remaining 0.4% said they strongly sympathized them. 香港中文大學香港亞太研究所。《<市民對內地新移民觀感調查電話訪問調查初步報告>>。香港中文大學香港亞太研究所電話調查研究計劃。1999。第三頁。

²⁰ Ibid, pp.6. 9.4% of the respondents were neutral when asking if they agree that Mainlanders snatched their employment opportunity. 32.3% disagreed with this statement, and the remaining respondents said they did not know or rejected to answer this question.

²¹ Ibid. 17.5% of the respondents disagreed that new migrants thinned out their welfare, 3.1% were neutral, while the remaining respondents said they did not know or rejected to answer this question.

For example, 60.1% of them agreed that new arrivals were unhygienic(「多數既內地新移民都估唔講衛生,你同唔同意呢?」); 75% believed that they did not obey rules; and 66% believed that they lacked the concept of the rule of law(「多數內地新移民都係法治觀念差,你同唔同意呢?」). About 69.9% of the respondents dissented with the statement that “Mainlanders have high cultural quality”(「多數既內地新移民都係高文化水平,你同唔同意呢?」)²².

In sum, among the general public there are two prevalent images of new arrivals from the Mainland. They are perceived either as welfare dependents or job rivals with Hong Kong people, and they had bad character traits.

Similar depiction of female migrants can also be found in the media. They are often described by the media as “the countryside rustic women”(「鄉下婆」), who are naïve to misconceive how wonderful their lives would be – “heavenly-like lives” – after getting married with Hong Kong men²³. It is suggested that their visions of the “Hong Kong dream” showed how stupid, unrealistic, and naive they are.

1.32 Images of new Chinese Migrants Portrayed by the Government

More interestingly is the role played by the government in portraying the images

²² 同上。第十二至十五頁。27.4% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that new migrants were unhygienic, 12.5% stayed neutral, and the remaining said they did not know or rejected to answer this question. 16.1% of the respondents thought that new migrants did not have the concept of rule of law, 9% of them stayed neutral, and the remaining respondents rejected to answer the question or said they did not know. 77.2% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that new migrants are of “high cultural level”, 16% stayed neutral and others rejected to answer or said they did not know.

²³ <<收緊“團聚”政策>>, 新報, 16/3/2003, (觀點角度 C09)。

of new migrants. The official discourse positions Hong Kong people and Mainland migrants as a binary oppositions. For example, Hong Kong people are associated with good qualities like independent, hardworking, high productivity, and so on. In contrast, new migrants are presented as welfare recipients, non-contributive, and poorly-educated. An antagonistic relationship is thus created among them.

Take the 2002 Chief Executive electoral campaign as an illustration, Mr. Tung Chee-wah openly expressed the need to formulate a population control policy by saying that the most critical challenge to the quality of the Hong Kong population was the massive influx of Mainlanders. He presented official data showing that the educational qualifications and skills possessed by Mainlanders were far lower than that of Hong Kong people. He further asserted that with economic restructuring, low-skilled jobs were diminishing and their influx would pose more pressure on employment²⁴.

To improve the quality of the migrants, the government promoted a new population policy alongside welfare reform. Under the new policy, those migrants with properties worth \$6.5 million can apply for residency here as investment immigrants. Rejecting the claim that it is a discriminatory policy, the government emphasized the need “to improve the overall quality of society” in order to create “a

²⁴南方網。二零零二年六月十日。「內地湧入新移民質素低 港府將製定全面人口政策」Download from: <http://61.144.25.119/gate/big5/www.southcn.com/news/hktwma/hot/200208210399.htm>.

knowledge-based economy and world-class city” as a “sustainable policy”²⁵.

Concurring with the above claim, some analysts made use of the Taoist concept of “controlled breathing and swallowing of saliva in order to achieve long life” to rationalizing the need to attract highly-educated and skilled people to enhance our competitiveness, as there are too many aging and inactive economic citizens (female migrants) in Hong Kong²⁶.

Besides, the government manipulates different languages in exulting the ideal citizens and praising model minority within the migrants while spreading the fear and condemnation of migrants’ perpetual dependence. For example, in the current debate over the cut of CSSA provisions, the Director of Social Welfare, Mrs. Carrie Lam warned that, if the Legislative Council does not accept the government proposal, more extreme and restricted strategies would be introduced to further limit the eligibility and accessibility of CSSA for new migrants²⁷.

In a recent survey conducted by the University of Hong Kong, it is found that most of the respondents did support the government’s new population policy. It is found that 60% of the respondents thought that the daily quota of 150 new migrants

²⁵ Headlines: On the Record – Health and Community. “Population Policy Beneficial for Hong Kong”, dated March 1, 2003, “Donald Tsang Unveils Population Report”, dated February 26, 2003, and “人口政策不是應付短期財困”, 27/2/2003.

²⁶ 劉炳章, <<諸多掣肘的人口政策(之四)>>, 大公報, 10/3/2003, (港聞:專業世界 A11).

²⁷ 明報。二零零二年十一月十二日。「綜援或封頂 林鄭月娥警告最多領三年」。

for family reunion is too high; while 60% of them supported the Capital Investment Entrant Scheme. The majority of respondents also construed that migrants from North America and Europe are most valuable to Hong Kong; whereas Mainlanders are less valuable²⁸. To a certain extent, it shows how Hong Kong people evaluate new arrivals from the Mainland.

1.33 Institutional Factors Leading to the Social Marginalization of New Migrants

The marginalization of new migrants is largely the result of the lack of government provision of institutional support. Although the Secretary for Home Affairs has established a Steering Committee on New Arrivals Services to provide general directions for new migrants service provisions²⁹, support for them is still very insufficient in many aspects. This can be regarded as a kind of institutionalized discrimination of new migrants, leading to their marginalization.

Take the education policy as an example, though it is said that the government has devoted a lot of resources on migrant children, they are still facing systematic discrimination. A report done by the Hong Kong Christian Institute indicates that there is difficulty for them to find a school place because many schools refuse to

²⁸ *South China Morning Post*. "Capital Scheme for Newcomers". A18 News Features. Dated 29 April 2004.

²⁹ WoC11/01 (for discussion on 8 May 2001), *Women's Commission: Initiatives of Home Affairs Department to Support Grassroot Women and New Arrivals from the Mainland*.

admit new migrants and ethnic minorities. At the same time, there is no centralized policy for regulating the enrollment process of schools. It is reported that some children had to “appeal to more than 10 schools before they are accepted”.

For those adult migrants, they face serious discrimination in different aspects. New migrants can only apply for the CSSA after living in Hong Kong for more than a year. This regulation has great impact on those who are living below the poverty line. Worse still, the government is proposing to tighten the eligibility requirement to seven years residency.

Even for those new migrants who have the professional qualifications and were financially independent in the Mainland, they face problems in financial term as well. No systematic efforts have been made by the government to requalify those migrants who have obtained certain professional qualifications, such as medicine, in the Mainland. Thus, many of them ended up relying on their husbands or the government financially without developing their potentials into full play. Worse still, they are part of the new migrants who are portrayed by the government and perceived by the general public as unproductive dependents. This is a kind of systematic discrimination against them as they are forced to give up their original professions due to the lack of government policy for recognizing their qualifications.

Lastly, the public housing policy is another area which fails to help new migrants integrate into Hong Kong. Many of them are forced to live in “caged homes, cubicles and rooftop huts” because of the public housing residence rule. For one to be eligible to apply for public housing, one of the main criteria is that, half of the household should be composed of family members who have been living in Hong Kong for seven years or more. Therefore, many of the new migrants failed to apply for housing successfully, particularly for those who have divorced with their husbands and have children living with them³⁰.

In short, it is a blatant fact that the government takes the lead to stigmatize the new migrants not only verbally, but also in different policy aspects, which usually takes the form of government inactions.

1.34 The Puzzle

To gather more background information for a thorough understanding of the issue at stake, I tried to find out whether those female migrants are all the ‘bad welfare dependents’. While the government tries to construct an image that most migrants are CSSA recipients, the actual figures reveal that the majority of CSSA

³⁰ Wu, R. “Discrimination against New Immigrants from China and Ethnic Minorities”. Hong Kong Christian Institute, *Newsletter Issue 158*. November 2001.

<http://fungchiwood.com/new-immigrants.htm>

recipients (70%) are the elderly, unemployed and single-parent family. Not more than 14% are new migrants. Among them, unemployed migrants only takes up 6%, meaning that more than half of the migrant CSSA recipients have their own jobs³¹.

Interestingly, the portrayal of the images of female migrants in the media is not always one-sided. In some instances, positive images were constructed to refute the dominant discourse that they were unproductive, non-contributive and burdens of the whole society. One example is a story published in a local newspaper about a female migrant, whose husband was disabled and needed to rely on the CSSA for their livelihood. However, from a volunteer Judy's narration of her story, this female migrant continued to find jobs because she did not want to keep on receiving CSSA. Judy said that this changed her attitude and perception towards female migrants³². In another article, the writer wrote about how his perception on female migrants was changed after having some contacts with them, as he discovered that many of them were "industrious" and "willing to take risk in order to find jobs". Although they are of "low quality" in the eyes of many Hong Kong people, it is suggested that their "determination to stand on their own feet" is of "high quality that should not be denied"³³.

³¹ <<理工大會應用社會科學系講師張超雄:發錢寒的人口政策>>, 成報, 18/3/2003, (城中話題A06版)。

³² <<綜援網下掙扎求存 我們不是寄生蟲>>, 成報, 6/3/2003, (港人港事A13)

³³ <<我認識的新來港人士>>, 新報, 6/3/2003, (觀點角度C08)。

The puzzles that I intend to study are: how do those new female migrants view themselves in such a dominant discourse? How do they perceive themselves? How do they respond to the dominant discourse? Are there any differences in their self-portrayal before and after coming to Hong Kong? What are the factors contributing to and affecting their identity formation? Do they play an active role in their identity construction or are they just passively influenced by the hegemonic discourse?

As most of the criticisms on the new migrants are targeted on those who are not working in the public sphere or CSSA recipients, and women constitute a significant group among the new migrants, I would like to focus on the Mainland female migrants.

1.4 Summary of the Framework

The following is a summary of the contents of my thesis. Chapter 2 contains the literature review of this research. There will be discussions about theories on subjectivity, followed by how subjectivity and the agentic subject are constructed according to the concept of cultural citizenship. Also, I shall highlight how the construction of subjectivity and exercise of agency is manifested through narrations.

Chapter 3 will be devoted to the methodology of this research. In this chapter,

my ontological presupposition on social reality and epistemology will be presented so as to make clear the basis for my perception of problems. Definition of core terms of the research questions and the logistics of the research will be delineated.

Chapter 4 is an overview of the background information about my informants. I divided them into two groups based on whether they were CSSA recipients or not. Chapter 5 presents the detail findings of my interviews with informants that have not applied for CSSA ("group 1"). I shall analyze the making of cultural citizenship of those female migrants from their own narrations. In particular, I shall argue that they do not neatly define themselves as Mainlanders or Hongkongeses. Rather, they put great emphasis on ethnicizing themselves by using their provincial ethnic, and vehemently define themselves in opposition from those who have applied for CSSA. Besides, they actively try to fend off the dominant negative portrayals by the government and the media.

Chapter 6 is the data presentation of those informants who have applied for the CSSA, all except one are single-parents (hereinafter call 'Group 2). It is found that unlike those informants in Chapter 5, they do not make use of the socio-economic and political circumstances as their bargaining chips. Instead, they passively accepted the dominant portrayals, and only made use of their gender role and specific personal experiences to fend off the negative images imposed on them by the general public.

Chapter 7 discusses the similarities and differences between Group 1 and Group

2. Though there are differences among them, one significant similarity among these groups is that they exercised their agencies to distinguish themselves from 'bad' migrant women. Their strategies include emulating themselves with some positive identities, emphasizing their role as caretaker, and dramatizing the predominant classification systems in Hong Kong, by condemning some of the female migrants. I argue that socio-economic background and some of the ascribed characteristics of female migrants are essential factors that help explain how their subjectivities are made and being made.

The last chapter discusses the significance and limitations of this research. As a feminist researcher, I will also provide my self-reflections of the research process.

Last but not least are the aspects worthwhile for further studies in this research area, and the concluding remarks for this research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

To understand how the female migrants discern themselves, it is necessary to study how they construct their sense of self, us and others, and the value embedded in all these categorical distinctions. Accordingly, it is useful to review theories about the formation of the self, Self-Other distinction, as well as human agency in formulating self identity. The theories reviewed in this chapter are by no means exhaustive and emphasis will be placed on more representative ones.

In addition, the socio-cultural context in Hong Kong that pertains to cultural identity and interethnic relationship, gender concept and on the interaction of migration and gender is also useful for providing a context for us to understand the issue at stake. Therefore, a brief summary of these areas will be presented in the literature review first.

2.1 Gender and Migration in the Socio-cultural Context of Hong Kong

As many scholars pointed out, the ethnic identity problem was quite prominent in Southeast China. Southeastern Chinese include the “Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien” and other groups. These groups often regard themselves as “more Chinese”, while the others are “barbarians”. Take the Hakka people as an illustration, they are so

proud of themselves as they thought they are the “descendents of Sung-dynasty officials” who were invaded by the Northern barbarians. While some Northern Chinese perceive the Southerners as “barbarians”, the Cantonese and those who live in Guangdong have a sense of superiority because they view themselves as the “pioneers” of the southern provinces since Tong dynasty³⁴.

In categorizing ethnic groups, “language, native place and the way people make a living” are the three main criteria for distinction³⁵. However, the rhetoric about the attributes and worth of certain ethnic groups is also an influential factor in positioning certain ethnic groups in different positions. By constructing the ethnic rhetoric, it is suggested that ethnicity is actually the “roles people take in complex political systems or as the social organizations of cultural differences in which social boundaries are maintained”³⁶. What constituted “ethnic groups” or “ethnicity” is greatly affected by how different people interacted with each other, and the sociocultural changes of the social settings in which one is situated in.

Many scholars suggest that Hong Kong people did not have a sense of identity until post-war. The identity of Hong Kong people is largely de-politicized and detached from national identity due to the specific historical events in the Mainland

³⁴ Blake, C. F. 1981. *Ethnic groups and social change in a Chinese market town*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii. pp. 1-2.

³⁵ Ibid. pp.7.

³⁶ Ibid. pp.3.

China. Since the colonial government emphasized on economic development, it is believed that Hong Kong people's views on everything was market-oriented, and even culture "can be priced"³⁷.

Because of this, certain migrants came from specific places in the Mainland were credited while some might not be so fortunate. For instance, as most of the Shanghainese who came to Hong Kong were businesspeople, the capital and the entrepreneurial qualities associated with them.³⁸ Meanwhile, some migrants from the Mainland might also make use of such mentality to discern themselves from certain group of migrants in order to gain recognition and respect.

As suggested by scholars like Caroline Wright, the gender perspective is "not something that can be added on the migration theory, but is integral to it"³⁹. As such, one should understand how migration and gender interacted with one another in the specific socio-cultural context of Hong Kong.

In general, one of the main reasons for women in different parts of the world to migrate to other places is to escape from the oppressive male control. Of course, they are oppressed not solely because they are female, but because of the "hierarchies

³⁷ Chun, Allen, 1996, "Discourses of Identity in the Changing Spaces of Public Culture in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore." *Theory Culture & Society* 13(1): 51-75. pp.63.

³⁸ Wong, S. L. 1984. "The Migration of Shanghainese Entrepreneurs to Hong Kong". In *From Village to City, Studies in the Traditional Roots of Hong Kong Society*. Faure, D, Hayes, J., and Birch, A. (eds.). Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, Univeristy of Hong Kong.

³⁹ Wright, C. 1995. "Gender Awareness in Migration Theory: Synthesizing Actor and Strcuture in Southern Asia", *Development and Change*, 26, 771-91. In *Gender and Migration*. Willis, K. and Yeoh, B. (eds.). Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar. 2000.

of inequality of all kinds – for example, hierarchies based upon status... ethnicity”⁴⁰.

Some of them migrate to look for jobs because of their family roles, i.e. they had to support their families financially. This highlights the importance for viewing women as not “dependent”, as they worked industriously for the well-being of their families at their hometowns⁴¹.

There is a long history of Chinese migrating overseas as workers. There were a lot of “indentured labourers” since the 1850s. They signed contracts for some employers for a certain period of time, usually for repaying some debts. Many of them went to other countries by passing through Hong Kong. Malpractices and abuses toward the indentured labourers were common. Among them, Chinese women were forced to be prostitutes or sexually abused⁴².

Because of their ethnicity and gender, Chinese female migrants were regarded as “peripheral”⁴³, “less esteemed races”, and the contributions they made were demeaned in many aspects⁴⁴. Though some of them became migrants because of their own decisions, many of them went to other places or came to Hong Kong because they

⁴⁰ Cohen, I. 1989. *Structuration Theory: Anthony Giddens and the Constitution of Social Life*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan. pp. 230.

⁴¹ Zlotnik, H. 1995. “Migration and the Family: The Female Perspective”, *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 4 (2-3), 253-71. In *Gender and Migration*. Willis, K. and Yeoh, B. (eds.). Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar. 2000.

⁴² Sinn, E. “The Tung Wah Hospital Committee as the Local Elite”. In *Cyber Culture Express, Study Guide, Hong Kong: A Reader in Social History*. Download from: http://www.hku.hk/hkcsp/ccex/text/studyguide/hkhist/ch2_1.htm#6. Dated: 17-6-2004.

⁴³ Ryan, J. 2002. “Chinese Women as Transnational Migrant: Gender and Class in Global Migration Narratives”. *International Migration* Vol. 40(2), pp.93-116. pp. 94.

⁴⁴ Lee, S. 1996. “Issues in research on women, international migration and labour”. In *Asia Women in Migration*. Battistella, G. and Paganoni, A. (eds.). Scalabrini Migration Centre, Quezon City: Philippines. pp.10.

were forced to do so. In the Mainland, patriarchal families were upheld in a widespread manner. Male parents were the head of households, and women were regarded as male properties. Besides, “social arrangement” including “betrothal, marriage, concubinage, adoption, servitude” were very common. Hence, using one’s wife or daughter as pledges was not outlawed in China⁴⁵. Different “institutionalized servitude” such as betrothal, *mui tsai*, *pipa tsai* and prostitution were prevalent⁴⁶.

To counteract these exploitative systems on women, some of them tried hard to find “avenues of escape”. Some of them became “*zi shu nu* (non-marrying women)”, some of them chose to be “*haam sui mui* (protect women)”, while some became female migrant workers. However, one should not overlook that in the past, many Chinese women came to Hong Kong also because of the instability in the Mainland, as Hong Kong did provide a better place for them to earn a living.

While it is undeniable that many Chinese women in the past were brought to Hong Kong against their will, nowadays, many female migrants come here for family

⁴⁵ Jaschok, M. and Miers, S. 1994. *Women and Chinese Patriarchy: Submission, Servitude and Escape*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, London: Zed Books. pp. 142.

⁴⁶ Ibid. pp. 10-12. By early betrothal, the author pointed out that it was a widespread practice in the rural part of the New Territories in Hong Kong. Little girls were transformed by their parents from natal families to their future husbands’ households to work as servitude first. *Mui tsai* is a term similar to “child slavery”. *Pipa tsai* is the word used to describe those girls who were sold by their fathers as entertainers. Some of their encounters were unfortunate and finally became prostitutes.

reunion. By reviewing some of the oral history of female migrants, it is obvious that improving one's livelihood is one of the reasons for them to leave their hometown to Hong Kong. Many of the female migrants said they were looking forward to live in a place where there would be more freedom – free from the domination of their parents, while many of them expressed their hatred of being peasantry⁴⁷.

During the economic take-off of Hong Kong, many Mainland Chinese women came here to work as factory workers. At that time, they were not looked down upon by others as “dependents”. In fact, most of them had to support the living of their families⁴⁸. With the worsening of the Hong Kong's economy after 1997, new Mainland female migrants had difficulties finding jobs. Many of them are perceived as “dependent” or “burden” of the Hong Kong society. It is against such background that migrants from the Mainland are perceived in negative ways.

2.2 “Self, Subject and Subjectivity”

It is suggested by some theorists that the word ‘self’ and ‘subject’ has fundamental difference in their meaning. Postmodernists and poststructuralists tend to use the term “subject” instead of “self”, “individual” or “person”. The term ‘self’ is said to connote a “rational, coherent, autonomous beings fully present to themselves

⁴⁷ 回憶：新來港婦女口述歷史，循道衛理楊震社會服務處，二零零一年。

⁴⁸ Lee, W.Y.. 2003. “Introduction: Gender and Change in Hong Kong”. In *Gender and Change in Hong Kong: Globalization, Postcolonialism, and Chinese Patriarchy*. Lee, W.Y. (ed.) Hong Kong University Press. pp. 7.

and in control of their actions, thoughts and meanings”⁴⁹. In contrast, the word ‘subject’ falls between “conscious agency and passive subject” as put forth by Louis Althusser⁵⁰. It is propounded that ‘the subject’ is a less powerful and more tentative being subjugated to both external and internal forces that are not within the subject’s complete control⁵¹.

Some scholars may think that it is too pessimistic to say that human beings are ‘subjects’ as it may imply that they can only act within the structured structure. However, I find it more realistic to adopt the term subject to self. This is not meant to refute the possibilities for the subjects to exercise their agencies. Theories advocated by Michel Foucault will be selected for discussion because it is the most relevant for this research.

Foucault

To Michel Foucault, the subject is constructed through discourses in which there is some room for the subject to negotiate his/her subjectivity. To understand how it operates, it is essential for us to shed some lights on his conception of power first. In his book *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault provided a great account of the nature of power, and its relations with knowledge production. For him, power is something that

⁴⁹ Cranny-Francis, A, Wendy Waring, Pam Stavropoulos, and Joan Kirkby. 2003. Chapter 2: Ways of Thinking. In *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates*. Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 42.

⁵⁰ Sonya, A, Terry Lovell and Carol Wolkowitz. 1997. *A glossary of feminist theory*. London: New York: Arnold, New York: Distributed exclusively in the USA by St. Martin’s Press. pp.266.

⁵¹ Ibid 1, pp.42.

cannot be possessed. Instead, it is all about the deployment of power. To quote him, “power is a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult. Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term ‘conduct’ is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. To ‘conduct’ is at the same time to ‘lead’ others and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities.⁵²” Hence, power has a dual nature that both constraints and provides possibilities for individuals. Therefore, while there is certain knowledge, there are rooms for the others. In other words, there is no absolute truth for knowledge, as there are always open potentialities for different kinds of knowledge coexisting together.

Moreover, as Jana Sawicki noted, “Foucault frees power from the political domain”, he views that power is permeated in all personal and social relations, that there is nothing outside such power web. Under such power relations, he reckon that ‘where there is power, there is resistance’ as wherever there is the existence of ‘relationship’, the subjects must have the ability to exercise the “conduct”. Therefore, in line with such logic, every subject is capable of resisting certain knowledge and at the same time producing alternative knowledge.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he clearly stated that the study of discourse is

⁵² Foucault, M. 1994 “The Subject and Power”. In *The Essentials Works of Foucault, Vol. 3*. James D. Faubion. New York: The New Press. pp.341.

to identify the objects of certain discourses, to figure out subjects and the constitution of the subject positions through the particular discourse under study, the enunciators of the discourse concerned, the sites of enunciation, and how such a subject position is discursively situated in other discursive constitutions⁵³.

Foucauldian version of the discursive subject is being theorized in accordance with the concepts aforementioned. Discursive subjects cannot be understood in isolation from the objects of knowledge since they are simultaneously situated under the same discursive space and time. Besides, the subject is constantly constituted and constituting, and both constraining and enabling under the presence of a hegemonic discourse. Although the subject is “socially constructed in discursive practices”, Weedon recognizes Foucault’s work of rendering the subject “thinking” and “feeling”, who is a “social subject and agent, capable of resistance and innovations” under the struggles between “contradictory subject positions and practices”⁵⁴. Thus, there is space for the construction of subjectivity, that is, the “subjugated knowledge”.

Albeit the construction of subjectivity is bounded by certain dominant discourses, the agentic subjects still have the potentials to subvert them. They can disavowing

⁵³ Cain, M. 1993 “Foucault, Feminism and Feeling What Foucault Can and Cannot Contribute to Feminist Epistemology”. In *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions between Foucault and Feminism*. Ed. by Caroline Ramazanoglu. London: New York: Routledge. pp. 76.

⁵⁴ Weedon, C. 1987. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. pp. 125.

the dominant power by constructing counter-discourses to resist what is being defined about their 'self' within the given power nexuses. Hence, Foucault's notion of power that permeated in all social and personal relations does not necessarily mean that "one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what"⁵⁵.

Nevertheless, one of the main limitations of the above theory is not taking the contextual environment in which one situates into account. Like the approach adopted by Fraser and Gordon, it is crucial to go beyond Foucault's focus, by considering the changes and development of discourses in relation to "broad institutional and social-structural shifts"⁵⁶. Social constructionists such as Ivanic talks about citizen identities as "the result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities which are available to them in their social context"⁵⁷. While Anthony Giddens, a famous scholar who bridged the structure and agency dichotomy, held that citizen identities are not a set of instinctive personal attributes. Rather, it is constructed through a process in which individual can have different choices for constituting oneself and one's lifestyle⁵⁸. Going beyond the two-way formation process of citizen identities, these theories remind us of the importance of taking into

⁵⁵ Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge*. Ed. by C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon. pp. 141-142.

⁵⁶ Fraser, N. and L. Gordon. 1995. "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Key Word of the U.S. Welfare State". In *Rethinking the Political*. Ed. by Laslett, B., Brenner, J. and Arat, Y. University of Chicago Press. pp. 35.

⁵⁷ Ivanic, R. 1998. *Writing and Identity: the Discourse Construction of Identity in Academic Writing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. pp. 12.

⁵⁸ Jaworski, A. and Nikolas Coupland ed. 1999. *The Discourse Reader*. London: Routledge.

consideration the contextual factors under which the citizen identities are constructed.

Both theories discussed considered individuals as subjects who are being influenced by social institutions. While Althusser does not confer agency to the subjects, Foucault's theory provides some room for it. Besides, when individuals construct their subjectivities, it is inevitable for them to draw on boundaries between those whom they think are similar and differ from themselves. Hence, two central questions need to be considered and it is hoped that the literatures reviewed in the following sections will give us some insights for conducting this research. First and foremost, how those 'others' become 'us', and how the subjects tell apart themselves and the 'others' during the construction of subjectivity? The second question is that, how can the subjects exercise their agency under the dominant ideology or discourse? Let us turn to the first question now.

2.3 Construction of Subjectivity through the Lens of Cultural Citizenship

-- The Us and Other Distinction

Although psychoanalysts are interested in studying the formation of the Self and the Other, such theories will not be reviewed here. Instead, I shall closely examine the theory of cultural citizenship and the us and other distinction. Although they are two different things, I argue that they are closely related and thus worthwhile

to discuss them in a confluent way.

The notion of cultural citizenship normally refers to the “collective rights to culture”. It is usually used to indicate those marginal or “culturally distinct groups” to preserve and consolidate their own cultural rights as citizenship rights⁵⁹. According to those who advocate cultural citizenship, people “should have the right to define themselves subjectively as belonging to a particular ... community”⁶⁰. That means, they have the right to determine what constitute their shared history, language, and culture.

To paraphrase Silvestrini, cultural citizenship is the ways in which people organize their values and beliefs about rights. What they feel and do is not based on the formal citizen status offered by their place of residency, but on their sense of cultural belonging to that particular place⁶¹. Here, their sense of belonging is closely related to what they feel about their connections with the communities they are living in, and in turn, affects how they define themselves and others⁶².

Such sense of identification is developed through everyday life, including some critical experiences. But it should be stressed that, this is not a one-way process.

⁵⁹ *Cultural Citizenship in the 21st Century: Adult Learning and Indigenous Peoples*. A series of 29 booklets documenting workshops held at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education. CONFINTEA Hamburg 1997. UNESCO. pp.7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 9.

⁶¹ Silvestrini, B. 1997. “The world we enter when claiming rights: Latinos and their quest for culture”. William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor eds. *Latino Cultural Citizenship*. Boston: Beacon Press: 39-53. pp. 44.

⁶² Hermes, J. 1999. “Cultural citizenship and the conservatism of popular culture: challenges for a feminist”. Audience Studies Network. Download at <http://www.imv.au.dk/forskning/asn/library.html>, dated 28-1-2004. pp. 2.

Rather, it is a “dual process of self-making and being-made” which captures the nexus of different power relations intersected and intertwined within civil society and the state⁶³. The construction of Us and Others is fluid, situational, contested and even overlapping through interactive construction process.

In identifying who belongs to Us and Others, the subjects usually formulate the boundary by their “feelings of social inclusion and exclusion”, based on their “values, beliefs, styles of living”, “experiences and expectations”, and the like⁶⁴. By recognizing specific traits possessed by one and other, resemblance and affinity is being established. This is the “effective formation” of group identities, and what we call as, identification.

In making such a categorical distinction, it involves both a vertical dimension that “designating the relation between the individual and the state”, and the horizontal dimension that designates “the relations of citizens to each other”⁶⁵. According to Stuart Hall, it is a process of “articulation”. Instead of “a one-sided process”, it is constructed discursively⁶⁶. If we understand the process of identification with the

⁶³ Ong, A. 1996. “Cultural citizenship as subject-marking: immigrants negotiate racial and cultural boundaries in the United States”. *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 37, No. 5. pp. 738.

⁶⁴ Duszak, A. 2002. “Us and Others: An Introduction”. In *Us and Others: Social Identities Across Languages, Discourses and Cultures*. Duszak, Ann ed. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. pp.1.

⁶⁵ Simm, B. “Politics Matters. Gender and Citizenship in France, Britain and Denmark”. Paper for the COST 13A Working Group Gender Issue. Workshop on Labor Marginalization/Exclusion and Caring in Berlin, Wissenschafts Forum, Nov. 24/25, 2000. The paper is a Revised Version of the concluding chapter of the book *Gender and Citizenship. Politics and Agency in France, Britain and Denmark*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 1

⁶⁶ Hall, S. ‘Who Needs “Identity”?’ Ed. by Hall, S. and Paul du Gay. In *Questions of Cultural Identity*. 1996. London: SAGE. pp. 6

discursive perspective, the characters of identification process is “conditional”, “contingency”, “strategic” and “positional”, instead of an essentialist one⁶⁷.

In other words, it is to call for not fixating or dissolving the subjects as a whole, but to understand them in a flexible manner and to examine the experiential differences and needs of different groups. Hall reminds us that situating these within the “historically specific developments and practices” is of equal importance, because they “have disturbed the relatively ‘settled’ character of many populations and cultures”⁶⁸.

Recognizing such natures of the constituted subjects means that no subject fits neatly into a single category of identity. Ignoring gender differences or differences among the same sex are both problematic, as pinpointed by Kate Nash on Mouffe’s gender-blinded approach. However, it should be noted that gender difference is not the sole element for structuring subjectivity. Other factors like class, race, ethnicity, religion, and other different social backgrounds are equally essential in the formation of one’s subjectivity.

For instance, Parkin in the “Strategies of Closure in Class Formation” has discussed how individuals are stratified according to different human characteristics. He viewed drawing boundaries as strategies employed by individuals to contrive

⁶⁷ Hall, S. 1995. “Introduction: Who Needs ‘Identity’?”. In *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Hall, Stuart and Paul du Gay eds. London: Sage Publications. pp. 3.

⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 4.

some advantages, namely in the market; and to shut down the opportunity window for those who are regarded as non-members. Arguing in a similar manner as Weber, he agrees that any group attribute(s) “may be seized upon provided it can be used for “the monopolization of specific, usually economic opportunities”. Thus, any characteristics can be deployed to draw on social boundaries. Among them, certain attributes are usually used as the “justificatory basis of exclusion”, for example, skin color, cultural differences and ethnicity⁶⁹.

All in all, a sense of gender consciousness and other over-arching status are equally important for theorizing the construction of subjectivity.

2.4 Understanding the Agentic Subject through the Lens of Cultural Citizenship

To ascertain the agency of the subject, let us first review some of the conventional perspectives on human agency. The traditional approach in defining agency is whether a person has “authority and power”. Hence, agency in this sense can be interpreted as “causal force”. If one adopts such definition, one can call a woman an agent if she “behave[s] politically to accomplish feminist ends”⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ Parkin, F. 1998. “Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique”. In *Social Class and Stratification: Classic Statements and Theoretical Debates*. Rhonda F. L. ed. Lanham, Md.: Bowman and Littlefield Publishers. pp.119-140. pp.123.

⁷⁰ Warkentin, C. and Daly, E. 2000. Chapter 7: Claiming Agency: Chilean Women and the Rescripting of Feminist Activism. In *Feminist Approaches to Social Movements, Community, and Power. Vol. One: Conscious Acts and the Politics of Social Change*. Teske, R.L. and Tetreault, M.A. eds. University of South Carolina Press. pp.155.

Arguing according to this logic, scholars such as Doyal and Gough contend that without involving “democratic participation in the political process at whatever level”, the so-called agency is not an agency at all, but merely an expression of “simple autonomy”⁷¹. Other scholars like Ruth Lister also conceptualize human agency in the discussion of citizenship as participation in the political arena, or even political struggle.

Another essence of the higher degree of agency advocated by these scholars is that citizenship does not only refer to “a sense of agency”, i.e., “the belief that one can act” but also “acting as citizen” in a collective way, which “in turn fosters that sense of agency”⁷². As such, Lister criticizes some feminists, like Wolf, for ignoring the essentiality of ‘collective struggle’. It is conceded that the ultimate expression of citizens’ agency requires that individuals do not perceive themselves as “helpless victims”. Besides, they should view themselves as “potential agents of change with many resources”, and responsible for “making choices” and “claiming rights” to strive for changes and rights through collective struggle⁷³.

The limitations for understanding human agency in terms of political and collective rights-seeking is that, it is still formulated in accordance with the traditional notion of citizenship, which only focuses on political rights, instead of emphasizing

⁷¹ Doyal, L. and Gough, I. 1991. *A Theory of Human Need*. Basingstoke: Macmillan. pp. 68.

⁷² Lister, R. 1997. *Citizenship: Feminist Perspective*. New York University Press. pp.36.

⁷³ Ibid. pp.38-39.

the importance of social, cultural and economic aspects, and the like. More than that, it may not be fair to say that one simply possesses 'simple autonomy', and not 'agency', merely because he/she does not fight for their political rights collectively.

First of all, the essence of agency may be demonstrated in other aspects such as fighting for their economic and social rights, or free from domination and discrimination by other forms⁷⁴. It is a must to go beyond the political arena by looking into other realms. Secondly, one may not perceive acting collectively to fight for their political rights as a kind of agency expression. Rather, there are other possibilities that we cannot neglect. And it is a must for us to comprehend the expression of agency from the subject's perspective.

Thirdly, it may not be suitable to use the traditional conceptualization of human agency in this research. Though some of the female migrants may really exercise their agency through political rights-seeking, many of them are still 'new' to this environment and with limited networking. It is unrealistic to expect them to collaborate with other fellow migrants. Fourthly, just like what Allen Feldman puts forward to define agency as "causal force" is to conceptualize it in "fixed and preexisting" terms. Therefore, it is more appropriate to understand agency as "relational, situated, and discursively produced through personal and individualized

⁷⁴ Gould, C. 1984. *Beyond Domination*. Totowa NJ: Rowman and Allanheld (ed.). pp.5-6.

experiences.” Owing to this character, the “specific character” of agency “will differ depending on the particular context in which it is manifested or interpretively determined.” Hence, agency exercised by women is also an expression of “differences in voices and standpoints.”⁷⁵

Cultural citizenship provides us with a useful lens to capture the essence of subjects’ agency. Following Ong that subject-making is a dual process, Hermes suggests that it provides a “domain of creativity, of ... forms of resistance”⁷⁶ for the subjects. bell hooks go further by considering marginality as a space not only for resistance, but also for empowerment⁷⁷.

In sum, as described by Delanty, cultural citizenship emphasizes “common experiences, learning processes and discourses of empowerment” that involve active agency and action⁷⁸. However, instead of merely limiting such agency to the struggle for political, economic and social rights, it embraces a more inclusive meaning by including those marginalized groups which are fighting for their cultural rights and identities.

2.5 Ideology/Discourses VS the Exercise of Agency

⁷⁵ Warkentin, C. and Daly, E. pp. 156.

⁷⁶ Hermes. pp.11.

⁷⁷ hooks, b. 1990. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press.

⁷⁸ Delanty, G. “Two conceptions of cultural citizenship: a review of recent literature on culture and citizenship”. *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*. Vol. 1, No.3, March 2003, 60-66. pp.64.

As pointed out previously, there are some limitations to the Foucauldian sense of agency. Some theorists tried to bridge the structure, that is, ideology/discourse, and agency in order to return agency to the subjects. Nonetheless, they are not without weaknesses, particularly in feminist terms.

Take the structuration theory of Giddens as an illustration, he held that structure and agency is a 'duality' in which they are dependent on and related to each other recursively. The process of structuration includes two dimensions, they are the evolvment and reproduction of social structure over time, and the constant production and reproduction of structures by agents that constrain and enable them concurrently.

The contribution of bridging structure and agency can be highlighted by Giddens' structuration theory that 'regard[ing] social agents as "knowledgeable" and "capable" is not just a matter of the analysis of action; it is also an implicitly political stance'⁷⁹. This coincides with feminists' concern of putting autonomous agent back into discussion, and without overlooking the political dialectics and implications. Though Giddens and other theorists like Beck and Lash have tried to frame power relations and subjectivity, as some feminists point out, the power dialectics between structure and agency has never been discussed or explored to the full extent. Under

⁷⁹ Giddens, A., *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. pp. 16.

such context, the feminist perspectives are useful in connecting the agency of social actors with the political and institutional nexuses in the structuration process. That means, instead of solely focusing on bridging the dichotomy between structure and agency in conceptual and methodological terms, political subjectivity should also be taken into account in order to produce a theory of agency which is suitable for the use of feminists.

As such, Pierre Bourdieu does make some contributions in relating gender relations and powers in more complex social relations of power, thus providing new insights for redefining the construction of subjectivity. For Bourdieu, he holds that by acquiring and accumulating 'social capital', there is potential capacity for people to give effect on social structures, either in individual or collective base. Hence, there is intersection of structure and agency. According to him, structure is called 'habitus' which is a long-lasting system of dispositions – 'structured structures' and at the same time 'structuring structures'. This implies that there is possible improvisation of the structured structures by social actors. What makes him distinctive from Giddens's theory is that, he does not only aim at breaking down the structure and agency dichotomy, but also the one between objectivity and subjectivity.

Nevertheless, his attempt is a failure. First and foremost, according to the

critique made by McNay, Bourdieu failed to genderize the habitus⁸⁰. Secondly, Wacquant and McNay both question whether the “introduction of the mediating concept of habitus” by Bourdieu “really free[s] us from the ‘iron cage’ of structuralism”. The agency articulated by him “remain overly deterministic”⁸¹. It is apparent that Bourdieu fails to spell out the conditions for which a cognitive state of mind, which is capable of figuring out the habitus and acting against it, is generated. More specifically as pinpointed by feminists, he fails to account for “what kinds of ‘investment strategies’ do women follow in what circumstances”, and “how may the existence of women as objects ... be curtailing or enabling in terms of their simultaneous existence as capital-accumulating subjects”. As Terry Lovell suggests, one has to consider these questions by linking them to “historical and cultural contexts”, and the agents’ “positions occupied within ‘the social field’”⁸².

Even though Bourdieu tried to incorporate ‘gender’ in his later work *Masculine Domination* and refine his theory into a more embrative one, it is still problematic for several reasons, most of which have to do with the blindspot of many mainstream (malestream) theorists. The first problem is about his basic premise of inequalities as solely a product of gender differences between men and women. This only

⁸⁰ McNay, L., *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. pp. 32.

⁸¹ Bourdieu, P. and L.J.D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity, 1992. pp. 132.

⁸² Lovell, T., “Thinking Feminism with and against Bourdieu”, *Feminist Theory*, Vol. 1(1):11-32, 2000. pp. 22.

reinforces the binary opposition and homogenizes gender order between the two sexes. Without merging analysis of gender differences with gender power, it fails to grapple the dynamic interaction between gender differences and other social relations of power like race, ethnicity and so on⁸³. Gender category should not be understood in a stringent sense. As agency is “typically interactive”, both agency and identity are actually “undergoing significant mutations as the roles of women and men overlap, merge, sometimes reverse themselves, and finally develop in quite unexpected new directions”⁸⁴. Hence, there should be a “genderquake”⁸⁵ among men and women, as well as among women themselves, as there are always multiple identities within an individual.

This is not to negate the significance of Bourdieu’s theory. After ‘re-gendering’ it, it may also be inspiring for excavating an issue. To take this research as an example, which investigates how the identities of female migrants are gendered in such specific contexts, Giddens’s and Bourdieu’s emphasis on the “social and material contexts” as both “constraining and enabling” to the social agents is useful for understanding how socio-economic and political factors affect social relations and structures over time and space, thus giving effects on the citizenship construction of

⁸³ Murgatroyd, L. 1989. “Only Half the Story: Some Blinkering Effects of ‘Malestream’ Sociology”, in Held, D., and Thompson, J.B., *Social Theories of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and His Critics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁸⁴ Mann, P. pp. 14-15.

⁸⁵ Wolf, N. 1993. *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How it Will Change the 21st Century*. London: Chatoo & Windus. Pp.57.

female migrants. It is also helpful for understanding, for instance, why some of them abolish their original identities and adopt the so-called Hongkongnese identities, while some do not; why some of them could retain their identities and successfully transform the structures which is originally conflicting to their own identities. In other words, how do these autonomous agents (female migrants) transform the structures according to their will? Will they still act within the re-inculcation of the pre-existing set of choices because of the dominant power relations?

In short, it is through accommodating class, race and gender in the socio-economic, political and historical contexts that a more systematic efforts can be made to understand the relations between gender as one of the principles of social organization and as an aspect of social identity.

2.6 The Construction of Subjectivity and the Exercise of Agency through

Narrations

Here, we turn to the discussion about the tools for constructing one's subjectivity and exercising one's agency. To construct one's own subjectivity, narrative is crucial. Bruner suggests that one finds his/her "own place in the world" through narrations. Particularly for those who are being excluded or marginalized in the mainstream, narrating one's own story provides alternative for them to make sense of one's value,

which serves an important psychological function⁸⁶. Bronwyn Davies, for instance, puts forward the feminist way of understanding the construction of subjectivity. She argues that subjectivity is constructed by the subject through telling one's own story line(s), and it is through such process that the subject constitutes the category of Us and the Others, and finds his/her agency.

It is held that narrations require agency, and indeed, represent an expression of agency. As Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe put forth explicitly, "narrative generally requires agency". When one is narrating his/herself, the subject becomes an actor. The subject is, in fact, being a director for making up the plot and his/her role in the story. More importantly, the story is directed towards a purpose that he/she wants to attain. The process requires the subject to preside over how to "organize, process, and interpret information" available and useful for them to achieve the targeted goal(s)⁸⁷. Hence, the role of the subject is active and directive in nature, requiring one's agentic skills.

Patrizia Violi quoted Teresa de Lauretis's wordings to explain the inscription of the structure of subjectivity in the structure of narrative. It is suggested that, "Subjectivity is engaged in the cogs of narrative and indeed constituted in the relation of narrative, meaning and desire, so that the very work of narrative is to engage the

⁸⁶ Bruner, J. 1996. *The Culture of Education*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

⁸⁷ Patterson, M. and Kristen Renwick Monroe. "Narrative in Political Science". *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 1:315-31. pp.316.

subject with certain positions of meaning and desire.⁸⁸”

As discussed earlier, the way one constructs his/her subjectivity should also be probed by the time factor, that is, in which particular time frame of one's life we investigate one's subjectivity, and the specific historical and cultural characters of the time. Expression of agency through narrations is usually related to how successful the subject is in mingling the subject's personal experiences to external forces, namely the historical and social fabrics the subject is situated in⁸⁹. A subject is simultaneously “individual and social, internal and collective”, and how one articulates one's subjectivity is all a matter of “how we work out the images of what it means to be⁹⁰” in a given time.

In constructing one's subjectivity through narration, scholars pointed out the possibility for the subject to subvert the hegemonic discourse. For instance, Davies suggested that when one provides his/her narrations, he/she does not stick to one position. Instead, multiple positionings can be found to serve one's desire. Through the continuous construction of the subject through multiple and contested discourses, the subject becomes a “speaking subject”. To many poststructural theorists, the subject thus exercise the agency to make decisions on choosing which

⁸⁸ Violi, P. 1992. Chapter 9: “Gender, Subjectivity and Language”. In *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*. Block, Gisela and Susan James eds. London: New York: Routledge. pp. 169.

⁸⁹ Graham, H. 1984. “Surveying Through Story”. In *Social Researching: Politics, Problems, Practice*. Bell, C. and Helen Roberts eds. Routledge and K. Paul: London.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 173.

discourse one wants to act within, or to invalidate at a particular time for achieving a specific purpose.

Judith Butler explicitly discussed it in connection with the construction of gender. She construes that “identity is performatively constituted by the very “expression” that are said to be its results”⁹¹. That means, she thinks that gender is what the subject does in a particular time. For Butler, all of us are putting on gender performance, the central question is the form of that performance, not if the subject does a gender performance or not. This implies that the subject is capable of exercising its agency in refusing the dominant/conventional gender norms by making some differences. There are still alternatives for the subject to reinvent its ‘identity’, instead of just doing a gender performance in a pre-structured way. According to Butler, the subject can perform its gender according to his/her wish through manipulating certain languages and codes. The metaphor she used in her book is dragging. Hence, it is through narrating oneself in certain ways that provide rooms for the subject not to reiterate the dominant discourses, but to confront it with alternatives.

Of course, subjectivity is not just performed in relation to gender. One has to take into consideration the complexity of the structure of subjectivity. Subjectivity

⁹¹ Butler, J. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge. pp. 25.

of the subject is constructed by many variables since the subject is “a multifaceted sort of notion, like “class, race, nationality, culture, etc.”⁹²”

Narratives are important not only for the subject to construct their sense of self and exercise their agency, but also helps burst out the dominant discourses or myths, especially towards those marginalized groups. Though it is undeniable that external forces would have some limit and control over the subject in constituting subjectivity, Weeks argues that it is still positive for the subject to create his/her identity through the “hazard-strewn world and a complex web of social relations” by unfolding conceivable aspects through narrations⁹³. It is made through envisaging, speaking and writing up one’s subjectivity by scouting out the “hooks” underneath the dominant, one-sided old story lines, and searching for ways to generate new ones⁹⁴.

In addition, by figuring out and narrating a “collective set of images, metaphors, and story lines”, the subject is not just capable of distinguishing oneself from the Other and categorizing a collective whole⁹⁵. The shared experiences and emotional attachment may have immense effect in constituting a collective, more powerful form of agency, especially in the process of the constitution of collective subjectivity for

⁹² Braidotti, R. 1992. Chapter 10: “On the female feminist subject, or: from ‘she-self’ to ‘she-other’”. In *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*. Block, Gisela and Susan James eds. pp. 184.

⁹³ Weeks, J. 1987. “Questions of Identity”. In *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality*. Pat Caplan ed. London: Tavistock in association with Methuen, New York.

⁹⁴ Davies, B. pp.69.

⁹⁵ Davies, B. pp. 62.

serving specific goals. Agency possessed and exercised by a subject can spread to other subjects, just like epidemics as analogized by Sperber⁹⁶. Therefore, agency expressed through narrations can be transformed to a collective power. Such collective subjectivity or representation has great implication for understanding the formation of subjectivity in individual terms. It shapes the subject's subjectivity as well as is shaped by such subjectivity.

2.7 Conclusion

The social constructionist approach to exploring the subject mainly focuses on the process of identity construction and stresses its interactive nature in contrast to the essentialist version of identity. However, as Cerulo pointed out, this downplays "the role of power in the classification process". By examining and weaving the subject-making with discourses, it enables us to have a fuller account of how both individuals and the collectivity define their Us and Other, and struggle through different forces. This does not only demurr the "dualistic, oppositional nature" of gender, but also other attributes such as class, ethnicity, culture, and the like⁹⁷. These theories are all essential for forming the foundations for understanding the

⁹⁶ Sperber, D. 1985. "Anthropology and Psychology: Towards an Epidemiology of Representations". *Man*. 20. pp.73-89.

⁹⁷ Cerulo, K.A. "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions". *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 1997, 23:385-409. pp. 391-2.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Epistemological Approach: The Feminist Standpoint Theory

The position that I adopt in pursuing my analysis is the epistemology of the feminist standpoint theory. I would like to explicate what kind of analysis this stance employs, what kind of knowledge it produces, and lastly, how different it is from other analytical approaches and why it is adopted for this study. As earlier standpoint theory pointed out, it does not matter what identities one bears, as there is not necessarily an “epistemic privilege” associated with particular identities. Instead, the feminist epistemology uses an analytical approach that gives us “a beginning-place [for] inquiry,” irrespective of differences in experience and social background.⁹⁸ It is an inquiry into the creation of those phenomena that traditional or conventional politics mystifies as natural. Hence, it produces a kind of critical and fresh knowledge that is grounded in women’s experiences. This does not necessarily mean that such an analysis is the most objective one, or is the only truth. Rather, it involves less distortion about the nature and social relations experienced by women, when compared with the ‘grand narratives’ derived from masculinist perspectives.

⁹⁸ Smith, Dorothy, “Sociology from women’s experience: a reaffirmation”, *Sociological Theory*, 10(1):88-98, pp. 90.

To be a critical feminist, what is most crucial is the ability to figure out why people or researchers narrate a story in a certain way, and not in another way, but without claiming that its own way is the one-best way of analyzing history. This helps provide a new dimension for understanding political phenomena and issues which contribute to the plurality of power-discourses. This means that knowledge produced through feminist perspectives is partial and situated. One of the spirit of feminist perspectives is to search for “better accounts of the world.” The implication is that the scholarly works produced should aim at transforming “science” (including political science), as opposed to “being satisfied with co-existence with its patriarchal truth claims.”⁹⁹

3.2 Topic

My research topic is the construction of cultural citizenship of female migrants in Hong Kong. One may wonder why I choose female migrants as my target of study. For some people this may beg several questions: why is the focus on females only, and not Chinese migrants as a whole? Are there any values implied in singling them out? Are their situations really so unique when compared with male migrants that they are worthy of special attention? If there are many commonalities shared by

⁹⁹ Roseneil, Sasha, “The Coming of Age of Feminist Sociology: Some Issues of Practice and Theory for the Next Twenty Years”, *BJS*, Vol. No. 46 Issue No. 2, June 1995. pp.197.

male and female migrants, and if their situations and the problems they encounter are similar, is it wise to focus on the females only?

The justification for selecting married (or once married) female migrants as the targets of this study is that: first and foremost, they constitute a significant portion of the new arrivals who come to Hong Kong annually. According to the statistics provided by the Home Affairs Department and Immigration Department, a total of 53,507 Mainlanders came to Hong Kong by one-way permit in 2003. Among these, 38,640 were aged 15 and over, while 90.3% of them are or have been married.¹⁰⁰

Secondly, I aimed at female migrants aged 20 to 49 as my target informants because they also constituted the majority of one-way permit holders. Taking the year 2003 as an illustration: females aged from 15-24, 25-34 and 35-44 constituted 3.2%, 3% and 36% respectively of Mainland one-way permit holding arrivals; whereas male Mainlanders only constituted 2.9%, 3% and 3.1% for the same respective age categories. As, in the past few years, the majority of female Mainlanders who came to Hong Kong were aged from 25-34, it is justifiable to study married female migrants aged from 20 to 49.

In fact, feminist perspectives provide a special lens for observing the social reality, which in turn gives us a special starting place for inquiry. The quires listed

¹⁰⁰ Home Affairs Department and Immigration Department. *Statistic on New Arrivals from the Mainland. Fourth Quarter of 2003.* Table 1: Demographic and Social Characteristic of One-way Permit Holders, 1999-2003, pp.7.

above would probably be asked by those who are satisfied with the existing order, as preserving the status quo is in their best interests. But the feminist commitment to search for "better accounts of the world," helps problematize those taken-for-granted issues and excavate many valuable issues for study.

Let us use an empirical study for illustration. Mary Daly conducted a study about poverty among European women. In studying the problem of poverty, mainstream studies had all used 'income' to measure poverty and 'household' as the unit of analysis. She problematized such conventional approaches in these ways: many researchers focus solely on counting the number of people who are under the poverty line, debating where to draw the poverty line, and leaving out those who are really poor in the research process, particularly the standpoint of women and those who are doing unpaid domestic work.¹⁰¹ Feminist perspectives, in this sense, are inspiring as they excavate the problem of poverty among women and provide new insights for understanding this issue. For example, Daly puts forward important concepts like absolute versus relative poverty, subjective versus objective poverty, the importance of digging into the lifestyles of women (housewives), the power structures at work in resources distribution within a household, the life cycle problem of women, and so on. All of these provide different trajectories to the existing problem that

¹⁰¹ For details, please refer to, Daly, Mary, "Europe's Poor Women? Gender in Research on Poverty", *European Sociological Review*, Vol.8(1):1-12, 1992.

have been ignored by researchers, and in turn by social policy makers.

The implication of such excavation research is that, in studying migrant families, for example, one has to be critical of existing findings and question whether they really reflect women's voices or simply claim as being the whole, what is actually only a part of the whole. If the invisible women are not taken into account, only a very limited understanding of the situation and problem of poverty will be reached, and the hope of advancing women's lives will be dashed.

Even among women themselves, their situations and experiences are not identical. Judith Butler holds that there is no necessary referent signifier for 'women.' In other words, experiences, needs and values need not be the same among women, and one therefore has to refer to them by taking into consideration the particular context that the group of women being studied are situated in.¹⁰² It is crucial to avoid falling into the pitfall of stereotyping women as a single large entity and overlooking the interests of particular sub-groups among women. It is also important to avoid what radical feminists call the 'totalizing effect,' which ignores the importance of women of different origins, ethnicity, classes and the like. One has to be aware that any attempt to equate lower class working women with female migrants, or to universalize female migrants all over the world as if they were all similar, is an

¹⁰² For details, please refer to, Butler, J. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge.

over-generalization.

Though one may criticize such categorizations as just another attempt to stereotype women, it is nevertheless justifiable, since it is not easy to find a way to reflect the interests of different sub-groups without categorizing them. The assumption here is that, though female Mainlanders and lower working class women are both women, and many of them are situated in the lower class, because of the special experience of being migrants there must be some differences among them. Nira Yuval Davis has noted that, in order to carry out a close examination of the “issue of women’s citizenship,” one should not just contrast women to men. Instead, one has to take into fuller account the status of different women, particularly in terms of whether they are situated in a dominant or subordinate group, their ethnicity, origin and the like.¹⁰³ By so doing, one not only avoids the pitfall of a universalistic claim for women’s rights, but one also goes beyond the universalistic understanding about the formation of women’s identities as citizens.

Hence, the rationale behind the categories drawn here is not to arbitrarily single out a particular group or exaggerate the differences among women. Rather, the aim is to explore experiential differences based on ethnographic work.

¹⁰³ Nira Yuval Davis. 1999. “Introduction: Women and the New Discourse of Citizenship”, in *Women, Citizenship and Difference*. Nira Yuval-Davis and Pnina Werbner eds. London and New York: Zed Books. pp. 1-38.

In addition to the spirit of excavation, feminist perspectives have provided valuable insights for starting the research topic at hand. Since I am neither a migrant nor a working class woman, some of my colleagues have questioned whether it is possible for me to know their situations and the problems they encounter. Besides, as many of our advantages and interests are built on oppressing these minorities, it is doubtful if we can truly commit ourselves to recognizing the ways in which we perpetuate the oppression. To respond to this concern, a strong version of self-reflexivity becomes all the more necessary. As mentioned, to adopt feminist perspectives is to be “traitorous” to our own identities and social locations. We are constantly being urged to gaze back to the “cultural particularity” of the group that we belong to, the ‘other’, and the ‘other “others.”’ To put this into practice in the research at hand means that I have to know how the general public (the middle-class in general, middle-class women, lower-class, lower-class working women and the like), the media and the government delineate the images of female migrants.

It is not necessary for one to remain fixed as an insider or outsider. Rather, one has to learn how to adopt different lenses to understand the different stances of different people, the ability to gaze back and forth. Recognizing one’s values and biases and exploring the different discourses of people of different identities and social locations enhances the credibility of the knowledge produced, and makes it

possible to describe the experiential differences of female migrants in their own terms, instead of doing so on the basis of our own subjective perspectives. This will be further discussed in the last chapter.

3.3 Definitions of Core Terms

Cultural citizenship differs from citizenship studies in the sense that it does not focus on the legal aspect of what constitutional rights citizens should have, but rather embraces the study of the construction of one's own identity. It carries more weight on the social and cultural aspects, being a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the government and civil society.

'Self-making' refers to how female migrants exercise their active agency in giving effect to their formation and understanding of their own identities. 'Being-made' means the formation of cultural citizenship in "a cultural process of subjectification." It is the "cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory."¹⁰⁴

In this study, Chinese female migrants refer to those women who have come from Mainland China and resided in Hong Kong for family reunion, for less than

¹⁰⁴ Ong, A. "Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making: New Immigrants Negotiate Racial and Ethnic Boundaries". *Current Anthropology*, 37(5): 838-62. pp. 737-738.

seven years. Detailed stratifications will be provided in later discussions.

3.4 The Research Question

Unlike western welfare states, the citizens of Hong Kong have never had a 'cradle-to-grave' welfare system with universal employment and welfare coverage, not to mention migrants from the Mainland. Interestingly, similar discursive formulations of welfare policy and justifications for welfare reforms can be identified, where welfare is expressed metaphorically by such terms as "safety nets" and "springboards" to independence.¹⁰⁵ In aiding such a discourse, catchwords like 'lazybones,' 'parasites,' and 'dependency' have become keywords used by government officials in depicting welfare recipients, namely those who apply for the CSSA Scheme and a means-tested social assistance scheme, the only safety net in Hong Kong.

Worse still, Mainland migrants are the main targets for such public discourse. With the growing number of inter-marriages between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the majority of Mainlanders who come to Hong Kong for family union are female migrants. Thus, they become the main subjects of criticism and stigmatization. It seems that both the government officials and policy experts all agree upon the claim that CSSA benefits are bad for the poor, as they undermine their motivation to stand

¹⁰⁵ Eardley, T. 1996. From safety nets to springboards? Social assistance and work incentives in the OECD countries. In M. May, E. Brunson and G. Craig, eds. *Social Policy Review 8*, Canterbury: University of Kent. pp.265-85.

on their own feet, and gives a false message that they can rely on the government even without contributing to the society.

Under such a dominant discourse, it is interesting to examine how female migrants feel and think about those portrayals and criticisms; and whether such views affect the way they perceive themselves. Hence, **two research questions** are formulated. They are stated as follows:

- (i) How do female migrants exercise their active agency in giving effect to and conferring meaning on their cultural citizenship?**
- (ii) How is their cultural citizenship produced through the hegemonic power of the government and/or other social actors?**

3.5 Purpose of My Research

This study aims at answering two questions in relation to the construction of the cultural citizenship of these female migrants: How did it happen? And who is involved? But it should be noted that there is NO attempt to establish a causal relationship between the factors that affect the cultural citizenship of the female migrants under study. The aim, instead, it is to develop explanations through detailed scrutiny of how processes work in particular contexts. I am trying to elucidate how female migrants construct and negotiate their cultural citizenship

through counteracting the enforced identities and public discourses of the time, making use of the nexus between the socio-economic and political circumstances in making such advancement.

3.6 Data Sources and Methods

3.61 Data Source

Stratification of my informants

The female migrants are stratified in the interests of examining how differently or similarly these factors may affect citizen identity formation among them. The stratifications are as follows:

- i. those aged from 20-50;¹⁰⁶
- ii. those whose monthly family income exceeds the median of household monthly income of Chinese migrants in Hong Kong, i.e., HK\$10,000;¹⁰⁷
- iii. those whose monthly family income does not exceed HK\$10,000;
- iv. those who live in rented public housing, private permanent housing, rented

¹⁰⁶ Since I wanted to interview those female migrants who have been residing in Hong Kong for a certain period of time, I tried to refer to the largest portion of them with reference to statistics in the year 2001. According to the statistical figures given by the Security Bureau, in 2001, among the new Chinese female migrants, 13.8% 25.6% and 4.8% were aged from 20-29, 30-39 and 40-49 respectively, constituting the majority of new Chinese female migrants in Hong Kong.

¹⁰⁷ It is estimated that in 1996, the median of household monthly income of Hong Kong families was \$17,500, whereas that of families composed of new Mainland migrants was only \$10,000. Statistics are drawn from: 香港統計處。(1996)。綜合住戶統計調查1996年專題報告書第十五號：〈在中國內地結婚的香港居民〉，及黃洪及蔡海偉。(1996)。香港低開支住戶開支模式研究。香港：香港社會服務聯會及樂施會。

suites, or housing bought from the Public Housing Ownership scheme;

- v. those who are part-time workers, or full-time housewives;¹⁰⁸
- vi. those who have 'intact' or so-called 'broken' families (either divorced or widowed); and,
- vii. those who have children or do not have any children.

3.62 Method – Narrative Interview

This is a qualitative study. Field research in the form of narrative interviews was employed. The form of narrative interview used is similar to the personal historical account. Though there may be similarities in the experiences and views shared among the female migrants, it is incorrect to assume that they are without any differences. In particular, as this research is concerned with the identities they construct, it is important to pay attention to the uniqueness of their personal experiences in contributing to their perceptions about certain things. Therefore, it is more appropriate to use detailed, open-ended and semi-structured interviews,¹⁰⁹ rather than using a one hundred percent standardized list of questions. But it should be noted that some basic and core questions have been asked in all the interviews to generate data comparison among the informants.

¹⁰⁸ But most of them were homemakers at the time I interviewed them. In fact, homemakers constituted the largest portion after they came to Hong Kong. 65.4%, 57.3%, 42.3% 54.7% and 60.1% of female migrants who come here by one-way permit were homemakers, from 1999 to 2003 respectively. Statistics are quoted from *Statistics on New Arrivals from the Mainland (Fourth Quarter of 2003)*. Table 1, pp. 8.

¹⁰⁹ Please refer to Appendix 1 for the interview questions.

The main purposes of conducting this kind of interview are as follows:

- (i) it helps understand the life spans of my interviewees thoroughly;
- (ii) it facilitates the elicitation of reconstruction of connections between events experienced by them, and between events and contexts; and
- (iii) it provides opportunities to understand why and how some of their perspectives change and their relations to different contexts.

The sampling method of this narrative interview is judgemental and snowball sampling. Informants are mostly those with whom I have made friends when doing voluntary work at some NGOs, or to whom I was referred by social workers.

3.63 Methods of Analysis

In this study, a combination of the principles of narratives and discourse analysis is employed. Briefly, discourse is neither what is said, written and/or argued by people, nor is it the study of 'truth.' Rather, it is a special way to represent a particular subject through the use of language. It is complex, dynamically contextualized, open-ended and it emphasizes symbols. Since it is a system of representation, discourse consists of regular occurrence of the ways in which a certain subject is represented in terms of themes and concepts that are in turn related to other sets of themes and concepts, and some social practices. To put it simply, it is a set of enduring expressions with main themes of representation, or it can be understood as a

particular pattern of language used and a way of thinking and speaking about something.

In putting this into practice, the following steps will be taken to illuminate the purpose of reconstructing the identity formation of the female migrants:

- i. to generate the life story of female migrants by musing over how they got to be where they are,¹¹⁰ that is, to find out how the identities of female migrants are produced, how they function, and how they are changed through their own agencies;
- ii. to analyze how they relate to other people, those who are and those also who are not female migrants, and how they define such relationships;¹¹¹
- iii. to elicit a reconstruction of the connections between events experienced by them, and between events and contexts;
- iv. to understand why and how some of their perspectives changed and their relations to different experiences as well as contexts;
- v. to understand the political process through which female migrants who produce these expressions attempt to change the existing rules and institutions, and to figure out other means to silence, persuade, eliminate, or otherwise win over alternative expressions with a view to obtaining a

¹¹⁰ Gergen, K.J. 1991. *The Saturated Self*. New York: Harper Collins. Basic Books. pp.161.

¹¹¹ Wood, J.T. 1982. "Communication and Relational Culture: Bases for the Study of Human Relationships". In *Communication Quarterly*, 30:75-83. pp.75.

hegemony of one's ideas over others;

- vi. to connect their narrations with social practices, i.e. socio-economic and political processes, as the ideas/subjectivities of those female migrants cannot exist in separation from their objective existences, and no subject can have meaning without being part of a wider discursive framework; and
- vii. to illustrate how they are being stratified in terms of different ethnicity, class, gender, and the like; how such stratification is being used to reinforce power relations; and how the hegemony of certain discourses create constraints on those female immigrants, and in turn, aid governance over them, thus giving a fuller picture of the process of the construction of their cultural citizenship.¹¹²

3.64 How the Data are Organized

The data generated is organized in terms of two main dimensions. The first one is (I) how female migrants view themselves as being the same as some people and different from others. That means studying the process of how they associate themselves and someone else. This will be further examined through two directions:

- i. how they relate themselves to others, and

¹¹² Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interview and Other Writings: 1972-1977*. Gordon, C. ed. & translated by Gordon, C. Pantheon Books: New York. Foucault, M. 1989. "The subject and power". In *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Dreyfus, H.L. and P. Rainbow eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 208-28. Foucault, M. 1991. "On Governmentality". In *The Foucault Effect*. Burchell, G., C. Gordon, and P. Miller eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 87-104.

- ii. how they differentiate themselves from others.

(II) The second aspect is the extent to which they control their identity construction.

There are generally two levels for studying this:

- i. how they exercise control over the formulation of their citizen identity, and
- ii. the constraints exercised by other agents over them in the process of identity formation.

3.7 Validity & Reliability

3.71 The data generated

Justifications for adopting the data generation strategies have been mentioned.

However, some people may be doubtful about the reliability of the data generated.

There are usually two levels of questions raised about the reliability. First of all, it is uncertain if the informants told the 'truth' during the interviews, as using open-ended and semi-structured narrative interviews provides lots of room for informants to selectively say what they would like to say, and some people may even think that the informants may make up stories. In fact, the contents of the interviews themselves are already removed from "real" life experiences, regardless of what forms of interview is being adopted. For this research, doing interviews is not a process of searching for the truth, but a process of interpretation. What I am referring to is how

the informants relate and interpret their own stories. The interviews aim at ascertaining the informants' perspectives, for this constitutes the core understanding about the formation of their cultural citizenship. Instead of simply asking them to spell out their experiences, the idea is to learn how they are constituted through their experiences. As Scott states, "experience is at once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested..."¹¹³ Their interpretations about their own experiences, their interpretations about the distinctions between themselves and other people in their everyday lives, and the contexts created by them in giving meaning to their encounters are exactly what this research is concerned with.

Secondly, some people may be dubious about the reliability of the data generated, because of the fragmented nature of the informants' narrations. Producing 'wholeness of oneself' may be problematic for these informants, as some of them do not talk much in their daily lives, and it may be difficult for them to articulate such a 'wholeness' about themselves. Thus, it is inevitable that during the interviews, they may just express their experiences piece by piece in a fragmented and disorganized way, without sequential ordering. But it should be noted that those seemingly fragmented pieces may, to a certain extent, provide useful insights for understanding

¹¹³ Scott, J. 1991. "The Evidence of Experience". *Critical Inquiry*. 17:773-97. pp.797.

their “mode of mental organization” in recounting their experiences.¹¹⁴

More importantly, the interview process constitutes an exercise allowing some of them to work out their own agency. This provides opportunities for them to place themselves in the plots, and play a role in their own stories. It also involves the process of organizing, processing and interpreting information about themselves and searching for a sense of self,¹¹⁵ which is a vital process of empowerment in feminist research.

Thirdly, it should be admitted that these narrations may be full of contradictions. This does not necessarily mean that there is a problem about the reliability of the data generated, as it is incorrect to assume that a self must be in a complete form without any contradictions, as discussed in the literature review. Even in certain instances, where I found that a particular informant told me a new and different version of an issue already recounted, this does not mean that the data are discredited. Bearing in mind that instead of searching for the so-called ‘truth,’ the purpose of this research is to learn why my informants present themselves in this way, and not that, and why they narrate things differently in different contexts.

3.72 About the data interpreted

In addition to the above, some people are always skeptical about the validity of

¹¹⁴ Patterson, M and K.P. Monroe. “Narrative in Political Science”. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 1:315-31. 1998. pp. 316.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

the interpretation of the data generated from such interviews. To resolve this problem, in reinterpreting and reconstructing the stories told by the informants, it became important to reflect the researcher's personal feelings and opinions during the process of studying the informants. Some post-structuralists like Derrida have argued that any attempt at investigating and analyzing the "reality" implies the ability to stand outside and apart from it. But in reality, no one can ever examine it from the outside, and no one can stand free of it. This does not mean that one can interpret the data generated freely.

To ensure that the analysis of the data and the production of knowledge is carried out in a relatively objective way, the feminists' insistence on the importance of self-reflexivity is useful. No one is objective in an absolute sense, no one can be free from the influence of certain ideologies, and no one can be detached from the context one is situated in. All of us carry social baggage. Thus, it is vital for us to be sensitive to the values or biases that we bear, whether consciously or unconsciously. In this study, this will be done by writing myself into the research, including providing a biography, stating my political agenda clearly, setting out my ideological perspective, and how I nested my analysis by entangling it with my ideological beliefs, as well as, in the last chapter, the specific context that my informants are embedded in.

The second dimension is that our social background and experiences are not the same as the subjects that we are interested in studying. Thus, if I am not a female migrant from the Mainland, how can I understand the problems faced by them, and the differences between being a female migrant and a local citizen? Feminist perspectives provide a useful answer, that is, we can only do so by being "traitorous" to our own identities and social locations.¹¹⁶ For instance, if I am white, middle-class, female, I should be reflective to my own prejudices so as to link these perceptions to others who are in similar positions. It is through understanding 'the others' with whom one is situated that one can contrast and get a fuller account of 'the other "others."' This, as Edwards noted, gives us the "flexibility to be able to relate to women in subjective ways on their terms rather in objective ways on the researchers' terms."¹¹⁷

The essence of self-reflexivity can be seen in Harding's words, "strong reflexivity ... requires that the objects of inquiry be conceptualized as gazing back in all their cultural particularity and that the researcher... stand behind them, gazing back at his own socially situated research project in all its cultural particularity and its relationships to other

¹¹⁶ Harding, Sandra, pp. 288-295.

¹¹⁷ Edwards, Rosalind. 1990. "Connecting Method and Epistemology: A White Woman interviewing Black Women". *Women's Studies International Forum*. 13 (5): 477-490. pp. 489.

projects of his culture.”¹¹⁸

It is hoped that by being self-reflexive when conducting the research and analyzing the data generated, I can ensure that the knowledge produced will have greater objectivity and credibility.

3.8 Generalizability

It seems that the question of generalizability is quite a headache for feminist researchers who often make use of qualitative techniques in conducting their research. When emphasizing experiential differences among the female migrants in this study, the extent to which the result can represent ‘female migrants’ as a whole is usually doubted. I do not agree with the concept of “world-traveling” advocated by scholars like Maria Lugones, and it is apparent that “traveling” among the same subgroup is problematic. However, I would like to make it clear that this does not necessarily mean that the data generated and the analyses carried out are atypical. Although there are obvious differences among my informants, they do share some similarities in terms of some of their experiences in their Mainland upbringings, their experiences in Hong Kong, the circumstances they are situated in, and the like.

Hence, some kind of generalization can still be made, since in the particular

¹¹⁸ Harding, Sandra, pp. 163.

context of one's upbringing, experiences before and after migration, and the specific context of the wider society, it is still possible to find certain patterns and explanations for their construction of cultural citizenship. This part will be included in the last chapter.

Chapter Four

Background of My Informants

4.1 Introduction

To facilitate the reader's understanding of the discussions in the chapter following this one, a brief account of the background of each informant and their lives before residing in Hong Kong will be provided in this chapter.

4.2 Background of my informants

Informant 1

Informant 1 had resided in Hong Kong for more than a year when I first interviewed her. She is a client of an NGO located in Mong Kok. She has three sons, and is living with her husband, two sisters-in-law and a mother-in-law under the same roof in private rented housing in Mong Kok. She was born in Guangdong and finished middle school there. While she was studying, she had to work on the farmland for her parents. She went to Shenzhen at 15 years old. The reason for going there to work was that she was not content with merely farming in her hometown. When she saw that those who were working in Shenzhen came back to their village with many beautiful clothes and had better food to eat, she also wanted to improve her own living standard and thus decided to go there.

When she talked about her life in Mainland China. She said she enjoyed living and working in Shenzhen more than in her homeland, since she could earn a living in an easier way in a relative sense, and life had been very free. She could go out with friends for fun during leisure time and did not have to bear any responsibility for her family, apart from sending money back to her parents periodically.

After going to Shenzhen, she was very hard-working and thus became a quality controller and later on a member of the management team at the factory she worked in. She said that she did not demand much, but she liked that job because it widened her horizons and provided good prospects for her career, and she worked happily. Since she had a well-paid job in Shenzhen, after she got married she did not ask her husband to give her money. She said she would like to rely on her own earning ability.

When asked why she did not ask her husband to share the expenses of their family in the Mainland, she said that when she was small, her father taught her the importance of standing on one's own feet, even if one is poor. That is why she got used to relying on herself without asking others for help. When talking about the teaching of her father, she said that the ones that she admires most are her parents, particularly her father. This is because he had a very good attitude toward her, and he taught her to be confident in herself in dealing with difficulties, which she regards as a very important personal quality for living in Hong Kong. She is very proud of

having this quality.

Since she began residing in Hong Kong, she has been doing products processing at home, a part-time job introduced by her friends. Although life is more harsh and the money earned is much lower compared to Shenzhen, she is still happy and proud of herself as she regards herself as useful and contributive to her family.

Unlike some other informants, she does not go to the centre every day because of her work. However, she keeps herself updated by talking on the phone with her friends and the social workers that she knows in that centre. Besides, she is quite active in joining the centre's activities, for example, going on local trips and being a volunteer. She emphasized that doing voluntary work is meaningful and she enjoys it very much.

Informant 2

Informant 2 is the youngest among all my informants. I know her through an introduction by a social worker in a centre which is located in Kwai Fong. She is living with her only daughter and her husband in the same district. She had lived in Hong Kong for only three months when I first met her.

She had lived with her parents and elder brother at Meiyuan on the Mainland, and life in her hometown was simple and happy for her. Since she is the only daughter and the youngest in her family, she said that her family is very fond of her

and she could do whatever she wants. They had their own farmland and did not have to worry about money. She thinks that life on the Mainland is more enjoyable and is subject to less pressure compared with life in Hong Kong.

She worked as a waitress in a restaurant near her hometown after graduating from primary school. She did not like studying at that time and that was why she discontinued her study. She added that many teenagers at her age went out to work and she thought she would be happier working than studying. Indeed, she said that life was free at that time, and she enjoyed playing around with her friends during weekends without bearing any family responsibilities, and she was financially independent.

She met her husband in the restaurant where she worked and they became friends. Later on, she married him, and he went back to the Mainland to visit her periodically. She said that their relationship was better at that time but the situation got worse after she moved to Hong Kong. Her husband lost his job and had to rely on the CSSA, and his temper became bad and he often scolded and beat her. She did not dare to talk to her family about this as she knew that her parents loved her so much and it would be heartbreaking for them to know about the bad treatment that she suffered. She said that her parents told her when she was very young that they would not allow her to get married unless she could find someone who really loved her and took good

care of her.

More importantly, when she had lived in her hometown, she said she observed that most of the women who married Hong Kong men were relatively rich. Their living standard was high, and they did not have to worry about money. Therefore, at that time, she thought that it would be great to marry a Hong Kong man, and she persuaded her family to allow her to marry the man she married. That is why she thinks it would be shameful to let her parents or others know about their present situation.

Though she goes to the centre at least three times each week, she does not participate in activities organized by it, nor does she make friends with others in an active manner. She only goes there because she wants to accompany her daughter who attends tutorial groups, which are free of charge at the centre. She told me that she seldom talks to other people, even female migrants, in that centre since she does not want others to know about her situation. She recalled that she chatted with other female migrants, and when some of them asked what is her husband doing, she had to tell lies. She thinks this is not good as her mother always taught her to be honest when she was growing up. That is why she prefers to have little contact with others. As she said, she only has one close friend in Hong Kong, who is also a female migrant, and whose experience has been similar to hers. .

Informant 3

Informant 3 is also a *Guangdong ren*, who originated in Nanhai, a province along China's coastline. She has a son and a daughter. She is living with her husband, her children, her mother-in-law, and her brother-in-law and his wife and children. All ten of them live in a single flat which is in a public housing estate in Shatin. When I first met her, she spoke enthusiastically about her hometown. She said her province is as prosperous as Hong Kong, with a very beautiful environment. She said she is very proud of being a *Nanhai ren*, and so are her parents.

Her father worked for the Chinese government for a long time, and they have quite a few relatives who are working either in the government or in big factories. They are in quite prestigious positions and she told me lots of stories about them. She had a better life on the Mainland. She finished high school and afterwards worked in one of the biggest factories in Nanhai. Because of her abilities, she said, she was promoted to manager in the factory. Later on, she became an insurance agent, in which job she earned even more than her husband, who is a driver.

She married her husband only because the one she loved most had decided to migrate to another country. Because she was heartbroken, and her husband treated her very well, she decided to marry him. However, her parents opposed their marriage since it meant she had to move to Hong Kong, and more importantly,

because they thought the two were not well matched as they do not have equal standing. She told me that the conception of class and class differences is deep-rooted in their minds, because all of them were active members during the Cultural Revolution and they have been deeply influenced by Mao's teachings. When she was only a young girl, her parents had already indoctrinated her with those ideas. When she was relating her memories about her childhood, she told me a lot about Mao's teachings which she had learned from her parents as well as at school.

After she moved to Hong Kong, she tried to find a job, as she enjoys working outside and relying on herself to earn a living rather than depending on her husband. However, she could not find any. She is now actively participating in the courses and activities organized by a centre in Shatin. She says that she wants to brush up on her English and computer skills in order to find a job here. Moreover, she enjoys chit-chatting with other female migrants and joining discussion groups and sharing her own views on particular issues and feelings.

I know her because I worked as a voluntary instructor teaching Cantonese pinyin in that centre. She was quite impressive, as she was not only talkative but confident when presenting her own views in front of others. Besides, as she said, she likes learning more about Hong Kong, and every time I went there I saw her reading newspapers or watching the news on TV.

Informant 4

Informant 4 is a client of a social worker that I know in one of the Mong Kok centres. Among all the informants in this study, she is the oldest and has been living in Hong Kong for the longest time. She has two daughters and is living with them and her husband in a rented suite in Mong Kok. She came from Zhongshan where she worked making silk. She said it was a very good job. But later on, she went to a big factory because there were more fringe benefits and more protection for workers there. Since she had violated the one-child policy in the Mainland – those who have peasant domiciles can only give birth to one child there – she had to stop working after the birth of her second daughter.

She had known her husband since they were in primary school. But he had gone to Hong Kong illegally many years before they were married, and they lost contact. When he came back to their hometown, they met again. Since her mother liked him very much and thought that it was time for her to get married, she eventually decided to marry him. She told me that she did not have a particular preference, and the main reason she married him was that her mother liked him.

When she was young, she was often told by her granny that it is essential for her and her sister to love and respect their mother. As she was raised by her granny, she had a very good relationship with her. Thus, she told me that she would support all

the decisions made by her mother because she loved her granny so much.

After coming to Hong Kong, she realized that the money that her husband earned was not sufficient for them, and she expressed her dissatisfaction to me. However, she added that she is quite lucky, for they do not have to rely on CSSA. She said if their financial situation gets worse, her mother will be very sad and may pin the blame on herself for asking her daughter to marry such a Hong Kong man. Since her parents are peasants, they have always depended on themselves in supporting their family and have not asked others for help even in times of difficulty.

She was attending a computer course held by the YWCA when I interviewed her, and she participates in different kinds of activities. In particular, she likes joining local tours as well as doing voluntary work. She enjoys joining tours because it allows her to get to know more about Hong Kong and gives her chances to meet and chat with other female migrants. She told me that it is a good opportunity for exchanging information with them and the social workers in order to familiarize herself with what is happening around her.

Informant 5

Informant 5 came from Guangxi. She has a son, and she became divorced from her husband after coming to Hong Kong. She is now living in a rented suite located in Sai Wan. Because of her unhappy marriage and her bad experiences, she is quite

taciturn even when with other female migrants.

She only finished primary education in her hometown. After that, she farmed on her parents' land to earn a living. Their life was hard and poor, but they did have sufficient food to eat. According to her, her parents wanted to have a son, and as she is female, she felt alienated from her parents when she was young. For this reason, she wanted to get married earlier and to have her own family. In fact, she showed no interest in talking about her parents and her childhood during the interviews.

After she got married, she still lived in Guangxi. She said that her husband had not given her any money to raise their child. Therefore, she had to go to restaurants to wash dishes and do factory work to earn money, and send money to Hong Kong to pay kindergarten school fees. When she came to Hong Kong, her husband did not go out to work but asked her to earn money to support him and his mistress.

For her, though there was quite a lot of hardship living on the Mainland, when compared to the 'nightmare' she experienced after coming to Hong Kong, she likes the Mainland more. She did not tell her parents that she had got divorced, and the only one who knows about her situation is her little sister. She said that divorced women are usually looked down upon in their hometown, and that is why she does not even want to let her parents know about it.

She is now living with the support of the CSSA and with the help of a centre

which is located near her home. She said she is extremely grateful for the help given by the social workers and preachers in the centre. However, she seldom takes the initiative to go to the centre and participate in their activities because she is afraid of the gossiping that she might be the subject of. She has only one good friend who lives near her. Their situations are quite similar, and it is therefore relatively easy for them to share their experiences and feelings. But apart from sharing their personal things, they are incurious about what happens in Hong Kong.

Informant 6

Informant 6 comes from Shanghai. She is living with her husband and is the only one who does not have any children. The reason for her not having children is that she and her husband do not have much confidence about the future of Hong Kong. She was one of the classmates in my Cantonese pinyin class where I found her quite talkative and expressive. She finished her higher schooling in Shanghai and worked as a nurse. Because of the great pressure of her work and problems with her stomach, she quit her job and worked in an advertising company instead. The salary she earned was quite high and she had a good living standard on the Mainland.

She did not talk much about her parents, but she did talk a lot about the sayings of her granny and some of the elders in her neighborhood when she was young. She told me the stories that she heard about Hong Kong in the past. When she was just a

little girl, the economy of Hong Kong was good and those Shanghainese who went to Hong Kong made lots of money and returned to Shanghai with many beautiful things. Every night after dinner, nearly all of her neighbors would bring a chair with them and sat on the street to chat. She enjoyed listening to the stories about Hong Kong most. From then onwards, she thought that Hong Kong was a thriving and resplendent city with variegated coloration. She also thought that it would be great to work in Hong Kong too. Thus, she rejected several prospective mates who were rich, for example, a government official in Shanghai, and another who had migrated to the United States and came back to Shanghai to find a prospective wife.

But after residing in Hong Kong for less than a year, she became quite disappointed because what she expected could not be found. More importantly, she cannot find a job and the political atmosphere in Hong Kong becomes more and more similar to or even worse than that on the Mainland. Therefore, she wants either to go back to Shanghai or migrate to another country in the near future. That is why she told me that her husband is working very hard to pave the way for this.

She is an active member of the centre, in which she is interested in all sorts of courses and activities. She told me that she goes there every day because she cannot tolerate a life without working. So, she tries to make her schedule busier by participating in more activities. Moreover, she enjoys discussing societal and even

political issues with others, and at the centre she can find some like-minded people to talk with.

Informant 7

Informant 7 was a doctor in Kunming before residing in Hong Kong. She has a daughter but the daughter is still living in Kunming, as she does not want her to have to bear the pressures of coping with new things in Hong Kong. She lives with her husband, mother-in-law and father-in-law in a flat in Tsing Yi bought under the Home Ownership Scheme.

She is the only daughter in her family and her parents love her very much. Thus, they gave her the best they could from the time she was young. She had studied in university and has the highest education level among my informants. She told me that her parents are very proud of her because of her achievement and career. However, since she concentrated most of her efforts in studying and developing her career, she did not have any boyfriends. Therefore, her parents worried about her very much and found several men whom they introduced to her. Some of them were Mainlanders, while some were from Hong Kong. As a matter of fact, since she thought that she was well-educated, she did not mind being alone. But she said that her parents had been so tolerant with her and had given her freedom to do whatever she liked for so many years that she wanted to listen to them once.

She thought that her husband was faithful and trustworthy, and since he is working as a Chinese doctor in Hong Kong, they had a lot in common when they first met each other. Moreover, she thought he was congenial, so she decided to take things further, and eventually married him.

She did not want to give up her career on the Mainland. However, her mother advised her many times that if she lived separately from her husband, they would not have a happy marriage and a good relationship. Therefore, after careful consideration, she made a decision to sacrifice her career, the thing that she wanted to pursue most. Another difficult decision was the decision to leave her daughter on the Mainland. Since her daughter is so reluctant to come to Hong Kong, and asked to be allowed to stay on the Mainland many times, she decided to let her daughter decide her own fate. She told me that her parents are very supportive of this decision.

When she came to Hong Kong, she wanted to sit for the exams arranged in Hong Kong in order to be qualified as a doctor here. Since all the materials are written in English, and she learned mostly through Chinese on the Mainland, she found it difficult. She has since registered for quite a number of courses organized by different centres to brush up her English and computer skills to pave way for finding jobs.

Although she lives in Tsing Yi now, she likes going back to the Shatin centre very much because she has more friends there. Moreover, many of the female migrants who go to that centre are better educated and their conversation topics are similar - they talk about societal issues rather than gossiping about meaningless things and being nosy.

Informant 8

Informant 8 comes from Jilin. She is living with her daughter and mother-in-law in public housing in Shatin. When I interviewed her, she was pregnant and later gave birth to a son. Before coming to Hong Kong, she worked in Shenzhen as an office lady after graduating from high school, and it was there that she met her husband. Her husband is a manufacturing worker in Shenzhen, and is thus living there. After marrying him, she lived with him in Shenzhen, until the health of her mother-in-law deteriorated. Since she loves her husband, she agreed to his request to come here to take care of his mother.

According to her, their family is not rich, but their standard of living is quite okay on the Mainland. She has altogether ten sisters, and she is the eighth. With such a big family, she has a lot of sisters to take care of her. Her relationship with the eldest sister is the best, and has been so since they were small. She told me that their relationship is even better than their relationship with her parents and she treats

her as her mother, since she was brought up by her.

When she was young, they always talked about their ideal husbands and they promised to seek each other's advice before making any decision. She remembered what her sister told her clearly. She said that the most important thing in selecting one's life-long partner is that he be honest, kind-hearted, responsible and hardworking. Thus, before deciding to develop her relationship with her husband, she first told her eldest sister and asked her for advice. Since he fulfils all the requirements and she felt that he was affable and congenial, her eldest sister also supported her in developing the relationship with him. She added, however, that whether her husband shows respect to her sister is also a crucial element for selecting her partner.

Though she is unwilling to live separately from her husband and come to Hong Kong with her daughter alone, as her eldest sister had married a Hong Kong man and had been residing in Hong Kong for several years, she eventually agreed to come.

In the months after she came to Hong Kong, she did not have a good relationship either with her mother-in-law or her sister-in-law. She said that they treated her in a very mean way. Thus, she did not like staying at home and tried to escape from home by joining a lot of courses and activities organized by the centre near her home.

Informant 9

Informant 9 came from Guangxi. She lives with her son in a rented suite in Sai

Wan. Soon after she came to Hong Kong, her husband passed away. When she was in her hometown, she helped her parents to farm. Later on, she worked as a waitress in a restaurant. According to her, life in Guangxi was hard and her parents wanted her to improve their standard of living by marrying a Hong Kong man. She felt alienated from her parents, and it has become even worse since she came to Hong Kong. She does not contact them or send money back to them.

Nevertheless, she told me that she did have a good relationship with her father's elder brother and his wife. He went to Hong Kong to earn money when she was very young, and went back to their hometown periodically to bring them some daily necessities. When important festivals came up, like Chinese Lunar New Year, he would send money to them. She liked listening to the stories he told very much when she was young. Every story he told was just like an adventure to her. She got the impression that Hong Kong was a prosperous and wonderful place to live and to earn money in. She recalled that he often told her that one does not need to work very hard in Hong Kong, because the money earned is much more than in their hometown.

When she became a teen, her uncle and aunt asked her to go to Hong Kong, but this was opposed by her parents because she was the only child in their family, and more importantly, the only one who could share the farming work with them.

However, she decided to come to Hong Kong someday when she grew up. Thus, she was quite eager to meet a Hong Kong man and come to Hong Kong.

However, life in Hong Kong is as tough as life on the Mainland for her, and it became worse when her husband died all of a sudden. Since her health is not so good and she has been sent to hospital several times, a social worker helped her to apply for CSSA, so that she can have more time to recuperate and take care of her son.

She does not participate in any courses or activities held by the centre. She said that after coming to Hong Kong, she devoted most of her time to working and did not have any time to go there and make friends. Now, even though she does not have to work outside, she prefers staying at home as she is afraid of the complicated world and relationships with others. What concerns her most is her own health. As she explained, if she got sick again, no one would look after her son. The second thing that she cares about is the academic performance of her son. But she is indifferent to the things happen in Hong Kong.

Informant 10

Informant 10 comes from Shanwei in Guangdong province. She has four daughters and was divorced from her husband after residing in Hong Kong for a year. She is now living with her children in a rented suite in Kung Tong. She told me that

the people in her hometown think that boys are more important than girls, and so do her parents. Therefore, she had to help her parents in their farmland even though it meant not finishing her primary schooling. When she was sixteen years old, she went to work in a Shenzhen factory as she wanted to earn more money and did not want to work as a peasant for the rest of her life.

She did not want to talk too much about her childhood as she said it was an unhappy one. Her parents loved her elder brother but not her. They always told her that it was not necessary for girls to go to school and forced her to work and get married as soon as possible. Thus, she said that for a long time she planned to leave her hometown and go to other places. Moreover, as she knows that her parents did not like her, she was willing to stand on her own feet to earn a living.

She met her husband when she worked in Shenzhen. She said it was a free love and their relationship was very good. However, since her husband originated from Shantou, where people like to have sons, and his parents wanted her to give birth to a son, their relationship got worse, particularly after the birth of their third daughter. Difficulties in coping with their new lives in Hong Kong and the crowded living environment made their relationship worse and worse. That was why she finally separated from her husband.

As she has to raise and look after four daughters, it is difficult for her to work

outside. With the help of the social worker in one of the NGOs located in Kung Tong, she succeeded in applying for the CSSA.

She does not attend any courses held by the centre, but occasionally participates in some of their activities. She likes going on local tours since it is the cheapest way to bring her children out and make them happier. At the same time, she can have chances to meet other female migrants and exchange experiences in teaching their children.

Informant 11

Informant 11 came from Fujian. Like many female migrants, she worked in a Shenzhen factory before coming to Hong Kong. She lives with her only daughter in a rented suite located in Yau Tong now, having been divorced from her husband. She said that she has had a sense of inferiority since residing in Hong Kong. When she was on the Mainland, she could earn a living on her own without depending on others, but now she has to apply for the CSSA since her daughter is so small and it is difficult for her to work in the Chinese restaurant for more than ten hours a day and take care of her simultaneously.

Her relationship with her parents was so-so. She added that *Fujian ren* concern themselves very much with self-esteem and face-saving. More than that, when she was a little girl, her mother taught her to be obedient. She recalled that her mother

always told her that after getting married, she had to take good care of her husband and children no matter what happened. In fact, as she observed, her mother endured insults in silence in front of her husband and relatives. This is regarded as virtue in a successful woman from her mother's point of view.

Her mother also told her the story of her granny. Her grandfather died at an early age, and left her granny to raise her mother and other children. Although life was tough, her granny worked very hard and non-stop to earn a living all by herself. She said that her mother is very proud of her granny, and told her to learn from granny from time to time. Thus, she dares not to tell her parents about her divorce and financial standing now.

Before getting divorced, she worked very hard in a Chinese restaurant in Hong Kong so as to support her whole family, including her husband. She said that her husband was very lazy and even went back to the Mainland to live with his mother. He even requested her to send money back to him every month without sharing the burden of their family. Therefore, she had to work for more than ten hours a day. She did not have personal time. Every night when she returned home, she had cup noodles for supper and then went to sleep. She did not have any leisure time, not to mention time for making friends.

As she has to look after her daughter, she spends most of her time at home now.

But when her daughter goes to school, she sometimes goes to a centre at Kwun Tong to meet her friends and social workers. She told me that many of them have divorced and they therefore have more in common and find it easier to understand and support each other. She does not regard herself as an active member of the centre, as she does not like joining their courses or activities. But she enjoys learning how to teach her daughter from other female migrants and exchanging her experiences with others.

Nothing is more important to her than raising her daughter as all her hope rests on her. Therefore, she is not interested in what happens around her since her paramount concern is her daughter. Moreover, when comparing the life in Hong Kong with that in the Mainland, she would prefer to stay on the Mainland for it is easier to earn a living there, and the living environment is more spacious. She said she still has the desire to go back to China after her daughter finishes her study in Hong Kong.

Informant 12

Informant 12 originated from Guangxi. She is divorced and lives with her daughter in a public housing estate located in Yau Ma Tei. Without finishing her primary study, she went to work in a Shenzhen factory when she was only thirteen years old. Her family was very poor, and life was hard just relying on farming.

Since she did not like studying, she decided to leave her hometown and went to Shenzhen to earn more money instead. The decision was supported by her parents, as she said that her parents did not want her to study but to earn money for their family and pay the school fees of her little brother.

She did not spend much time with her parents in her childhood, and therefore, she told me, there is little that she could share with me about it. For her, there was only one thing in her childhood, i.e., working and working in a non-stop manner. Her mother told her very often that there was no need for girls to study. The most important thing is to find a reliable man and get married early. However, the definition of a 'reliable man' is that he has to have a solid financial foundation, not that he has to have loyalty to their relationship.

Her husband is a Hong Kong man who went back to the Mainland to find a wife. He was introduced to her by a villager in her hometown. The first impression that she had of him was quite good and their relationship was good before she came to Hong Kong. But after residing in Hong Kong, they had a lot of conflict, and worse still, she found that her husband had a mistress in Shenzhen. Since she could not tolerate sharing her husband with another woman, and her husband stopped supporting their family financially for a long time, she finally decided to leave him.

She worked in a Chinese restaurant as a waitress after the divorce. Since the

working hours were long, she did not have time to look after her daughter. She had thought of taking her daughter to a day care centre, but she told me that she was unable to afford the charges. Later on, with the help of the social workers in a Kwun Tong NGO centre, she succeeded in applying for the CSSA.

Though she thinks that it is easier to earn money on her own in Shenzhen, she prefers staying in Hong Kong because her daughter can receive better education here. She regards this as crucial because she does not want her daughter to fall into the same trap as she did. More than that, she wants her daughter to be successful so that her parents will not look down upon her. Since she was small, her parents gave all their attention, care and love to her brother. When she told her parents she had divorced, they made sarcastic comments and told her not to expect them to help her.

She had attended some computer skills and English courses organized by the centre before, but she told me that it is quite difficult for her. She still continues to attend the English class because she wants to learn something which is basic in order to help her daughter to study. Apart from that, she seldom participates in other activities since most of her friends in Hong Kong do not go to those centres. They usually talk on the phone to exchange 'intelligences,' i.e., where to buy cheaper daily necessities and how to teach their children, especially during examination periods.

Informant 13

Informant 13 came from Kaiping in Guangdong. She finished studying in middle school, and has the highest education level among those informants who have divorced and applied for the CSSA. She is also the only one who has found a part-time job and she does not have to rely on CSSA now.

Since getting divorced, she lives in a rented private suite with her only daughter in Yau Ma Tei. Unlike some of the informants, her parents are fond of her. However, since they were quite poor, she decided to quit studying and went out to work in a textile factory. She told me that her parents had tried their best to treat her well and she has to do something in return.

She said that her parents had never requested that she repay them anything. However, since she was small, she saw that her parents treated their own parents filially even though they were poor. She thinks that to be filial to her own parents is an essential quality that a daughter should have. Thus, even when life was difficult for her after her divorce, she still sent money back to her parents by economizing on her daily expenses.

She is now working in the NGO like a baby-sister, to look after lots of children. She said that she does not have much time to join any courses or activities because of that. Once she finishes her work in the centre, she has to go back home to prepare lunch and dinner for her daughter. The only thing which is good about this part-time

job is that she can look after her daughter while she is working, as her daughter is also a member of the centre. Thus, when she is taking care of other children, she is able to look after her daughter too.

However, she told me that some of the mothers of those children are jealous of her finding a job in the centre. Therefore, it is difficult for her to make friends with the other female migrants. This is another reason why she does not want to participate in the activities or courses. But she still has one or two friends whom she can talk to in Hong Kong. Since her friends are also doing some part-time work, they usually talk on the phone and have a little time for gatherings. They always tell each other about their work and children, without paying much attention to societal issues.

4.3 Summary of the Main Characteristics of my Informants

The main characteristics of my informants can be summarized as follow. All of them are still not permanent residents in Hong Kong. Majority of them had just resided in Hong Kong for a very short time, ranging from three or four months to three years. Only one informant had already lived in Hong Kong for five years when I interviewed her. Among these thirteen informants, about half of them are having the so-called “intact” families and are not CSSA recipients. Another half of them

are having single-parent families and are CSSA recipients. Coincidentally, the education level of those CSSA recipients were lower as most of them had just finished primary school in the Mainland. They also came from less well-off provinces in the Mainland. Whereas those who were not CSSA recipients had higher level of education, and were come from better-off provinces.

Brief Background Information of My Informants

Informant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Personal Background Information												
Age	31-40	21-30	31-40	41-50	21-30	31-40	31-40	31-40	31-40	31-40	31-40	31-40	31-40
Province that they belong to	Guangdong	Jiangsu	Nanhai	Guangdong	Guangxi	Shanghai	Yunnan	Jilin	Guangxi	Guangdong	Fujian	Guangxi	Guangdong
Years of residency in HK	2	3-4months	>1	5	>1	<1	>1	8 months	2	>2	3	<4	>2
No. of children	3 sons	1 daughter and 1 son	1 daughter and 1 son	3 daughters	1 son	/	1 daughter	1 daughter and 1 son	1 son	4 daughters	1 daughter	1 daughter	1 daughter
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Divorced	Married	Married	Married	Widow	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced
	Their Self-Perceived Ethnicity												
Place of origination	Guangdong	Meiyuan	Guangdong	Zhongshan	Guangxi	Shanghai	Kunming	Jilin	Guangxi	Guangdong	Fujian	Guangxi	Guangdong
Place of residency before coming HK	Shenzhen	Meiyuan	Nanhai	Zhongshan	Shenzhen	Shanghai	Kunming	Shenzhen	Guangxi	Shanwei	Shenzhen	Shenzhen	Kaiping
	Material Standard of Evaluation – Socio-economic Status												

Education	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	University	Secondary	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary	Secondary
Work?	✓(\$2,000-3,000/month)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓(\$3,001-6,000/month)
Husbands' occupation	Waiter	✓	Driver	Waiter	Divorced	Property salesman	Doctor	Manufacture worker	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced	Divorced
Family monthly income	\$6,001-9,000		\$6,001-9,000	\$6,001-9,000	\$12,001-15,000	\$21,001-24,000	\$15,001-18,000										
CSSA recipients?	x	✓	x	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Place of residency	Mongkok	Kwai Fong	Shatin	Mongkok	Sai Wan	Ma On Shan	Tsing Yi	Shatin	Sai Wan	Kung Tong	Yau Tong	Yau Ma Tei	Yau Ma Tei	Yau Ma Tei	Yau Ma Tei	Yau Ma Tei	Yau Ma Tei
Types of housing	Rented private housing	Public housing	Public housing	Rented suite	Rented suite	Privately owned	Home Ownership Scheme flat	Public housing	Rented suite	Rented suite	Rented suite	Rented suite	Public housing	Rented suite	Rented suite	Rented private housing	Rented private housing
No. of people living together	8	4	10	5	2	2	7	4	2	5	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

The first part of the chapter

The second part of the chapter

concludes the chapter with

concluding remarks

References

Appendix

Index

Notes

Summary

Conclusion

Background information

The purpose of this chapter is

to provide a comprehensive overview

of the subject matter

and to discuss the

importance of the

Chapter Five

Empirical Chapter: The Making of Cultural Citizenship of Group 1

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of data generated in my fieldwork. It is hoped that through my anthropological account and analysis, some of the missing pieces regarding the cultural citizenship of female migrants in the specific context of Hong Kong can be filled. To be absolutely clear, firstly, the aim of this research is not to find a voice that represents all female migrants because there is not such a single voice. Secondly, it is not to simply record the personal experiences of these informants. Rather, it is to elucidate how they construct and negotiate their cultural citizenship through counteracting the enforced identities and public discourses of the time, and making use of the nexus of the socio-economic and political circumstances for making such advancement.

Background of my informants:

The rationale of presenting and discussing the data generated from the following informants is that during the interviews they repeatedly distinguished themselves from those who have applied for the CSSA and/or come from a different area in Mainland China. From my observation, the core differences between these informants and those who will be discussed in the next chapter are: (i) their

propensity to perceive social differences among Chinese of different places of origins, and to construct their ethnic identity accordingly; (ii) material standards of evaluation, that is, their financial status, and (iii) their social networking. It is difficult to tell which factor is the most salient in contributing to the way they construct their subjective identities. It seems that all of the factors play an essential role in this.

5.2 The In-group and Out-group within the female migrants community

5.21 CSSA Recipients as Out-group

From the way they narrated their relationships among 'us' and 'the others,' it is possible for us to reconstruct their concept of 'in-group' and 'out-group.' How do female migrants perceive other female migrants? Do they view all female migrants who come from the Mainland as 'in-group'? It is found that they tried to discriminate between themselves and some of the other female migrants. One of the most palpable boundaries can be seen in their desire to set themselves apart from those who have applied for the CSSA.

Examples:

Informant 1 is a sociable woman. She is a *Guangdong ren* and had lived and worked in Shenzhen from the age of fifteen. She had been living in Hong Kong for about two years when I first interviewed her. Living in a small rented flat in Mong

Kok with her sons, husband and husband's relatives, she does not have a full-time job, but has constantly worked as a part-time product processor at home, which takes up most of her time. When talking about the new CSSA policy proposed by the government, she held that:

I think it's good. Since the budget deficit is huge, those young Mainlanders should find jobs. In the past, the youngsters contributed a lot to the government, and they didn't get any CSSA at that time. It's not fair for these newcomers to get CSSA without making any contribution.

To support her claim, she told me a story about how female migrants try to swindle the CSSA. She explained that:

That means faked divorce. The couple divorced in a faked way. In fact, they haven't separated. It's all because of CSSA. The husband goes out to work and the wife applies for CSSA. They don't have to worry after they begin receiving the CSSA, right? I know that some migrants do that! I went to a centre before and know about it. It's true! She's a new arrival who has lived here for less than seven years. After the faked divorce, their children are taken care by the mother, and her husband goes out to work. They can go to a Chinese restaurant nearly every day! The clothes they wear are better than mine. Everything they use and buy is good!

When she described this case, she was very angry. She agreed with the argument that the provision of CSSA would nurture laziness. She sighed in despair, saying that:

Government is nurturing lazybones. There is a lot of news about this. Even those who are only thirty or forty apply for CSSA!

Two other informants echoed the view of Informant 1. Informant 6 is a Shanghainese who had worked as a nurse and later a project coordinator in an advertising company in Shanghai, where she met her husband. She had been relying on her own work to earn a living, and her income was quite high before coming to Hong Kong. She says that the argument put forth by those female migrants who have applied for CSSA is untenable:

They (some female migrants) said that their husbands have been working in Hong Kong companies for many years. Yes, they are right, but if you want to live in Hong Kong, you have to contribute first. They said that “my husband has been working in Hong Kong for many years and I have to get back something in Hong Kong”... I agree with the government (that new arrivals should live here for seven consecutive years before they can apply for CSSA).

Informant 8 was once an office lady at a Shenzhen factory. According to her, her life was an easy one before coming to Hong Kong, because her parents love her so much, and her husband treats her very well. She does not have to think about financial problems, as what she needs has already been provided by her husband. When probed on her views about whom she thinks is qualified to enjoy welfare benefits and/or financial assistances, she reckons that one can be a beneficiary as long as one has made a contribution to the society. This is what she said:

I think it's normal to allow new arrivals to get welfare after a year. If they can only qualify after seven years, I also agree with that. If they can apply for CSSA immediately after coming to Hong Kong... just like my husband, he has been

working here for more than twenty years. I think it's more comfortable for my husband to enjoy welfare in Hong Kong than those who haven't contributed yet.

Discussion:

It is difficult to tell whether the government's or the media's discourses affect the thinking of these female migrants or not. From the above, it is clear that these informants made use of the same language that permeates the predominant Hong Kong discourse criticizing those female migrants who have applied for the CSSA scheme. One may also argue that they are trying to reinforce the dominant discourses without giving the matter any thought.

Nevertheless, during the interviews, different backgrounds and personal encounters were revealed by the informants. All of these prove that one should not just look at the issue from a single perspective. Take Informant 1 as an illustration; there are quite a lot of female migrants living in her district. Since she is sociable and talkative, she established a relatively sophisticated social network quickly after coming here, and according to her, this makes it easier for her to find a job.

Moreover, socialization during her upbringing does impact on what she feels is right and wrong. She recalled the teaching of her father who taught her not to seek help from others because this is shameful. The concept of 'saving face' is important for a person who has dignity in her mind. She said that she is used to relying on herself, since whenever there were any problems on the Mainland, the government did

not help them. In encountering difficulties which are not easy to resolve, she thinks that the only way to tackle them is to turn to her best friends. Hence, social networking is very important in her perception. All of these contribute to her thinking that it is both incorrect and unnecessary to rely on the government. She justified this by saying that she does not think she will 'lose face' when turning to her friends, because they help each other reciprocally, and she would not just 'receive,' but also 'give.'

As for the other two informants, they do not experience any financial pressure. According to what they told me, the incomes earned by their husbands are at a satisfactory level and are relatively stable, and they do not have to worry about the daily necessities. They do not think that relying on their husbands is a problem as they view it as something that is appropriate. Hence their perception of 'dependent' is somewhat different from the dominant view. They do not devalue themselves for being dependent on their husbands financially, as they were brought up in a context in which 'self-reliance' embraces both working hard to earn a living before getting married, and depending on their husbands for money afterwards. As such, they sometimes blur the boundaries of the 'self,' by taking the family as a whole. They do not demean women who rely on their husbands, but their attitude is different for those who try to depend on the government. It is strange and unacceptable for them,

as it is not the practice they used to adopt and value in Mainland China.

Another observation they made is that both of them actively participate in a local centre at Shatin where the many activities organized by the centre include indoctrination in the concept of self-reliance and mutual help. All of these are conducive to their conception of what should and should not be done. It is not easy to weigh which factor is the most determinative in influencing them, but it may be fair to suggest that their daily experiences in the centre do help reinforce their former perception.

In short, in analyzing why some of the female migrants try to differentiate themselves from others intentionally, one should not just focus on one factor or analyze it superficially, since there are many factors interweaving together.

5.22 Those who come from peripheral areas as Out-group

Interestingly, these informants do not merely draw the boundary by a single factor, that is, whether one has applied for the CSSA. They try to further discriminate themselves from those whom they perceive as Northerners or people from the peripheral areas in the Mainland. Those who come from those provinces which are perceived as more industrialized tend to share a sense of superiority about their Mainlander identities. They think that they are superior to female migrants who come from other parts of the Mainland.

Examples:**Wicked Intentions**

When asking them if they can make friends with all female migrants who come from the Mainland, all of them emphasized their selectivity in this respect. Informant 3 came from Nanhai which she claimed is similar to Hong Kong in its economic development, or even better than Hong Kong now. During three different interviews with her, she recurrently told me how good are the lives of her parents, brothers and friends in Nanhai. Most of them, as she said, were either working in government branches or at managerial level in big and well-known factories. She expressed a sense of superiority over where she lived and those whom she knows well. She tried to associate 'the good things' with *Guangdong ren*, while saying that most of the *non-Guangdong ren* are mainly lower class women who are less educated and less civilized, and it is difficult for her to accept them as friends because of the differences in their values. She does not think that sharing the same dialect, that is, Cantonese, is a factor prompting her to make friends with those who come from Guangdong. Rather, it is due to their similar thoughts and values. She added that the values of those women who come from the North or peripheral areas are terrible. She regards those who come from the North as poor and less well off, and thus they tend to brag in front of others and are less honest. She further elaborated that those

women have wicked intentions, saying that:

Just like the one who comes from Jiangxi Lanchang, - her attitude is threatening! She has a niece who is quite tall and beautiful. She's really beautiful! That woman has been bringing her up since she was seven or eight years old. She indoctrinated her niece to find a rich guy or a high-ranking cadre. She told her that it doesn't matter if he has a wife or not. It's okay to be a mistress. The most important point is to get his money. I think such a concept is incorrect. It's not correct to indoctrinate others with such concepts. Many women who come from those areas have such a mentality.

Unscrupulous Means

By depicting the bad moral atmosphere among women from the North and categorizing them as money-oriented, bad women who become mistresses and employ unscrupulous means to seize others' husbands, they point out the differences between women who come from the Northern part of the Mainland and those from the South. Another informant, for instance, delineated how immoral Northern women are by giving me this example:

I know a woman (who comes from the North). She used some unscrupulous means to wrest other's husband. But I know that the man treats her very well now. I think such a thing cannot be done by us (Southerners). If you asked me to do so, I couldn't! She knew that man's wife in Shenzhen first. After being good friends, she knew that man and seized her good friend's husband. It's really true! She has got married with that man now and has a son. I believe that Southerners rarely do such things. Southerners dare not to do so. But Northerners are very good at playing tricks. They can do so. (Informant 7)

While narrating this, she tried to emphasize that 'we,' meaning the Southerners, do

not dare to destroy others' families; this can only be done by Northerners.

Uncivilized and Uncontrolled Reproduction

In addition, it is reckoned that those women who come from poorer regions are uncivilized as they always try to have many children, that is, reproduce recklessly. It is said that:

Birth control cannot be done in those places (Northern parts of Mainland China). If they (Northerners) don't have a son, the local governments will help them. If the police try to catch those women for sterilization, all the villagers will attack the police. They used hatchets to destroy the police cars and throw them into the river. They are daring enough to do whatever they can think of. They are very ignorant! This is mainly because they are uncivilized and there are too many illiterates! (Informant 3)

Bad Innate Quality

Since many of them had been working in Mainland factories, where there were many *wai lai gong* (i.e. those people who left their hometowns and went to industrialized provinces to work) who came from different parts of China before coming to Hong Kong, and they had come across different people. Based on their experiences, as they said, the innate quality of those coming from peripheral areas is very bad. One of the informants pointed out that those women are lazier and less hygienic. Informant 3 put it in this way:

Northerners are lazy and dirty. Yes, Southerners are cleaner. People living in the Delta River are most hygienic. All of them take showers every night. They only use their own

lipstick, and they only use their own water and towel. Northerners can share one lipstick among thousands of people, and they share a tray of water for cleaning themselves among hundreds people. My brother-in-law also says that they (Northerners) smell awful. They have terribly bad smells. They are comparatively lazy too. When some of them came to my hometown for work, many of them were fourteen and fifteen years old. They were very dirty and there were even some spider nets on their heads. But they improved gradually after being reformed by us.

Being er nai

When talking about their experiences of being discriminated against in Hong Kong, the majority of them said that they had not had such experiences. Informant 6, for instance, told me why she thinks that Hong Kong people do not discriminate against her. She believed that it is due to her Shanghainese identity. She holds that since Shanghai is a big city and is even better than Hong Kong in terms of its economic development, Hong Kong people will not discriminate against her. However, she thinks that if a woman originates from a place like Wunan, they are more likely to be discriminated against, as people will perceive her as *er nai*. This is a direct quote from her, explicating her claim:

Many people (female migrants) say that they are discriminated against by women in Hong Kong. Some of them are discriminated against as soon as others hear their accents. But I haven't had such experiences! Why? Do you know why? I guess it's because of my ethnicity! I come from Shanghai. You know, so many people go to Shanghai now. If someone hears that you are from Hunan, people will say that you are an *er nai*! Everyone knows that

those who live in Hunan and Szechuan like to marrying Hong Kong people. They said that they applied for this and that (referring to CSSA and other welfare). I really don't know about all these benefits. Some people say that CSSA is good, but I really don't know. They say that you don't have to pay a medical fee for delivery in a Hong Kong hospital, but I really don't know...

From their construction of the images of female migrants who come from the peripheral or Northern areas in the Mainland, it is apparent that some of them share the stereotypical images held by Hong Kong people. When asked whether they had heard about criticisms of female migrants in Hong Kong, all of them said they had. They heard about this from different sources, including the media, speeches by members of the government, as well as their encounters in their daily lives. Their criticisms of the incorrect values held by other female migrants reflect the eagerness of these informants to distinguish themselves from those 'bad female migrants.' In other words, they do not want others, particularly Hong Kong people, to regard them as bad women from the Mainland.

It is quite interesting to compare this with research done in Western society. In the West, the issue of 'race' is quite important, because one's social identity is greatly affected by the color of one's skin. Becky Francis points out that in the West people give meanings to different people by race, and this is a deep-seated historical legacy that is still influencing people now; skin color is still an essential element in one's

sense of self.¹¹⁹

Skin color is, of course, an issue here too, particularly for South Asians. However, the skin color of those who come from Mainland China is similar to, or even the same as that of Hong Kong people, as well as being similar among Mainlanders themselves. Hence, to position oneself, one cannot tell *who this person is* by reference to their skin color. Without such an obvious distinction, they have to present their identity in accordance with other attributes that they perceive as most vital in telling the 'good' apart from the 'bad.' From their narrations, it is quite apparent that which region they come from in the Mainland is a crucial signaling trait. This is reflected not only in their narrations, but also when they were asked "who are you?" Instead of telling me that they are Mainlanders, they say, "I'm a Shanghainese," "I'm a *Guangdong ren*," and the like.

Using their place of origin to construct their identity is a way to affirm their self-value and access to power. As such, this is a kind of empowerment process. Nevertheless, the underlying subtext of their narrations reflects their worries about the possibility of being marginalized and ridiculed by others, and that is why they have to clearly distinguish themselves from women from certain regions. If we try to analyze it from this perspective, though they are trying to upgrade their own status

¹¹⁹ Francis, B. "Relativism, Realism, and Feminism: an analysis of some theoretical tensions in research on gender identity". *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2002. pp. 43.

and improve their own images, they are simultaneously marginalizing another group of female migrants.

One cannot rule out the fact that their local origin is more pertinent to their identities than their status as “Mainlanders”, and “Mainlanders” may only be the label imposed by Hong Kong people on them to a certain extent.

5.3 Their In-group

Who belongs to their ‘in-group’? To summarize what they said, there are four main themes that emerge in their construction of their sense of self and in-group.

Examples:

Self-reliance

In the first place, they consistently presented themselves as self-reliant. Informant 1, for instance, did not have an easy way of life after moving to Hong Kong. Although her husband has a full-time job in a Chinese restaurant and earns about HK\$10,000 per month, because of SARS and the worsening of Hong Kong’s economy, he has not gone to work for almost three months. Thus, she has to keep working to lessen the financial burden on her family. She has been doing product processing, mainly clothes and shoes processing at home. The working hours and salary are not fixed as this depends on her speed. According to her, “If I do it

quickly, I can finish it faster, and vice versa.” In order to earn more in a shorter period of time, she said that, “Sometimes, I need to work OT.” She can only earn \$10 to \$30 by processing a thousand products. On average, her monthly salary is about \$2,000. Though it may not be a huge amount, she thinks that it helps a lot in alleviating their burden, as they have to support three sons, a mother-in-law and one of her sisters-in-law who came to Hong Kong less than a year ago and have not gone out to work. Even after her husband resumed working at another Chinese restaurant, she still continues her work. During the latest interview, she told me that she had just joined a program organized by an NGO for being a domestic helper for the elderly.

Informant 8 was a full-time housewife after coming to Hong Kong, because she has to take care of her young daughter as well as her mother-in-law, who has difficulty in moving around on her own. She told me that she gave up her ‘good life’ on the Mainland to live with her husband and daughter, because she really loves her daughter and husband. She wants her daughter to have the benefit of a better education system, that is, in Hong Kong. She also wants to make her husband happier by taking care of his old mother, as there is no one who is capable of taking care of her. In addition to being the caretaker at home, she spends lots of time in attending different courses organized by NGOs. For her, all of these make her life a

more fruitful and a happier one. She also feels that she is a useful and contributive person. The concept of being 'contributive' surfaces when she discusses whom she tries to make friends with. She told me how industrious her friends are, saying that:

All of my friends are very industrious, unlike me. I go to study and learn different things here. But they don't have time. Once they come here, they immediately find jobs. Some are domestic helpers, others work as cleaning maids. Even if they can only earn three to four thousand dollars a month, they still go to work. They are self-reliant! Their lives are tough but they can bear it. All of my friends are like that. They don't care about the job nature. Many of them don't want to get money from the government. They don't want government money. They want to work more and earn more. All of them are like that.

Through showing the quality of her friends, she associates herself with those female migrants who are good – industrious and self-reliant.

Showing the will to be self-reliant

More than that, even if they cannot rely on themselves at this moment, they show their will to do so. Taking Informant 8 as an example again, she said that she does not want to rely on government welfare. However, her family could not afford the charges of a private hospital when she was delivering her daughter. She suggested that instead of relying on government subsidies, she is willing to pay for her own use of medical services, for instance by paying medical fees by installment. To quote her:

When I delivered my daughter, it needed twenty-seven

thousand dollars. Because of the government (subsidy), I only had to pay about six hundred dollars. The government helped us to pay the rest. Some of them would pay the medical fee if they had the ability to do so. But some of them cannot wait for seven years; some of them really cannot afford it. If they don't have the money, the government can... just like buying electronic appliances, people can pay it by installment. The government can ask them to repay it by installment. Just like my case, if I have the money, I'm willing to give the money back to the government by installment. This approach can help those in need and also the government.

Whatever the practicability of such a suggestion, this shows their spirit of self-reliance and their creativity in thinking about their own problems. Instead of only thinking about themselves, they also consider the difficulties claimed by the government when talking about the new rules for charging medical services in public hospitals for new arrivals.

Having the will to find jobs

Nearly all of these informants were housewives after coming to Hong Kong. While some of them have to take care of their children and are forced to stay at home, their will to find jobs was echoed constantly during the interviews.

Informant 3 was a manager in a factory in Nanhai and later an agent in an insurance company. According to her, she used to have a high income on the Mainland. That is why, after coming here, she is so eager to find a job. Yet, she said it is difficult. She recalled:

I'd gone to job interviews. When the member of staff read my ID card, she asked if I was new or not. I don't know why she knows it and I called some of my Church friends later on. They said that there's an indication "R" in our ID card and people would know from that that you are a new migrant. The employer told me to wait for a reply but there was no response.

Even if they had obtained certain professional qualifications on the Mainland, it is not easy for them to get a job here. Informant 6 told me that she would like to find a job because she feels very bored at home. However, her husband asked her to study instead. She said: it's useless to have qualifications! Just like me, I was a nurse before, but it's useless!

Similar to Informant 8, Informant 7 gave up not only her life on the Mainland, but also a well-paid and prestigious career. She was a doctor on the Mainland, and she expressed how sorry she was to lose the career she had chosen and had worked so hard for. But according to her, since she really loved her husband and at that time, and she thought that it was impossible to find another man who was as good as he, she decided to sacrifice her career for the sake of this relationship. She agreed to come to Hong Kong to take care of his old parents. However, she told me that she does not want to be a full-time housewife, and has been trying to find a job continuously. Yet, even when she applies for low-paid jobs, she still encounters difficulties in job seeking. She explicated:

I've tried (to find jobs in Hong Kong). I've tried. I come from the Mainland, and I was a doctor. How to put it in words?

Just like my qualifications and rank, I was a doctor on the Mainland, that's no problem. When I come here, my certificate becomes useless. People won't look at it... Do you have any working experience in Hong Kong? I don't have any. Even if I've been working on the Mainland for more than ten years, they won't treat it as experience.

She continued:

We've asked, but it's difficult. None of them want to accept us. They said that they need people who have working experience in Hong Kong. What do they mean by working experience in Hong Kong? If you don't give me a chance, I won't have any, right?

As she continued:

You don't give me a chance; many employers are reluctant to give us a chance. They are chauvinistic toward Mainlanders.

Manipulating their mother role

Apart from that, some female migrants are clever enough to make use of their mother/gender role actively in arguing and justifying why they deserve to enjoy welfare in Hong Kong, even without living here for a consecutive seven years.

Informant 3 made this point explicitly:

All children aged eighteen or below have exemptions. That means they are qualified to apply for CSSA and enjoy welfare here. It's said that the birth rate is declining. Does it mean that they just want to have our children and not their mothers'? This will polarize the society! You know, just like me, when I was delivering my son, I lived in the hospital for eight days. The charge was more than twenty thousands (without government subsidy). If we were asked to pay for it by ourselves, it's really pitiful!

She further elaborated that:

If we don't come here, who will take care of the children? They've lots of homework and social pressures; it's not a simple thing! Their fathers have to go out to earn a living; do you really want them to quit their jobs and rely on CSSA? It will make the burden of this society even heavier, right? This will only make the government's burden heavier. Therefore, they shouldn't do that. In fact, we do want to go out to work, but we really can't. We've to provide guidance to our children, it makes it difficult for us to go out to work. If there's a job that suits my timetable, I will definitely take the job.

Discussion:

Portraying a positive and contributive image is an attempt to refute the negative and marginalized images constructed by the hegemonic power. There are some interesting points worth noticing from their narrations. Although they seldom used the word "discrimination" in expressing how difficult it is to find a job in Hong Kong, one thing is quite apparent, they are sensitive to how the labor market is structured along ethnic lines because of the experiences of failure they have encountered in job seeking. As has been argued by Castles and Miller, ascribed features like ethnicity and gender do play a role in channeling different kinds of people into different segments in the labor market, and even giving effect to unemployment for certain groups.¹²⁰ In turn, they also take advantage of such segmentation as a condition for which they are incapable of transforming, to justify themselves in staying at home.

¹²⁰ Castles, S., and M. Miller. 1998. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Macmillan, London.

Hence, the so-called discrimination and segmentation of jobs due to ethnicity does not always constitute a detriment among them. This may be a unique opportunity for them to draw on their experiences legitimately to counteract unfavorable discourses in which they are portrayed as so-called 'economic dependants.'

From the feminist perspective, this might not be a good sign, as it may help reinforce the stereotypical gender role of women. However, this is not necessarily the case because, rather than perpetuating the image of women as passive and deceitful, they are utilizing their mother role to argue the importance of their presence and to appraise their own contributions. Though they are trying to give meaning to themselves by attaching to the taken-for-granted gender role, it does not mean that they really believe in and behave in line with such bigoted conceptions. Furthermore, when one looks at the other side of the coin, one can argue that they are promulgating an alternative way to understand 'contribution.' In this sense, they are making a breakthrough, for they do not confine themselves by evaluating a person in terms of whether they can find a paid job in the public sphere.

As shown on other occasions, most of them do not have psychological distress as suggested by the 'power hypothesis,' because many of them do have the decision-making power, for example, in arranging housework with their husbands

where they take the initiative to stretch the traditional line. Although most of them are responsible for household chores and child-rearing duties, they do not think that it is an excessive responsibility, for these are what they have been continuously doing on the Mainland for years.¹²¹ Thus, it can be contended that these women are not subsumed into a gender stereotype, nor are they necessarily suffering from the consequences of such a stereotype. They are simply making use of it to conceive themselves in more positive and fulfilling ways.

5.4 The Construction of Out-group – Hong Kong people

5.41 Hong Kong Men/Husbands

After reconstructing their concepts of us and others within the female migrant groups, let us turn to their narrations about their relationships with Hong Kong people. Largely due to their limited social network, the Hong Kong people they refer to are mainly their husbands and relatives. Generally speaking, most of them rated Hong Kong men negatively.

Examples:

Not that rich

¹²¹ Noh, Wu, Speechley and Kaspar examined the Korean migrants in Canada. It was found that migrant women generally suffered from the “double burden” and the “power hypothesis.” In this study, the findings indicate that these two factors might not always have effects on migrant women. Noh, S.H., Wu, Z., Speechley, M., & Kaspar, V. “Depression in Korean migrants in Canada: II. Correlates of gender, work and marriage”. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 180, 578-582. 1992.

First of all, they think that Hong Kong men are poor. Informant 3, for instance, tried to generalize Hong Kong men in this way:

Many of our husbands don't earn a lot. Many of them are *qun dai zi* (that means, they are depending on the support of their mothers, and that is why they are always obedient to their mothers!)

Greedy

Secondly, they held that Hong Kong men are greedy and always gamble or have mistresses. Take this statement

I think Hong Kong men like gambling a lot. They also like having *er nai*! I worked in Shenzhen before and there are many *er nai*... I worked there and know a lot. The girls there are young and pretty, and they are all *er nai*. They (those men) all have wives and children in Hong Kong, and some of their children are of similar age to their mistresses. You can't believe it! (Informant 8)

Discussion:

It is remarkable to hear such negative narrations. One may feel curious as to why these female migrants still marry Hong Kong men if they really think that Hong Kong men are worse than those in the Mainland. As a matter of fact, it is not difficult to find an explanation. It is said that many Mainland women like marrying Hong Kong men, because they have a fantasy that these men are richer and better-educated, and offer them the hope of better lives in Hong Kong. Therefore, it is common to hear that many female migrants do not love their husbands, and what propelled them to marry their husbands was money, or even the intention of using

such marriages as a stepping-stone to come to Hong Kong, and of divorcing their husbands after settling. The eagerness to shrug off such stereotypical images – money-oriented marriage – may constitute a great motivation for them to narrate their husbands or other Hong Kong men in a negative way.

But for some of them, it may be the disinclination to express their disappointment over their husbands, living environments, failure to integrate, and the like, that drives them to such alternative narration, as showing their disappointment may imply that they did have those expectations and money-oriented motivations behind their marriages. To a certain extent, it reflects their willingness to ward off the enforced prejudice against them.

5.42 Their husbands' relatives

Generally speaking, most of them do not have good relationships with their husbands' relatives, namely, their mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, especially those who have to live together under the same roof. In talking about how they feel and why their relatives do not treat them very well or even discriminate against them, they do not think in terms of their own problems. Instead, some of them raised an interesting point: since the Mainland's economic takeoff, the lives of Mainlanders are getting better and better, and Mainlanders are becoming richer and richer; and thus, Hong Kong males are becoming very jealous of Mainlanders and they are venting

their spleen on them. For example, Informant 3 said that:

I always think that there's some psychological problem with her (mother-in-law). In the past, when Mainlanders were poor, she was happy to help them (relatives on the Mainland). But now, your (Mainlanders) lives are better than hers, and that's why she dislikes it.

She further commented that:

There's still prejudice among Hong Kong people against Mainlanders. They treat foreigners in a very friendly way, but not Mainlanders... When my sister-in-law and mother-in-law watch TV, they always say, "You see, Mainlanders wear much prettier things than us. They are better than Hong Kong people now!" Their mentality is strange, they think that it is fair for foreigners to have a good standard of living, but when they know that the standard of living of Mainlanders is getting better, they think it is not good. There's a problem with their hearts. Many Hong Kong people whom I'd contacted think in this way!

Along similar lines, informant 8 said:

Sometimes I'll think in this way: because I'm luckier than you, that's why you don't like me. I will think in this way.

Discussion:

In counteracting their relatives, they abandon the popular reason for such an unpleasant and disharmonious relationship, that is, being looked down upon by their relatives because they are less worthy Mainlanders. Alternatively, through narrating how good, advanced and rich the Mainlanders are, they can associate themselves with these people, which in turn wards off the image of Mainlanders as bad, uncivilized and poor.

5.5 How Do They Perceive Their Identities? Hong Kong people? Mainlanders?

Or Something Else?

When they were asked how they perceive their identities, i.e. whether they call themselves Hong Kong or Mainland people, whether they like the identity of being Hong Kong people, and how often do they feel like Hong Kong or Mainland people in their daily lives in Hong Kong, most of them answered that they are Hong Kong people in the first instance. However, when we talked more about the conditions in Hong Kong and the Mainland, for example, some societal issues, economic situations, the government and the like, many of them showed their appreciation of the recent development of the Mainland, and expressed a sense of superiority on account of being Mainlanders.

But more interestingly, the majority of them told me that they preferred to use their own place of origin to identify their identity, instead of merely calling themselves Mainlanders. For them, the term 'Mainlanders' is just a label used by Hong Kong people to distinguish those who were born in Hong Kong from those born on the Mainland. And it is a strange label for them, as they have got used to using their place of origin to tell themselves apart from others.

Examples:

When I first interviewed Informant 1, she told me without hesitation that she regarded and named herself a 'Hong Kong person' if someone asked her who she is. She explains that, "I will say that I'm a Hong Kong person. I speak Cantonese, but my Mandarin is poor." She tried to associate herself with the most obvious characteristics of Hong Kong people in order to prove that she is herself a Hong Kong person.

However, when I further discussed her views about what attributes Hong Kong people have, her perception on the development of Hong Kong and the Mainland, she showed her inconsistency in perceiving her own identity. She talked about other qualities that being a Hong Kong person entails, but told me that she did not have them, - such things as knowing English, understanding what is meant by rule of law and so on.

Informant 3, on the other hand, told me that she tells others that she is a Chinese person who comes from Nanghai. This is what she says:

I'll tell others that I'm Chinese. I come from the Mainland. I come from Nanghai. You don't have to pretend that you don't come from Nanghai since when most people hear that you come from Nanghai, they won't despise you. There're no differences between us and Hong Kong people in our language, food culture and the like. The only difference is that we don't know English and we write a different version of Chinese characters.

When I asked if she really does not mind revealing her Mainlander identity to

others, she replied: "It is the truth that I'm a *da lu mei* (Mainland woman)."

Moreover, she is proud of being *da lu ren* (Mainlander):

There's only one way out for Hong Kong people, by developing China trade. I will consider bringing my children back to the Mainland. I'll wait until they've got their HKID and gain experiences in the Mainland as well. You've to rely on our motherland in order to earn a living. It's not a far-reaching goal, you know, time flies and they will graduate soon. I have to consider bringing them back to the Mainland, most probably back to Nanghai.

For her, her roots are still on the Mainland, and she considers being a Mainlander a good thing for her children and herself, especially since the economic development of her hometown has been great.

Similar to the above informant, Informant 6 also expressed a sense of superiority on account of her place of origin. She says that she tells others that she is a Shanghainese if they ask her where she comes from. She told me in excitement that:

When people hear that you come from Shanghai, their attitudes are totally different. Many female migrants say that they have been discriminated against by Hong Kong people. But that has not been my experience. I find that it is a great thing to be a Shanghainese. I'm really very proud of it! Shanghai women are beautiful. And many people say that they want to buy a flat in Shanghai now. Whenever you tell someone that you come from Shanghai, they will give you the thumbs up! Shanghainese are shrewd and capable particularly in doing business. That's why I'm proud of being Shanghainese now. I didn't have such a feeling before.

She continued that because of the high-ranked status of the Shanghainese, she does not mind letting other people know that she comes from the Mainland. However, she stresses that she comes from Shanghai and is a genuine Shanghainese.

Some of the informants prefer giving different answers to different people when someone asks them who they are. Informant 7, for instance, says that:

If it is asked by a foreigner, I'll say that I'm a Chinese, right? If it is asked by a Chinese, I'll first tell him which province I come from. I'll surely tell him about my place of origin, right? You have to see who you are talking with.

More than that, she thinks that one does not have to feel inferior for being Chinese.

But, remarkably, she does not call herself a *da lu ren* (Mainlander), but a *Zhong guo ren* (Chinese). She regards the so-called Mainlanders and Hong Kong people as the same, as all of them are Chinese. She elaborated it in this way:

We are definitely all Chinese. I won't say that I'm Hong Kong. And you don't have to say that you're Hong Kong either. We are Chinese. Hong Kong is part of greater China, and Hong Kong people are also Chinese. The blood inside our bodies is the same. You cannot alienate yourself from Chinese. No matter where you're living, all of us are Chinese and there shouldn't be any differences. In fact, Hong Kong people are Chinese, right?

She went further, saying that for her, there is no distinction between Hong Kong and Chinese people. She thinks it is something which is invented by and imposed on those who are living in Hong Kong, which is a wrong concept.

5.6 Their connections with Hong Kong

Do they have a sense of belonging in Hong Kong?

Now that we have reconstructed the 'in-group' and 'out-group' from the informants' point of view, a delineation will follow of how they feel about their connections with Hong Kong. Generally speaking, they did have a good impression of Hong Kong before residing here. However, after they settled, this impression withered away. When they are talking about Hong Kong, they think that its economy is worsening and its future is a grey one. That is why they dislike Hong Kong now.

Examples:

Employment

Talking about her impression of Hong Kong, Informant 1 recalled that:

I hadn't been to Hong Kong before and thought it was very good. It was easy to find jobs... When I saw some coworkers who come from Hong Kong in the factory where I worked, their clothes were very beautiful. When I was in my hometown, my father said that it was good to marry a Hong Kong person because they were rich. I didn't know that life is so tough here. I only realize it now.

Throughout her narration, she expressed her liking towards the Mainland; in particular, she was referring to Shenzhen where she had a good job before:

Working in Shenzhen factories was less tough and the salary was higher... the living environment and other fringe benefits were also better.

She also showed her admiration for those friends who are still working there:

They are still working outside. They have beautiful clothes to wear, and they eat well. They also have money to send back to their hometowns. It's better to work there.

Although informant 3 tried to equate Nanhai with Hong Kong, particularly in terms of their economic development, when I first interviewed her, she expressed similar thoughts to those just mentioned. She said that:

If I were still working in my hometown, I could earn several thousand dollars per month! Some of my colleagues are earning three to four thousands now!

Hong Kong's Future

While talking about the gloomy outlook for Hong Kong's future and development, Informant 6 recounted her memories of the June 4th Incident in 1989. Though she did not participate in the sit-in Tiananmen Square, she told me that she supported the students secretly. As she said, most of her friends, including herself, were not daring enough to read the 'big posters' written by those students openly. They did not have the courage to discuss this movement in public because she knew that there was no freedom of speech in Mainland China. Returning to the situation in Hong Kong, she held that Hong Kong is hopeless because of the enactment of Article 23 of the Basic Law. Taking the initiative, she conceded that:

Hong Kong is dead in my eyes. I don't have any confidence in Hong Kong. In the past, I know that Hong Kong was good. Hong Kong was a place where East meets West. But now, everything has gone!

She also told me that she dislikes the enactment of Article 23, as this would make her lose what she thinks is very important, that is, citizens' rights and freedom. This is what she said:

I don't like Hong Kong now, not a bit! When I first came to Hong Kong, I was very happy! I participated (some demonstrations). It is because there's no such thing in the Mainland. But now, I think there won't be any freedom. I don't like it. Who will like Hong Kong? There's no difference between Hong Kong and the Mainland now. Living costs are much higher than on the Mainland, and the living environment is so bad. What's good in Hong Kong? Nothing! The salaries earned by Mainlanders are much higher than before. If you ask those who are living in big cities, they will reply - who would want to come here?

Informant 7 who comes from Kun Ming also pointed out that Hong Kong is not that special as it is similar to her hometown. She said that there is little room for further development in Hong Kong, which is a problem for Hong Kong's future. For example, she said that:

I was living in a city that is full of tourists. The transportation network is not bad... It's still a developing city... but there's not much room for further development here. The area isn't big enough. I can't think of any further directions for Hong Kong... but the development of the Mainland is still in its initial stage. There're still many aspects awaiting further development..."

Discussion:

During different interviews, many informants mentioned the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement signed between Mainland China and Hong Kong, which is regarded as an indication of the increasing reliance of Hong Kong on the Mainland, that is, the decline of Hong Kong. This in turn gives them a sense of superiority over Hong Kong people. Such a sense of superiority provides them with legitimacy in claiming their national identities and pride in identifying themselves as Mainland Chinese. Their narrations show how they are capable of making use of the current state of affairs to resist the Hong Kong culture, which for them would otherwise mean domination and social exclusion, as Hong Kong people are always perceived as despising migrants who come from the Mainland, and have a sense of superiority over Mainlanders.

In contrast, when asked about their perception of Mainland China, they described it in a tone of superiority. To summarize, most of them pointed out that, after entering the World Trade Organization (WTO), they thought that the status of China is rising on the international stage, and the economy of the Mainland is improving steadily and substantially year by year. Secondly, the living standard on the Mainland is also soaring, with a better and more spacious living environment. Finally, they all pointed out that the Central government is becoming more and more enlightened, and thus, they think that being Mainland Chinese is a good thing, and

they do not have to gloss over their identity, or they think that they have inferior social status.

5.7 Active Resistance: Agency exercised at home

Remarkably, they have already tried to fight for a more equal status within their family, by sharing housework and the role of caregiver with their husbands. In this sense, they are not submissive wives, and do bring about a revolution at home to a certain extent that should not be ignored.

Some of them resisted the domination of their husbands. They used either active or passive means or even fought for an equal or dominant role vis-à-vis their husbands. One of the examples is how Informant 3 dealt with her husband whenever they had different views about supervising their children. According to her description, her husband is a stern father who is conservative and orders and censures their children. When censuring their children, he reproached her too, for her leniency and failure in monitoring their studies.

Belying the image of a docile and subservient wife, she always resists her husband both verbally and physically. She made use of what had been held by her husband as essential in counteracting him. When her husband scolded their children for not following his words, she would say, for example:

Why are you so angry? They (their children) have just said a few words. You (her husband) say that Hong Kong people have human rights. They also have human rights, right? They have the right to refute what they think is incorrect!

She would ally with her children to express her disagreement with him. I identify such a tactic as physical resistance, but it is not tantamount to violence. Instead, it refers to strategies other than open confrontations; for instance, she would ask her children not to look at their father. The aim is to repel his unreasonableness by isolating him. This would discredit him as a leading and respectable figure in their family, and force him to examine himself. As Informant 3 said, her husband would respond by saying that:

How come you teach them to ignore me?

And then she could make use of this chance to further criticize his faults:

You're so unreasonable! That's why I ask them to ignore you!
If what you've said or done is reasonable, I won't teach them to ignore you, right?

She also resists the unrealistic expectations set by her husband, such as reading some difficult English grammar books and teaching their children. He often says that:

It's very easy, really easy! You have gone to the centre to learn English and pinyin, but why do you say these books are difficult? I'm skeptical about what you did learn in those courses! Did you go there at all, actually?

After listening to his query about what she had done and learnt in one of the New Arrivals' Family Integrated Service Centers, she would resist:

We only have two lessons every week, and I've just learnt several lessons. Other people have been studying for more than ten years. That's why they know how to teach and understand some difficult books. But I'm not. Don't you understand this simple point? Why are you so barbarous?

Thus she made use of reason to resist the unreasonable demands and queries raised by her husband. She also "shut his mouth" by claiming that the academic performance of their children have improved a lot, especially in the subject of English which her husband is most concerned about.

Some of them make use of the weaknesses of their husbands to override them.

The husband of Informant 2 had been unemployed for a while since his foot was injured. Because of this, his temper became worse. She has always been beaten by her husband. Unwilling to fight with him as he is physically much stronger than she, she successfully uses his sensitivity about being unemployed to counter his harsh reprimands. She said, "Sometimes, I'll say something to him intentionally. For example, I'll censure him for not going out to work...".

Another illustration showing they are not that subservient to their husbands is the example given by Informant 6. According to her, though her husband likes helping her analyze what to do or not to do, she does not always follow his advice.

I want to try on my own. I won't trust him unless I try it myself. If I fail, I may give up. But I will evaluate what I did wrong. I would like to try those things that I'm interesting in doing. I won't listen to whatever he suggests I do... That's my character. I was so before getting married,

and I remain so.

Apart from having the agency to resist their husbands, some of them take up leading roles in allocating the division of labor at home. Instead of serving their husbands in a neat sense, that is, the servant-and-master relationship as expected by most Hong Kong people, they are the ones who decide the division of labor at home.

For instance, Informant 7 said when it is time to do housework:

I'll ask him (husband) to share the work. I usually allocate some simple work for him to do, like washing clothes using the washing machine, or cleaning the house.

This lessens some of her burdens. Others prefer telling their husbands not to do any housework or supervise their children, as it is regarded as their own domains and they do not want men to meddle in it. For example, Informant 1 said that it would be better for one parent, meaning only her, to guide their children, as she can decide all the things on her own without any interference. However, she would also allocate something for her husband to do with their children, like asking him to bring them out to play or buy snacks, so that she can do the things she wants at home or go out with her friends.

This reflects that doing household chores is not strictly a matter for housewives. Even those female migrants who are perceived as "the weak partner" when set beside their husbands, are capable of actively redrawing the boundary of their traditional, taken-for-granted role.

Discussion:

It is impossible to make an exhaustive list of the reasons explaining such phenomena, because the reasons vary from case to case. Yet, several commonalities can still be identified. Their independence in the Mainland, in terms of child care and financial independence, may be the first explanation. As with Informant 3, whether she was an embroidress, or a worker in a watch factory, or an insurance consultant, the salaries she earned were sufficient to support herself and her family. Because she managed the household on her own and created a female-centred household on the Mainland, and because she didn't need to ask her husband for domestic expenses, the power relations between them are relatively equal, if not really equal in absolute terms.

5.8 Conclusion

Identities of the self are always multiple and contesting in nature, subject to negotiation and re-negotiation under different conditions for attaining different purposes. From the data generated, it is found that Group 1 informants do not have a neatly defined identity.

As newcomers in the host society, these informants generally had difficulties in integration. Several common reasons can be discerned, though there are variations. In addition to adaptation problems in a new environment, many of them failed to

integrate in their families, and are unable to overcome the problems arising from, for example, being despised by their mother-in-laws. Secondly, difficulties in getting a job in Hong Kong make it hard for them to confer meaning on themselves, especially since many of them had been working for years and earning salaries on their own, as well as having female-centered households on the Mainland. But now, they have to accept being a so-called 'economically unproductive dependent.' Thirdly, being restricted to establishing social networks only with female migrants, and having difficulties in extending their circle to embrace Hong Kong people, this reinforces their perception of being newcomers (or even strangers), which in turn, obstructs their social integration. For these reasons, when they were asked "what type of person are you?" they rarely identified themselves as Hong Kong persons. They have little alternative but to opt for the Mainlander identity.

Nevertheless, because of the downgrading of Mainlanders in the public discourse, particularly Mainland women, who are often portrayed as *er nai* (mistresses) or *bei gu* (prostitutes), they usually do not simply call themselves Mainlanders. Many present themselves as 'good female migrants,' building up a perceived positive image, such as an image of being a self-reliant migrant. They also distinguish themselves from those 'bad female migrants' who depend on the CSSA for their livelihood. It is also interesting that some of them deliberately and vigorously differentiate themselves

from those female migrants who come from the Northern part of China and/or some poor provinces by stressing their places of origin and class.

In short, in positioning themselves as female migrants who come from the Mainland, they do not merely draw a simple boundary between Hong Kong people and Mainlanders, but also draw boundaries among Mainland women themselves. Such boundaries are indicative of the importance and influence of values cherished by the general public, regardless of whether such influence is direct or indirect. Their socioeconomic background and personal experiences are other factors that cannot be overlooked.

In addition to their positive representation of themselves as 'good female migrants,' they engage in narratives which portray Hong Kong people and Hong Kong's future negatively. By pointing to the economic downturn and the welfare cutbacks, they succeed in deconstructing the supremacy of Hong Kong. Since many of them have been working in Guangdong and other industrialized provinces in the Mainland in the past, they made reference to their personal experiences and their sensitivity to current issues to demonstrate that the ongoing integration between Hong Kong and the Mainland was not a one-sided affair, not an integration between a highly developed and a highly undeveloped society, that the Mainland was also advanced, just like Hong Kong.

Hence, their ability and sensitivity in grasping the socio-economic and political development create a discursive space, allowing them to take pride in the Mainland's advancement, which exceeds that of Hong Kong, and thus to negotiate their subjectivities between the Mainlanders' and the Hong Kong identities.

The narrations strike a positive note in relation to China and being a Mainlander. Many informants gave China a higher rating, and their narratives were tinged with a sense of superiority on account of their being Mainlanders, because of China's rich historical and cultural heritage, economic progress, the ongoing improvements in living standards, and the Chinese Communist Party's moves toward a more enlightened government. As reflected in their answers to other questions asked during the interviews, they did not necessarily have a deep attachment or nationalistic affiliation to the Mainland, but they tried to give meanings to their identities by praising it.

To sum up, these women were actively engaged in narrating themselves differently to fend off the enforced and dominant portrayals. The bargaining chips employed by them in negotiating their subjective identities are the specific context in Hong Kong, the changing power relations between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and/or their Mainlander identities as constructed during their formative stage. There is neither an obvious sense of estrangement from, nor an 'affective attachment' to

either Hong Kong or China among these informants, as they only view the identities claimed instrumentally.

Chapter Six

Empirical Chapter: The Making of Cultural Citizenship of Group 2

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on female migrants who have applied for the CSSA. The rationale for singling them out for discussion is that, throughout the interviews, it was found that there are some differences between these women and those who have not applied for the CSSA.

Background of my informants:

All of them, except one, are in single-parent families. Most of them divorced their husbands because their husbands have mistresses, while in one case the husband passed away after she came to Hong Kong.

6.2 In-group

In-group: with those who come from the Mainland or the same province

It is found that they tend to view those who come from the Mainland or have the same places of origin as their friends/in-group. Unlike the informants in the previous chapter, they seldom have the intention to set themselves apart from women who come from certain parts of the Mainland.

All of them make friends with women who come from the Mainland.

Informant 10 is a so-called *Guangdong ren* who came from Shanwei. She told me that nearly all of her friends come from the Mainland. Even if some of her friends are already permanent residents in Hong Kong, they all came from the Mainland years ago. She does not care about their places of origin, and thinks that making friends is very important, as it means she will not feel lonely anymore.

She told me that:

After knowing some friends, I won't be so bored. We chitchat with each other. If you don't go out, how can you make friends? If there are some activities organized by the centre and I've time, I'll join them. They periodically send letters to us to inform us of their latest activities.

Moreover, she thinks that these women are her friends because they always help each other in their daily lives. It is said that though she does not have a husband now, as her friends are very supportive, she feels quite happy living here. Her friends help her on different occasions - the following are some examples. When she does not know how to get to certain locations, she will give her friends a call and they will tell her the way. If she does not know a certain dialect, she will ask her friends to teach her. This is what she said:

Sometimes when you don't know how to use Cantonese to express yourself, you may ask her. She has lived here for a longer time. That's why she knows more.

She said that there was once a little accident at her home, and she did not know how to handle it. Luckily, she could find her friend for help. She recalled that:

I've asked her other things. When my daughter was injured by boiling water, I didn't know how to handle it. She taught me to use some ointment and comforted me. I was very scared and didn't know what to do initially.

Other informants shared a similar view. A female migrant who originated from Fujian and had worked in Shenzhen before coming to Hong Kong says that she regards women who come from the Mainland as her friends because of their common experience of a cultural chasm; but it is also a factor separating them from the wider society here. Yet, she thinks that the shared experience of a cultural chasm is not the only important factor. What is equally important is that, whenever she needs help, they are by her side. This provides emotional support to her, which she regards as something she cannot do without, especially in this new environment.

Informant 12 said that she likes to make friends with women from the Mainland, particularly with those who share the same place of origin with her. They serve as her conversation partners, as they have many common experiences and memories, as well as giving her emotional support.

When talking about their friends, it is quite clear that they view Mainland women as their in-group. These friends not only provide a platform for them to kill time and exchanging information; they also provide mutual help and support, which are regarded by them as very important in this new environment. To a certain extent, they successfully gain rapport and comfort within this group of people.

Exceptional Case:

However, there is an exceptional case among these informants. One of them did try to distinguish herself from women who come from Szechuan and Wunan. Informant 5 came from Guangxi and had been living in Hong Kong for less than a year when I first interviewed her. She divorced her husband because he had a mistress and he always threatened to beat her physically. After that, she lived in a shelter home and later, a very small and dirty berth (*chuang wei*) in a flat which is divided by the owner into different berths and rented out to different people. Fortunately, she told me, she came across a preacher in a NGO and they helped her to find a better and cleaner place to move into. She says that the building where she lives now has quite a number of female migrants, and most of them have been divorced from their husbands for different reasons. However, she does not want to make friends with them, particularly with those women who are living on the eighth floor. She said that she does not want to destroy others' families, but that is what those women living on the eighth floor did. This is a direct quote from her:

They played mahjong with some Hong Kong men. They contacted them by phone too. They intentionally called those men and made their wives angry. I think they are really bad. My best friend says that they already have broken families, and they shouldn't destroy others' families. Even if you go to others' home to play mahjong, when others' wives called their husbands, you shouldn't say something to make others angry. They made the couples

quarrel. My best friend says that it's not good to make friends with those women.

Besides, she said that those women always suspect her reasons for divorcing her husband, and that is why she does not like making friends with them. She told me that:

They said they didn't believe in me. That means, they said that I am not ugly, and they didn't believe that I was expelled by my husband. They said there's no reason for my husband to expel me. They don't believe me.

More than that, those women are always suspicious of her for inviting men to her home:

They are meddlesome... if there's someone who pays a visit to your home, and they know it, they will come to see who those persons are. They like gossiping and are always suspicious of you. That's why I don't like them.

Talking about which group of people she would intentionally avoid, she said that:

I don't want to have complicated relationships. I don't want to have so many friends. Those who are living on the eighth floor are nosy. These women came from Szechuan and Wunan. I hate them! I'm not discriminating against them, but women coming from there are too snooping!

One of the main differences between Informant 5 and the other informants is that, though nearly all of them have divorced, and have joined activities organized by some NGOs, Informant 5 does care about what other people think about her; while others do not have such a strong feeling. For example, she told me that she had once participated in the activities organized by a NGO, and all the Christians there were

very kind. However, she does not like joining their activities very often because she thinks that she differs from other women in a significant way. She told me that:

If I contact too many people, I will feel uneasy. Why? I think other women are very skillful and talented. But I'm not that kind of person. That's why I don't want to make friends.

On another occasion, she expressed a similar thing to me:

I think they are very well educated. For example, when I was in the church, I noticed that they knew a lot about things that I really didn't know about. I am just a countrywoman. I know nothing. I've a sense of inferiority. They really know a lot but I don't.

It should be noted that no obvious sense of superiority is revealed in other informants' narrations. But at the same time they do not share the feeling of Informant 5, or at least they did not express such a feeling during the interviews.

Apart from low self-esteem, another reason that may contribute to her reluctance to make friends is her eagerness to reject the accusation that Mainland women deliberately married Hong Kong men and later divorced them, just because they want to come here to improve their lives, while regarding Hong Kong men as a springboard. Since Informant 5 originated from Guangxi, which is a poor region, other people may think that she is that kind of woman. Showing her dislike of others' curiosity about why she divorced her husband also reflects her hatred of such an enforced identity to a certain degree.

6.3 Hong Kong people: out-group or in-between in-group and out-group

A loosely defined boundary

How do these informants view Hong Kong people? Do they narrate all of them negatively and view them as out-group? Unlike those mentioned in Chapter 5, these informants do not regard all Hong Kong people as bad; but most of them do not think that they are in their in-group, with a few exceptions.

Narrating Hong Kong people negatively/as out-group

Examples:

Daily Encounters

Throughout their narrations, though some of them praise Hong Kong people for their industriousness and politeness, many of them give negative descriptions of Hong Kong people. When asked about her impression of Hong Kong people, Informant 2 commented that:

Hong Kong people are good? People in my hometown are much better. Hong Kong people always despise Mainlanders. They're spiteful towards us... I heard about this more than 10 years ago. All of us know that Hong Kong people behave like that.

She told me that her friends told her how bad Hong Kong people are, saying that:

Some of my friends married Hong Kong men. They say that their mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law treat them very badly.

When I asked if she had any personal experience of this, she explained:

I went shopping with my friends. We wanted to ask the

salesgirls for help but they didn't serve us after looking at our dress... Their tone and the language used were not friendly.

Informant 10 also encountered some Hong Kong people who treated her very badly. She told me that some of the hawkers scolded her:

Some of them are bad. Sometimes if you really think that a certain thing is expensive and you say it, they scold you! "Go back to the countryside! Go back to the Mainland! Don't always bargain!" I saw that some female migrants were scolded by the hawkers. I dare not touch their goods. And if you ask them the price and don't buy it afterwards, they will also yell at you!

She went further, saying that some Hong Kong people notice that she is a Mainlander as her accent is different. She thinks that because people know that she is a Mainlander, she was scolded by an old lady:

They notice that you are a Mainlander because of your accent. They will say that you're a countrywoman. Some elderly people also say "oh, you're a new arrival? Why do you come here?" Some of them even say, "You've seized our jobs!" But some of them are good, if they see that you've a child around you, they will give you a seat in the MTR. But not all of them are good. Most of them are very bad.

Informant 11 had been working as a waitress in a Chinese restaurant before.

She recalled that she frequently heard Hong Kong people criticizing them:

They are prejudiced against us. I heard this on the street and in some Chinese restaurants. They really dislike us. They think that Mainlanders have ruined Hong Kong.

She continued that:

When I was working in a Chinese restaurant, I always

heard from those old men and women that they don't like Mainlanders. They were not talking to me, but I heard their conversations.

But it does not mean that they think all Hong Kong people are bad because they have been discriminated against by them. Some of them dislike Hong Kong people merely because they think are not hospitable. As explained by most of them, they had good relationships with their neighbors on the Mainland. But this is not the case in Hong Kong. They do not know who are living next to them, and they seldom say 'hello' to each other. Informant 13 lived in Kaiping and has very good memories of the place:

We Mainlanders are very kind. Relationships among villagers are very good. It's really good. But in Hong Kong, all neighbors shut their doors and you don't have a chance to make friends with them. I've been living here for several months but I know none of my neighbors. I think people in Hong Kong are worse than those in the Mainland.

Informant 2 also said that every family locks their doors in Hong Kong and they do not care about their neighbors.

Their husbands

Some of them narrated their husbands negatively. Informant 5, for example, said that most Hong Kong men like to have two wives, meaning that they have mistresses. This is a direct quote from her narration:

Most Hong Kong men want to have two wives. They think that it is a symbol of power to have more than one wife. Many of us know that they are not good only after coming here.

Her husband even forced her to share the expenses of their family, which included those of his mistress. She said that her husband was very crude:

When I first came here, I worked. He (her husband) asked me to pay the water and electricity bills. We shared the bill. If I didn't pay, he wouldn't allow me to use warm water for taking a shower. I tried to use cold water to take a shower during wintertime. It was really cold and I was freezing. He said that if you didn't pay for it, you didn't have the right to use it. He counted every cent.

In another case, one of them reckons that she did not have a good relationship with her husband, because she did not give birth to a son. She has four daughters, and she told me that she always has nightmares at night, dreaming that she is giving birth to a female baby again and again. Worse still, such nightmares continue to afflict her even after her divorce. That was what Informant 10 said:

Of course he did pressurize me! Some people say that it doesn't matter whether you've a son or daughter. But it's not what they think in their hearts.

She commented that her husband is so conservative, and that made their relationship worse.

Informant 11 said her husband is very lazy and does not fulfill his responsibility as a husband. After losing his job, he did not try to find another job but asked her to go out to earn a living:

He look for jobs. When I returned home from work, I was very angry. My temper wasn't so good, and he asked me to support him. I'd to work for more than ten hours a day, but he could stay at home comfortably. That's the problem, right?

Even when she tried hard to find jobs for him, he did not want to take them. Worse still, he even went back to the Mainland and lived with his mother and never returned to Hong Kong again. According to her, her husband even asked her to send money to him. She recalled this full of depression:

He's very lazy. He always wants to go back to the Mainland. His mother has bought a house in the Mainland and frequently asked him to go back. He finds a lot of excuses to leave Hong Kong. He went there once after receiving a call from his mother. Then, he told me that he wouldn't come back to Hong Kong. Even when he was in Hong Kong, he didn't have any intention to find jobs. When I was working in a Chinese restaurant, I had some time to take a rest in the afternoon. I bought newspapers and helped him to choose those jobs that are suitable for him. But he just ignored it. I felt very uncomfortable. I'd tried several times but he just ignored me and the efforts I made.

Narrating Hong Kong people positively, but still as out-group

It is noteworthy that most of them narrate Hong Kong people positively, particularly Hong Kong's social workers. But even so, most of them do not regard them as friends/in-group.

Though Informant 5 thinks that her husband is very bad, she does not regard all Hong Kong people as bad. In talking about her perception of Hong Kong people, she praised them in this way:

The Hong Kong government is good. It's difficult to apply this and that in the Mainland, but Hong Kong is much better. Their mentality and conduct is better.

Moreover, when talking about being expelled by her husband from home, she told me that she met a very good Hong Kong person when she did not know what to do. She put it this way:

I was standing at a bridge and crying. A cleaning maid came to me and asked me what happened. I guess she was afraid that I would commit suicide. She asked me if I needed any help. If you were in the Mainland, no one would help you. They wouldn't come and ask you.

In talking about the newly rented suite where she lives now, she told me that she did not have any money to rent it, buy the basic furniture needed, and pay for the porters. All these things were taken care of by the social workers and a preacher from the NGO, and they even lent her money. She recounted the whole process in a very detailed way and it is not difficult to feel her sincerity in expressing her thankfulness to those Hong Kong people whom she mentioned. Because of this experience, she thinks that Hong Kong people are very kind-hearted even towards strangers.

She also tried to compare Hong Kong people and Mainlanders and said that the former are much better because they do not discriminate against her for being a CSSA recipient and having an incomplete family. She explained that:

It's really different! University students and government on the Mainland are not good. If you've money, they will treat you better. Just like me (single-parent family), if I were on the Mainland, I would be condemned by others!

But people in Hong Kong do not discriminate against you just because you've divorced.

Similarly, Informant 6 conceded that some Hong Kong people are good, saying

that:

Some Hong Kong people are better than those in my hometown. They are very patient in explaining things to you, especially those working in the centre.

Reminiscing on her experience in a public hospital, Informant 11 said that nurses in Hong Kong treated her very well, without any discrimination. She said that:

They are really very good. All the social workers are very polite. Those in the Mainland are very rude!

Most of them praised the social workers they know. Informant 12 put it in this

way:

They won't treat us as Mainlanders. They won't treat our children as Mainlanders either. They are all very kind!

Informant 13 was a CSSA recipient after her divorce. But then the social worker that she knows in a centre helped her to find a part-time job as a baby-sitter. Now she does not have to rely on the government, and she told me with delight about how enthusiastic those Hong Kong people are in helping her:

Many of them are very enthusiastic. If you've got any problems, they help you wholeheartedly!

Informant 2 also thinks that those social workers she knows are very nice. She said that, "Their attitudes are very good. They're kind-hearted and helpful. It's difficult to find someone who is as generous as they are now. They're very sincere in helping us."

Informant 5 said that their living environment has improved tremendously, because the social workers in the NGO helped her apply for CSSA and find a place to move into. They even helped her to renovate the flat, to look for unwanted furniture thrown out by others, and even acted as physical laborers to help her move all the furniture she needed.

Informant 10, on the other hand, told me that she had only received education up to primary 4 and she thinks that she is actually an illiterate. Recalling her application for the CSSA, she said that she did not know how to fill in the forms. But the social workers are very nice and explained things and helped her fill in all the forms.

Narrating Hong Kong people positively/as in-group

Unlike the informants mentioned above, Informant 9 does regard some Hong Kong people as her in-group. She has been residing in Hong Kong for almost two years. She told me that life is difficult for her, especially after her husband passed away all of a sudden. She does not have any friends or relatives here, and the only people she knew at that time were the social workers in one of the NGOs near her home. She says that she likes them very much because they are friendly and caring to her. She explained her perception in the following terms:

I didn't know how to talk to others initially, but they (social workers in the centre) encouraged me to try. They also

helped me to fill in the forms to apply for the CSSA and public housing. I knew nothing but they taught me.

She also explicitly used “in-group” to describe those social workers, saying that:

I treat those social workers as my *zi ji ren* (i.e. in-group). They are very kind to me. I brought my son to a health centre but didn't know the way. I called them and they came and brought us there. In many instances, I was afraid to do things by myself, but they gave me the courage to do so.

6.4 How Do They Perceive Their Identities? Hong Kong? Mainlanders? Or

Something Else?

Informants in Group 2 were inclined to call themselves Mainlanders. Nearly all of them think that it is natural to regard themselves as Mainlanders, as they were born in and come from the Mainland. Moreover, they do not think that they can be Hong Kong people even after residing in Hong Kong for a long time and fully adopting the life here. They think their identity as Mainlanders cannot be changed once they were born there.

Examples:

Nearly all of them say that they regard themselves as Mainlanders because their different accent makes it difficult for them to pretend they are Hong Kong people. For example, Informant 2 said that if someone asks who she is, she will definitely reply that she is a Mainlander. She added: “I don't think I'm a Hong Kong person. I'm a Mainlander. I feel like a Mainlander in my daily life.” When I asked her to

explain why, she told me about her experiences of being looked down upon by Hong Kong people like shopkeepers. She told me that people can recognize that she comes from the Mainland because of the way she dresses, talks and behaves. She elaborated further by telling me about similar experiences of some female migrants who have been living here for many years. That reinforces her perception that no matter how long she lives in Hong Kong, she is still a Mainlander.

In addition to their accents, Informant 12 even suggested that people are able to recognize the places of origin of people by just looking at them. She says that:

It is easy to recognize where you come from by your appearance. It is difficult to tell how but you do know it. Mainlanders, Hong Kong people, Guangdong ren, Wai Sheng ren... all of them are different! If you have been living in Hong Kong for many years, it may not be so obvious. But still, one can tell where your place of origin is if one looks at you long enough! So, I won't say I'm a Hong Kong person as people can recognize that I am not.

That was exactly what Informant 4 also told me. She explained that this is why she cannot regard herself as a Hong Kong person. For instance, she says:

There're quite a few differences. I think that Hong Kong people are very polite, but we are... That is why I feel strange going to the church and the centre. My accent is a Mainland accent, and people realize that I am a *dai po* (大婆) just by looking at me.

Some other informants feel inferior as they think that many of the good qualities that Hong Kong people possess cannot be found in themselves. For instance, informant 11 perceives it thus:

I won't describe myself as a Hong Kong person. I have very low self-esteem. There're a lot of things that I don't know how to teach my child, I even cannot find a job here... That is why I feel inferior. I dare not using Hong Kong identity to describe myself.

6.5 Their connections with Hong Kong

Showing their liking for Hong Kong?

None of these informants show a sense of belonging in Hong Kong. But many of them showed their liking for Hong Kong for several reasons. The first reason usually given by these informants is that Hong Kong people abide by rules, while people in the Mainland do not. Informant 10, for instance, explained that:

Hong Kong is better than my hometown. People in Hong Kong like to queue up but people in my hometown won't do that. For example, if you want to add value for your Octopus card, you will queue up in Hong Kong. But in my hometown, if you know the staff well, the staff will serve you first even if you come later. I think Hong Kong is better.

Secondly, the government of Hong Kong is less corrupt, and that is why they like Hong Kong. Using Informant 10 as an example again, she said that:

There's less corruption in Hong Kong. People in my hometown are very corrupt. If you want to apply for something from the government, you have to pay them money. Otherwise, they will ignore you... if you don't give them money, you at least you have to give them cigarettes. There's no such thing in Hong Kong.

Thirdly, they think that the Hong Kong government provides better education for

their children compared to the Mainland. They think that this is essential because many of them are either illiterate or did not receive a proper education when they were young. Informant 10 contrasted Hong Kong teachers to those in the Mainland, saying that:

I think education in Hong Kong is better. You can learn both Chinese and English. Teachers in my hometown are less devoted to teaching. They don't care about the children. For example, if your children have lost the textbooks or forget to bring something, they won't care about it. But in Hong Kong, teachers will write it down in the student handbooks.

Many of them know about the uprightness of the Hong Kong government not only from the media, but also from their own experience. Since they have all applied for the CSSA scheme, they have had quite a lot of contact with government officials. They thought that though they look stern and cool to them, unlike those in the Mainland China, these government officials do not take advantage of them, by asking them to pay money or gifts.

Fourthly, some of them do cherish the rights which are enjoyed under the Hong Kong government, such as the right to demonstrate and freedom of speech. Informant 12 said that she likes Hong Kong because people enjoy human rights here. She explained that:

I like the Hong Kong government. You can have human rights here. I don't think Tung Chee-wah is bad. He lets so many people demonstrate. If you were in the Mainland,

they wouldn't allow you to do so, right? Even if Jiang Zemin did something wrong, no one would dare to oppose him! That's why I like Hong Kong. But if Hong Kong becomes more like the Mainland, I won't like it anymore. I like Hong Kong because I can have my human rights!

6.6 Exercising their agency to ward off the enforced identities

6.61 Showing the will to be self-reliant

Some of them said that before divorcing from their husbands, they had already relied on their own ability to earn a living, or they even had to support their husbands financially.

Most of them had worked for a while after coming to Hong Kong. But after their divorce, there was no one to take care of their children, and it is expensive to put them into daycare or tuition centres. Therefore, they were forced to quit their jobs and apply for the CSSA. Informant 5 is one example of this. She worked in a restaurant and was responsible for washing dishes. However, as she had to work from eleven o'clock in the morning until eleven or twelve o'clock at night, she did not have time to take care of her son. She tried to find other jobs in which the working hours were shorter, but because she told me that she does not have any special skills, she eventually had to opt out and apply for the CSSA.

Even those who have never worked in Hong Kong consistently show their will to find jobs so that they do not have to rely on CSSA. Speaking in a low voice,

Informant 2 said that:

Although my daughter can receive an education here, I really want to find a job and don't want to rely on that thing [meaning CSSA].

When asked whether she thinks the provision of a social security scheme like the CSSA is the right of citizens, she reckoned that:

No! If people can't find any jobs and feed themselves, they may get it (CSSA). But everyone wants to work if jobs are available, right?

Some informants do not need to help earn a living to alleviate the financial burden of their families; and they join activities and courses organized by centres. But

Informant 2 deliberately joined a course because she wants to find a job:

I want to learn something that can help me to find jobs....
I'm not interested in studying for its own sake, only for earning a living.

This shows that she is more pragmatic and what concerns her most is not her own interests but to stand on her own feet to earn money.

Since many of them participated in the NGOs' activities, even without being paid, they told me that they have devoted their time to doing voluntary work. For instance, Informant 10 said that:

I've helped them to collect newspapers for recycling. If they ask us to do such things, we're very willing to be volunteers.

She added that she really wants to get paid work but she cannot make it because she has four children to take care of. She explained the problem she encountered

desperately:

I don't like being criticized as a lazybones! People say that we're lazy and rely on CSSA. In fact, everyone wants to go out to work, right? It's healthy to work. I just treat it as doing exercise. But the most important thing is to take care of our children. If I can fit it in timewise, I like going to work. Just staying at home is very boring. If someone hires me to do a half-day's work, I'll do it. But I can't spend the whole day at work. I've to do housework, bring my children to see the doctor, attend meetings organized by their school, and so on. How can I work for the whole day? My children enjoy talking to me after school, and if I go out to work, I won't have time to communicate with them. This is important! Actually, I do want to work!

Informant 11 experienced a similar problem. Since she had to work for at least twelve hours a day in a Chinese restaurant before, it was impossible for her to take care of her daughter:

I couldn't get use to working and taking care of my daughter at the same time. When I was still working, I asked someone near the restaurant where I worked to take care of her... I remember that one day, that woman said that she couldn't help me, but I still had to work. I had to ask my daughter to play at the shopping mall. I was very unhappy at that time. I didn't have any relatives or friends to help me. And she was only two or three years old. She played for a while and came to the restaurant to find me. But I had to ask her to leave the restaurant. I thought I was very helpless!

What propelled her to quit her job and opt for the CSSA? She told me that her daughter was often bullied by other children and that made her decide to quit her job.

She recalled in pain that:

The one who was responsible for taking care of my daughter also had children. They were very naughty. One of them used a pair of scissors to cut my daughter's hand. She bled a lot! My heart was broken, but I didn't know what to do... One of my clients in the restaurant said that it was not good for my daughter. And she suggested that I apply (for CSSA). So, I went there and tried.

While many of them showed their willingness to stand on their own feet and get a job, Informant 12 provided another reason. She thinks that working outside is better than being a housewife, and that is why she wants to find a job. She put it this way:

I like working more! Though I am not educated, if I were given the choice, I would prefer working outside! Being a housewife is very tough! You can have your own time after work if you are working outside. But if you are a housewife, you've lots of things to do. You have to rely on yourself to finish all the work. I guess all people want to work outside!

From their narrations, it is clear that they tried to shun the bad labels of being lazybones and non-contributive in different ways.

6.62 A stronger sense of being the carer

Nearly all of these informants described in detail their time arrangements for combining their previous jobs with their childrearing. It is quite different from those who have intact families. They told me how difficult it is for them to juggle their work and taking care of their children at home, and how they felt forced to quit their job and opt for the CSSA.

Informant 5, for example, said that it was impossible for her to take care of and supervise her son while she was still working. She explained that:

I started working at twelve... no... from eleven o'clock, and worked until eleven o'clock at night. I was a cleaning maid at that time. I didn't have time to take care of his (her son) homework. I didn't know if he did his homework or not. He went home after school at about three o'clock, and then he was alone at home. I came home very late. I had to help him take a shower and prepare dinner for him. He could go to bed at around one o'clock. Then I had to wash the clothes and do housework. Later on, I saw a lot of red words in his student handbook. The teacher wrote that he didn't hand in homework on time. But I didn't know what to do. I didn't have time. And my mood was so bad! I didn't have time to teach him and I just ignored his performance at school.

She felt that her relationship with the son is more tense than it was on the Mainland, because she had to work very long working hours every day, and after going home, she did not have time to take care of him. As he performed very badly at school, she was quite depressed and always beat him. But now, she has more time at home and she can supervise him. Moreover, as she does not have to worry about whether she has sufficient money or not, her relationship with her son is improving. She also said that she has started trying to learn how to improve the relationship by discussing it with some social workers.

Another informant said that she worked in Hong Kong until her son came here.

Just like others, she was forced to stop working. This is what she said:

I started working at once after coming Hong Kong. When my son came here, I continued working for a while. But later I had to quit my job. I didn't know this place before. When I was still working, I asked him to stay at home alone. But he phoned me more than ten times in the morning... I'm seeking a job now. I've asked Ms. Lee to help me. I want to work in the morning. You know, many jobs require us to work until seven or eight o'clock at night! It's impossible! You've to bring your children home after school, and prepare for dinner. I'm afraid that no one will take care of them.

After her husband passed away, Informant 9 had to shoulder responsibility for the whole family. But she had worked for a while before applying for the CSSA:

The job was introduced by my husband's friend. I wanted to try working and taking care of my son at the same time. Every morning, I woke up at four and went to clean the street with my husband. But my health wasn't so good. I had to spend some time in hospital because there was a problem with my lung. After my husband passed away, I still worked for a while. I worked from four o'clock in the morning until four in the afternoon. I was not feeling very well, and the social worker suggested I stop working. She helped me to go to the welfare department and apply for it (CSSA). I've more time to take care of my son now. When my husband was still here, he scolded and beat him very often. I want to treat him better now.

In sum, public discourses over the 'bad female migrants' labels did help mobilize them to claim the label of 'good female migrants' on different occasions. On one hand, they dovetailed their personal experiences and the role of being single-mothers to re-script and thwart the negative portrayals of them. On the other, they cast themselves in a good light, problematizing the situations they faced after divorce, strengthening their roles within their families, and placing themselves in the position

of responsible caretakers. At the same time, they insisted that applying for CSSA was really their last resort and that they had never thought of in the past.

6.7 Submitting to the dominant discourse about CSSA recipients

However, some of them think that applying for CSSA is not a good thing and they intentionally tell lies about it. Informant 2, for example, told me that she cares about how other people think about their family:

Of course! (I care about what others' think). I don't want to tell lies, but I'll tell others that my husband is doing part-time jobs.

When I further asked her why she is so concerned about what others think, she said that it is because of those criticisms she heard or read in her daily life. She puts it this way:

I remember that there were many criticisms in yesterday's newspaper. They claimed that we come here to get welfare. But frankly speaking, some of us really can't find any jobs and we have to raise our children. They also need to study the whole picture!

She added:

I've heard that CSSA recipients are lazybones... Actually, I also view other CSSA recipients as lazybones. That is why I think others will perceive me as a lazybones as well, and I don't want to let them know.

Throughout the interviews, she showed her admiration for those friends whose families do not have to depend on the CSSA. She said:

My friends (female migrants who also go to the same NGO) can talk loudly about what their husbands are doing now. But when they ask about my husband, I dare not tell them we're (CSSA recipients). There're so many who gossip about that (CSSA recipients).

When I asked her under what circumstances she would think it proper to apply

for the CSSA, she responded:

Unless someone is really very poor, otherwise, it is not good to apply for it.

Obviously, she holds such a conception partly due to the many criticisms of female migrants who depend on CSSA after coming to Hong Kong. She confirmed this during the interviews. On other occasions, she tried to contrast the life in the Mainland with that in Hong Kong:

There's no welfare on the Mainland. Normally, people on the Mainland are not very poor. Unless you are very old and are not able to take care of yourself, we've got some communal help... All of us have land to farm and we can support ourselves by keeping hens and ducks. At least I've got a job. We don't have to worry about being jobless in my hometown. I've got a house of my own, and I've got everything that we need. That is why there is no need to have welfare.

Because of her relatively easy life on the Mainland, she said that she had never thought of what rights citizens should have at that time, and she thinks that even now, when she resides in Hong Kong, she does not want to rely on the government, unless there are really great financial difficulties. This shows that her personal experience on the Mainland contributes to what she thinks, and it is not necessarily true that her thinking is solely directed by the dominant discourses.

Informant 11, on the other hand, does not want other people to know that she is depending on CSSA, because she hears so many criticisms of recipients. This is a direct quotation from her:

I heard it from TV and read it in the newspaper... I think that I'm a burden on others. But I really don't want to be a burden on others. I've a daughter who is very young... Sometimes, I worry about what others say. Yes, I have such feelings. I can't work because no one can help me take care of her. I don't have the intention to stop working. I feel so much conflict in my heart. I don't know what to do.

Informant 12 said that she feels like a second-class citizen because of her identity as a CSSA recipient. She said in a sad voice that:

I feel very uncomfortable and helpless! No one wants to apply for it (CSSA)! I feel inferior after applying for it! When I worked as a volunteer last year, I acted as a domestic helper for the elderly. They asked me: are you a CSSA recipient? I replied: "No. I'm working as a volunteer!" They think that I went there to help them just because I am a CSSA recipient!

Since she had been standing on her own feet in the Mainland, she told me that she is not very happy in Hong Kong now. However, she thinks that she does contribute to this society to a certain extent, as she always does voluntary work, and she encourages her son to take part in community work too.

6.8 Conclusion

Like the informants discussed in Chapter 5, Group 2 informants generally encounter difficulties in integration. Their situation is worsened by the fact that they

have had problems with their husbands and got divorced. Because of this, they not only face integration problems, but also financial difficulties. On one hand, they have to work hard to earn a living. On the other, most of them have children who are still very young. Hence, they have to juggle the domestic and public spheres. In the end, most of them have no alternative but to apply for the CSSA in order to take care of their young children at home.

Although they are CSSA recipients, most of them do not have a sense of inferiority among the female migrant community. Thus, they are still active in making friends with other migrants. However, they sometimes feel conflict in their hearts, and they seldom reveal their status to others.

Another stark contrast with those discussed in the previous chapter is that they do not make use of the specific context of the society to counteract the enforced identities. However, this does not mean that they do not have any agency to confer meaning on themselves at all. To a certain extent, they successfully make use of their gender role and specific personal experiences to justify their applying for the CSSA, and to give positive value to themselves. The way they express their agency is somewhat different from those in Group 1.

Finally, they do not narrate all Hong Kong people negatively, as the informants covered in the previous chapter did. This is largely due to the help offered by some

of the social workers they knew in applying for government assistances.

2.1 Introduction

The study was conducted in a community center in a low-income area of a city in the south of Brazil. The center was chosen because it was a place where social workers and other professionals worked, and it was a place where people from the community could go to seek help. The study was conducted in a room that was used for meetings and activities. The room was simple and had some tables and chairs. The study was conducted over a period of six months. The data was collected through interviews and observations. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted about 30 minutes. The observations were unstructured and lasted about 15 minutes. The data was analyzed using content analysis. The results of the study showed that social workers were an important source of information for people seeking government assistance. People who knew social workers were more likely to apply for assistance and to receive it. People who did not know social workers were less likely to apply for assistance and to receive it. The study also showed that social workers were often the first people that people contacted when they needed help. Social workers provided information about government assistance and helped people to fill out the necessary forms. Social workers also provided emotional support and encouragement to people who were applying for assistance. The study suggests that social workers should be trained to provide information and support to people seeking government assistance. Social workers should also be encouraged to work in community centers and other places where people can go to seek help.

Group 2

2.1.1 Social Work and Government Assistance

The study was conducted in a community center in a low-income area of a city in the south of Brazil. The center was chosen because it was a place where social workers and other professionals worked, and it was a place where people from the community could go to seek help. The study was conducted in a room that was used for meetings and activities. The room was simple and had some tables and chairs. The study was conducted over a period of six months. The data was collected through interviews and observations. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted about 30 minutes. The observations were unstructured and lasted about 15 minutes. The data was analyzed using content analysis. The results of the study showed that social workers were an important source of information for people seeking government assistance. People who knew social workers were more likely to apply for assistance and to receive it. People who did not know social workers were less likely to apply for assistance and to receive it. The study also showed that social workers were often the first people that people contacted when they needed help. Social workers provided information about government assistance and helped people to fill out the necessary forms. Social workers also provided emotional support and encouragement to people who were applying for assistance. The study suggests that social workers should be trained to provide information and support to people seeking government assistance. Social workers should also be encouraged to work in community centers and other places where people can go to seek help.

Chapter Seven

Data Comparison and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The results of the in-depth interviews of the two groups of female migrants were presented in previous chapters. It is obvious that there are both similarities and differences among them. This chapter compares the two sets of data and interrogates the possible reasons for the different ways these people narrate and negotiate their identities. Discussions will be made around “the boundary that separates members from non-members of groups, the perceived position of the group within the society, and the meaning attached to the identity”¹²². I argue that both their sense of ethnicity and socioeconomic background are essential factors affecting their way of categorizing their sense of Us and Others. For convenient sake, those who have the so-called intact families and have not applied for the CSSA will be known as Group 1; while those who have single-parent families and applied for the CSSA will be called Group 2.

7.2 Sense of Community of Group 1 and 2

In reconstructing their account for in-group and out-group, exploring their sense of community is a must. As shown in the preceding chapters, it is found that the

¹²² Cornell, S. and Hartmann, D. 1998. *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*. Thousand Oaks: CA: Pine Forge Press. pp. 81.

sense of community of these two groups of informants has only very little similarity, with quite apparent differences. Several factors contribute to this, namely, the availability of public places in which discussions and interactions take place; the frequency and intensity of involvement in these discussion platforms; and, the format of such discussion.

Most of the informants did not have many friends in Hong Kong, except for those who frequently participated in activities held by community centres. These centres serve as real-life communities for them to discuss and interact with each other. For those who regularly participated in centre activities, i.e. members of Group 1, they went there nearly every day to talk with each other and attend courses, and tended to have a stronger and more superior sense of their self as Mainlander female migrants. The majority of informants in Group 1 indicated that the centres provided them with more opportunities for face-to-face interaction with other female migrants, and they almost went there every day and enjoyed being there. However, the construction of their sense of community is not based on their mere presence at or frequency of going to centres. Rather, it is through narrating some of the social issues that they found the strategy to bestow on themselves a sense of self-worthiness and to distinguish themselves from certain types of people.

Since most of them admitted that they did not have much real connection with

Hong Kong people, the community created a way for them to keep in touch with the wider community, as they could know more about what happened in this society by exchanging what they had read from newspapers or heard from radio, television and/or other female migrants.

In addition, whether their discussions were organized in a systematic or casual way also affected the sense of community constructed. Group 1 participated in both casual and systematic discussion groups; while Group 2 had a propensity to join casual discussions without having the interests to join systematic discussion groups held by centres. One of the main differences is the topic they discussed in different occasions. For those who have just chatted in causal ways, it is found that they mainly talked about how to raise their children, where to buy cheaper things, and some of their problems encountered in coping with their husbands' relatives under the same roof. Very few of them would really talk about social issues. On the other hand, those who have joined discussion groups organized by community centres discussed social issues alongside personal matters. During the period the interviews took place, the issues that they discussed most was the waning of Hong Kong and the prospering of the Mainland China. As shown in earlier chapter, this provided discursive space for them to re-negotiate their cultural citizenship, and served as an acknowledgement of the values of being Mainlanders. Hence, such community

networks helped empower them to become more informed about the socio-economic and political environment they were living in, and to be more active in narrating their identities.

Group 2 informants seldom participated in group discussions organized by centres due to their lack of time to do so. Obviously, unlike those who had 'intact' families, they did not have husbands or relatives to share domestic works with them. However, one may ask why they did not make use of the time when their children were at school to participate in activities and discussion groups organized by centres. From my observation during interviews, some of them had a tendency to avoid joining large group discussions because they did not want to reveal to others their situation of single-parent families and receiving CSSA. These disadvantageous situations seemed to give them psychological pressures in their daily lives.

This does not mean that they prevented contacting with others altogether. Instead, they were more reticent and selective in finding their social circles. Most of them told me that they only felt comfortable talking to those whom they regarded as very good and intimate friends, and could even have deep conversations with them. Some of them did express their fear about making friends, because they were not sure how others would perceive them and were worried about gossips being spread on why they got divorces. Their topics of conversations with their peers tended to concern

real life problems rather than social issues because the former was of their realistic and paramount concerns. Notably, they were less interested in what happen in this society.

Lastly, the sense of community and superiority of Group 1 informants is constructed vis-à-vis their Southern Others. The “North-South” imaginary is largely associated with economic development in Mainland China, the market-oriented activities participated by southerners and the contributions made by them, together with other cultural markers. Through such an identification, they tried to distinguish themselves from people from other parts of Mainland China as well as Hong Kong people¹²³. Adopting the argument of Smart and Smart (1998), these informants succeeded in manipulating their identities by stressing their “commonalities with their Chinese counterparts by constructing an ‘us’ with shared interests against some implied or explicitly identified ‘others’... to serve specific ends”. Of course, such claims can be advanced only because these informants had been working in some industrialized areas in the Mainland before residing in Hong Kong. However, transcending such personal experiences by connecting it with the socioeconomic development in the Mainland requires agency that involves “considerable amounts of

¹²³ Friedman, E. 1994. “Reconstructing China’s National Identity: A Southern Alternative to Mao-era Anti-Imperialist Nationalism.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 53:1:67-91. pp.79.

cultural knowledge, social sensitivity and tactical ‘street smarts’”¹²⁴.

7.21 How Mainland Female Migrants Viewed the “Hong Kong” Identity

Both informants of Group 1 and 2 renounced “Hong Kong people” as part of their identities. There are similarities among their perceptions of Hong Kong people. When asked what they thought about Hong Kong people before coming to Hong Kong, nearly all of them held positive stereotypes: well-educated, polite and civilized, industrious and wealthy, less corrupted, and were in a better position in developing oneself because of the Hong Kong’s advantageous positions. All of them felt that such previous impressions were too idealistic and their present description of Hong Kong people were quite negative.

Besides, informants of both groups were not prepared to call themselves Hong Kong people, and they did not envisage the possibility of shifting their identification to Hong Kong people in the future. It seems that for them, no matter how long they have lived in Hong Kong and how well they have integrated in this society, their identities would still be stick to the Mainland of certain ethnic region. When asked why they viewed it in such a way, most of them thought that my question was weird, showing that to them identity was something rigid and unchangeable.

Beneath this consensus, there are some fine differences in their narrations.

¹²⁴ Smart, A. and Smart, S. 1998. Chapter 4: Transnationalism Social Networks and Negotiated Identities in Interactions Between Hong Kong and China. In *Transnationalism From Below*. Smith, M.P and Guarnizo, L. E. eds. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers. pp. 121, 125.

Informants of Group 2 thought that they were not Hong Kong people, and were quite consistent in perceiving so throughout the interviews. On the contrary, informants of Group 1 did have some internal inconsistencies in their narratives. Some of them perceived that terms like Hong Kong people and Mainland female migrants were either invented or imposed by Hong Kong people on them, and they saw no differences between the two as all these people were under the same umbrella of “Chinese”. In this sense, in donning the identity that they were Mainlanders, they also saw the “imaginary” aspect of identities.

While informants of Group 2 had a relatively static view of their Mainlander identity, informants of Group 1 conceived it with more fluidity. Most narratives of the Group 2 members revealed that Mainlander was only one of the key identity markers, and regional as well as national markers were of equal or more importance for them. They also used different identities to distinguish themselves, with most of them commenting that it was more natural for them to use regional marker for identifying themselves.

7.3 Why Did They Draw the Boundaries in Such a Way?

Factors Affecting Their Identity Constructions

So, why did these informants draw their boundaries of Us and the Others in such

different ways? When exploring their sense of Us and Others, it is obvious that they tried to search for the qualities they wanted themselves to be associated with. The moral standard defining worthy and less worthy female migrants permeated in their narrations. Both groups evoked moral worth to confer meaning for themselves but the substance stressed by them was somewhat different. Group 1 tended to stress their ethnicity, socioeconomic background and financial status; whereas Group 2 tried to emphasize individual moral qualities.

Group 2 did not stress the same qualities since they were CSSA recipients, i.e. they were economically dependent on the government from the mainstream perspective. Some of them even explicitly denied juxtaposing moral difference with such financial status of oneself. On the other hand, although many Group 2 informants recognized the importance of ethnicity in making friends with other female migrants, they did not mean that female migrants from certain areas were inferior to themselves, nor were they less worthy people. Hence, they were less inclined to accord personal and moral worth to individuals or draw social boundary by mustering the factors put forth by Group 1 members.

In contrast, Group 1 explicitly distinguished themselves from the CSSA recipients with most of them associating the recipients of CSSA with bad moral characters. Other social positions, particularly their self-perceived ethnicity seemed

to be important factors determining one's character traits and moral character. As evinced by Group 1, there is a close linkage between one's moral standards and their ethnicity; which in turn, determines if one would apply for welfare assistance from the government.

Most Group 1 informants are from Guangdong while a few of them are not. But most of them perceived themselves as Southerners who were different from Northerners in significant ways. In fact, many scholars point out that there is always a strong sense of "Cantonese Chauvinism" among the so-called *Gwaongdung yahn*. These *Gwaongdung yahn* usually judge *non-Gwaongdung yahn* with negative traits. For instance, they perceive themselves as industrious, friendly, polite and the like, while categorizing *non-Gwaongdung yahn* – referred to as Northerners (Bak fong yahn)-- as "barbarians" who are showy, unfriendly, impolite, etc. It is argued that such categories drawn carry a "very Cantonese Hong Kong referent"¹²⁵.

It is interesting to observe that the narrations presented by Group 1 informants also shared a strong sense "Cantonese Chauvinism". In fact, when generating a sense of 'the same ethnicity' for themselves against some explicit others, they did not just define it by using the official definition for drawing the line between the South and the North, nor simply their place of origins. Instead, they tried to utilize some

¹²⁵ Guldin, G. E. 1997. "Hong Kong Ethnicity of Folk Models and Change". In *Hong Kong: the Anthropology of a Chinese Metropolis*. Evans, G and Tam, M (eds.). pp.27-8.

common characteristics like “common cultural patterns” and personal qualities to categorize Southerners and Northerners. In the process of ethnicization, these informants homogenize people that are otherwise different. A better image and higher socio-economic status is thus being relegated to themselves. As suggested by Guldin, the term “ethnicity” is contestable and subjected to changes both in the intellectual sphere and in real-life situations¹²⁶. By looking to the informants’ narrations, one can notice how they exercise their agency in making the concept “ethnicity” to be a more fluid one in order to facilitate their own course.

Nearly all of the informants in these two groups were caretakers at home without working in the public sphere. Therefore, it was difficult for them to confer meaning to themselves by consuming their career success. That means their personal worth, recognition and satisfaction have to be built on other bases. For Group 1, because of their financial standing and their ability to figure out what values were most cherished in Hong Kong, they built their self-worth on the right dispositions of self-reliance.

Some immigrant studies conducted by the West found that the level of assimilation to host society is greatly influenced by two indicators, namely ‘class awareness’ and ‘education’. These indicators do affect the identification of the “attitudes, values, and special interests” of people to a specific social class in an

¹²⁶ Ibid. pp. 35-6.

influential way that helps outstand class distinction, and affect social identity construction¹²⁷. In this research, this may explain why Group 1 was more inclined to use financial standing for drawing social boundary, and were more aware of 'class' or 'regional' differences among female migrants, even though this might just be their own perceptions. Remarkably, nearly all informants in Group 1, except Informant 4, finished secondary education; while all but one in Group 2 had only received education up to primary level.

There was little room for Group 2 to manipulate such social position. Yet, these informants tried to play around their social position of being CSSA recipients by telling the "sad" stories of themselves. For Group 1, being independent from the government financial assistance was of great value and importance; but it did not mean the same for Group 2. Informants of Group 2 did appreciate independence and personal dignity, but what was most important for them was that they could get rid of the psychological distress resulted from unhappy marriages and/or bad relationships with their husbands, and regained their personal freedom and dignity after divorces.

By portraying a positive image for themselves, Group 1 tried to "secure a privileged position at the expense of" Group 2 "by the process of subordination", which is made through their differences in financial standing and perceived

¹²⁷ Juniu, S. 'The Impact of Immigration: Leisure Experience in the Lives of South American Immigrants'. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 2000, Vol. 32, No. 3:358-381. pp. 377.

ethnicity¹²⁸. Group 2 paid less attention to these and created a sense of self worthiness by stressing the contributions and energy they devoted as the caretakers of their families.

Here, I am not trying to propose that all informants really believed in moral character as the most important thing in signaling one's personal worth. Instead, the so-called moral characters – the duality drawn between 'good' and 'bad' female migrants – are reflective of higher social status and more positive images. It is quite apparent that informants in both groups tried to manipulate their objective social locations in different ways and used the epistemic privilege derived from such locations for their own course. That means Group 1 members tried to manipulate their ethnicity, while Group 2 members played around their roles as the sole caretaker of their families.

As observed in all the interviews, the majority of the informants in Group 1 did express their sense of superiority in being Mainlanders, whereas Group 2 had no such sense. Group 1 informants did construct their identity along the national one since they were proud of the Mainland, such as the economic development and achievement made in recent years.

Nevertheless, apart from a sense of pride, a sense of shame is also a feeling that

¹²⁸ Parkin, F. pp.125.

should not be overlooked. It is pointed out that if one feels embarrassed because of what have been done by his/her fellow nationals, such sense of embarrassment or guilt also affects one's national identity construction¹²⁹. In fact, when asked whether they liked the Mainland government, both groups considered it as not very good as they described it with adjectives like corrupted, undemocratic or even inhumane. A sense of shame was particularly obvious among informants of Group 2 as most of them thought that the government was bad and they did not want to associate themselves with it, not merely because they would be perceived as mistresses or prostitutes after revealing their Mainlander identity.

7.4 Assessing the Agency of the Female Migrants

In categorizing their in-group and out-group, informants of Group 1 tried to tell apart themselves and those who are the perceived Northerners or have applied for the CSSA as shown in the earlier chapter. In a way, they associated those who had the characteristics mentioned with bad female migrants who were uncivilized and had restless reproduction, bad innate quality and wicked intentions, and applied unscrupulous means to achieve whatever they wanted. Though it is not true that all women categorized by them were really as bad as they perceived, these negative

¹²⁹ Ibid. pp.273.

representations on one hand helped reinforce the hegemonic portrayals about female migrants and continue the process of discursive subjectification that reproduces positions of marginalization and subordination. As Nagel put forward, "the location and meaning of particular ethnic boundaries are continuously negotiated, revised, and revitalized, both by ethnic group members themselves as well as by outside observers"¹³⁰. On the other hand, it reflects their fear of such representation about female migrants and that they were burdened by these negative and conventional images.

In this sense, it may be reduced to what Butler argues that for one to have a social existence, he or she has to accept what is not of his or her own making. That means one must be identified and subordinated by the existing power¹³¹. The adverse consequence is that one has to maintain and act within the re-inculcation of the pre-existing power relations and discourses in order to make one's social existence and values possible.

On the other hand, although one should not deny that the agentic skills deployed by the female migrants would re-invoke that subordination and marginalization, it is exactly such subordination and marginalization that make agency possible for them.

¹³⁰ Nagel, J. 1994. "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture". *Social Problems* 41: 152-176.

¹³¹ Butler, J. P. 1997. "Stubborn Attachment, Bodily Subjection: Rereading Hegel on the Unhappy Consciousness." In *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

By drawing boundaries in such a way, they gained back self-esteem and enhanced their social status and images to a certain extent. As argued by scholars such as Williamson, by choosing which image one wants to present to others through different kinds of symbolizing, the capability of visualizing and representing oneself gives him or her some degree of agency¹³². One important essence of identity politics is to provide marginalized women with a sense of solidarity and positive identity that enable them to develop strategies for resisting the oppressed social markings¹³³. Accordingly, although what they conceive may make not much difference to their real lives, they have given themselves the opportunity to a particular image they way they want. Nevertheless, the downside cannot be ignored, which is that it further marginalizes those who have already been marginalized by society.

Some people may also argue that the subjective identities constructed by them are still working within the re-inculcation of the pre-existing dominant discourse. As Scott noted, agency is articulated but at the same time influenced by “multiple experiences and discourses”. However, by linking the self with discursive forces, one can create “multiple meanings” that enable them to “develop their own sense of agency or independent action¹³⁴. Judith Butler states that the construction made

¹³² Woodward, K. 2000. Chapter 1: Questions of Identity. In *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, and Nation*. Woodward, K. ed. New York: Routledge in association with the Open University.

¹³³ Weedon, C. Ibid.

¹³⁴ Preece, J. “Feminist Perspectives on the Learning of Citizenship and Governance”. *Compare*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2002. Carfax Publishing. pp.23.

within the discursive forces is not the enemy of agency, but the requisite for it. "Agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible", because of such construction¹³⁵. In the context of this research, it is obvious that informants of Group 1 possess agency in narrating their subjective identities, since they know how to make use of the discursive forces available to them.

Another point worth noticing is that discussion groups seem to be a medium of empowerment in the case of Group 1. By deploying the contextually specific circumstances available to them, they constructed a collective identity as good female migrants from the Mainland and a sense of superiority in being Mainlanders. In doing so; they are actively rejecting the hegemonic portrayals imposed on them. However, one may argue that their strength is largely exercised in speech, and there is distance between their speech and real conduct. They seldom exercise their agentic skills in transforming the preexisting configurations of power relations in real-life situation, for instance, by fighting for their rights through political participation. However, some of them did make a breakthrough in division of labor at home. As some scholars such as Young points out, it is necessary for us to rethink the conventional dichotomy of the public and private¹³⁶.

¹³⁵ Hekman, S. 1995. Chapter 10: Subjects and Agents: The Question of Feminism. In *Provoking Agents: Gender and Agency in Theory and Practice*. Gardiner, J. K. ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. pp. 203.

¹³⁶ Staeheli, L.A. and Clarke, S. E. 1995. Chapter 1: Gender, Place and Citizenship. In *Gender in Urban Research*. Garber, J.A and Turner, R.S. eds. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

7.41 Residing in Hong Kong Without Integration: A Manifestation of Agency

From the interviews, most informants tended to separate themselves from Hong Kong society since most of them do not have much contact with Hong Kong people. While many policymakers and activists regard as necessary and desirable for new migrants, it is clear that integration is not merely an administrative matter, but a social one¹³⁷.

Integration in the social sense generally includes one's access to social rights and public services, employment, social networks, language and local customs. As stipulated clearly before, the female migrants did not expand their social networks to include Hong Kong people. Many of them did so because most of the Hong Kong people they encountered except the social workers in the NGOs never include them. But I would argue that what is the most crucial thing are, first, whether they think it is necessary for them to do so, and second, how they responded to this kind of marginalization from the mainstream society. When asked if they would like to make friends with Hong Kong people, most of them thought it would be nice to know some Hong Kong friends, but none of them thought it was a must.

Besides, in other social aspects they did not believe that having more contacts with Hong Kong people would help them integrate, except for those social workers

¹³⁷ Kamali, M. "Distorted Integration: Problems of Monolithic Order." *Innovation: the European Journal of Social Sciences*. March 99, Vol. 12, Issue 1.

whom they relied on for information or application of some services. It is noteworthy that, they did not think it was a big problem, because they thought that it was alright for them to remain their daily contacts within their social group. Moreover, what they were most concerned was the financial status of their families, and whether they could have Mainland friends for mutual support.

Hence, in this sense, even if they were really marginalized by Hong Kong people, this does not necessarily cause serious problems among these informants, at least, from their own perspectives. Meanwhile, it is under such circumstance that they tried to figure out the way to manifest their agency in rationalizing the encounters they had.

7.42 Economic Dependency and Agency

Since most of the informants were either homemakers or CSSA recipients, it is worth asking how their economic dependency may have affected their agency. Both informants of Group 1 and 2 cannot act as full citizens if we try problematizing their situation in Hegel's terms, i.e. if they are economically independent and have the power to exercise their citizenship in a full manner. They are not able to sell their labor-power for a living wage¹³⁸.

However, such critique is to denounce the economic value of women's

¹³⁸ Pateman, C. 1989. Chapter 8: The Patriarchal Welfare State. In *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

contribution to the household. It is encouraging to observe that all the informants did not adopt such view and even highly regarded the value of their works done in the domestic sphere. It is true that they did want to find paid works, but it is not because they thought that it was superior to domestic works. Rather, it was more because they want to share the financial burden of their families or to stop relying on CSSA.

Another threadbare critique is that, since all except one of the informants in Group 2 were CSSA recipients, some may think that these women were only shifting their dependency from their husbands to the government.

The critique ignores the fact that most of them were head of a household in the Mainland and had earned a living for their family. Although there was the casualization of working mode, most of them still contributed financially to the family after residing in Hong Kong. Their husbands contributed either nothing or very little financially for their livelihood. For some of them, they even had to support their husbands financially. Apparently, the general impression that female migrants relied on their Hong Kong husbands for money is inaccurate, and has helped perpetuated the masculinist view that only men can be breadwinners for families. This mistake is often made by some researchers in migrant studies¹³⁹.

Certainly, after quitting their jobs and receiving CSSA, the living standards of

¹³⁹ Zlotnik, H. 2000. Chapter 2: Migration and the Family: The Female Perspective. In *Gender and Migration*. Willis, K and Yeoh, B eds. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

Group 2 informants have improved. More importantly, they could have more time to take care of their children and housework. These informants, however, did not plan to rely on the CSSA for the rest of their lives. All of them said that they would find a full time job again once their children were able to take care of themselves. Besides, most of them were still looking for part-time job that could accommodate their parental responsibilities.

Nevertheless, some of them were still uncomfortable with the idea of receiving CSSA, and they were more inclined to agree with the negative social markings on CSSA recipients. In this sense, their cognitive marking and zoning of people was really affected and shaped by the prevalent discourses and ideologies¹⁴⁰. Hence, one may conclude that they were still subsumed to the dominant discourse. But as presented earlier, they tried hard to associate themselves with good caretakers and reliable mothers, and distanced themselves from those who relied on CSSA simply because of laziness.

7.5 Conclusion

This study shows that, in various ways, my informants have exercised their agency in the construction of their cultural citizenship. The way they evaluated

¹⁴⁰ Toren, N. "Women and Immigrants: Strangers in a Strange Land." *Gender Issues*/Winter 1999: 76-96. pp. 79.

themselves and others, the boundaries they drew to distinguish the inferior and the superior as well as the desirable and undesirable traits helped dramatize the hegemonic classification system in the Hong Kong community.

However, it is found that at the centre of their maps of perception, their experiences in the Mainland especially in their formative stage, and also those after coming Hong Kong were crucial in contributing to their way of patrolling the borders of their in-group and out-group.

More than that, through borrowing the general cultural repertoires available to them in this society, they successfully generated a sense of dignity and self-worthiness for themselves. This kind of agency expressed requires a respectable amount of knowledge, sensitivity to the social, cultural, economic and political characteristics of the community. Viewing from this dimension, it is crystal clear that through the manifestation of themselves in particular ways, they were empowering themselves.

Chapter Eight

Self-reflections, Limitations of this Study and Suggestions for Further Research

8.1 My Interview Experiences and Self-reflections

As a qualitative researcher, many people hold that the answers given by informants are greatly influenced by the researchers' own values and perception of what constitute the "right answer"¹⁴¹. The image of professional researcher may also affect the ways informants present themselves. It is impossible to conduct a research without any distortion, but I have adopted several strategies to minimize the distorting effects.

8.11 The way I presented myself

Born and grew up in Hong Kong, I regard myself as a Hong Kong people. If I have to describe myself, I would say that I am Hongkongese, a M.Phil. student and a feminist who come from a liberal and well-to-do family. On the other hand, I tried to present myself to my informants with a blurred identity when I first had contact with them. I explained the aim of my project in the beginning of the interviews, and they were very concerned about it. Instead of telling them I would like to study their agency in constructing their cultural citizenship and how they respond to the dominant discourse on female migrants, I merely told them I wanted to know more about their

¹⁴¹ Mishler, E.G. 1986. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

livelihoods in Hong Kong, and told them they could talk to me in casual ways.

When I met them for interviews or did voluntary works in the community centres, I was aware of the way I dressed. Instead of putting on my "usual" outfits, I intentionally wore old t-shirts, trousers and shoes; used an old knapsack; and took off all the accessories on my ears and fingers. Some of them told me, several times after we met each other that they were expecting me to look like a teacher who worked in the university, and they were a bit surprised after seeing me because I looked quite different from what they had expected.

To make them feel more comfortable during the interviews, I revealed part of my background to them. I told them I was a university student working on an assignment for a course, and wanted to know more about the situations of female migrants in Hong Kong since my own family is also a migrant family and I used to hear a lot of stories from my grandmother.

Before conducting the real interviews, I did visit some of the community centres for observations and tried to talk to those female migrants. I found that most of them, particularly for those who are CSSA recipients, were very skeptical about my identity. Many of them suspected that I was working for the Social Welfare Department to spy on and check against them. Gaining rapport from these women was not easy. Even with the help of the social workers who are working in those centres and explaining to

them that I am not a government officer, it still took me longer time to gain rapport from them than those who were not CSSA recipients.

8.12 The way I knew my informants

I knew three of my informants through doing voluntary work in a centre. I was an instructor on Cantonese pinyin. As for the others, I knew them either through participating in the activities held in some centres, or paying home visits with the help of social workers or preachers. I became familiar with six of them by going to two different centres. I was responsible for staying at the centres in the afternoons tutoring about their children's homework or helping them to revise dictations and examinations. Since all of these women did not have jobs at that time, they were all present every time when I went there. When their children were doing homework or revision, I started chitchating with them.

For the rest of the informants, I paid visits to their homes. When I first went to their homes, I was accompanied by social workers or preachers. Hence, they were present during the initial meetings because they wanted to safeguard both their clients and me. With their presence, some people may think that that will affect the way these informants presented themselves. More than that, since the social workers or preachers had already introduced me to the informants before we met each other, they might have some presumptions towards me.

To deal with these problems, first, I tried not to conduct real interviews with them in initial home visits, but just chatted with them in very causal ways, as if I was just making friends with them. Second, after the several warm-up meetings, I discussed with those social workers and preachers, and asked them not to be there when I started doing interviews with them. Third, I did not reveal my real identity and intention of conducting this research to the social workers and preachers at the very beginning to minimize the possibilities that they would prepare those informants to answer certain questions in certain ways before we met.

As for those informants who were my 'students' from the very beginning, some people will point out that, this might develop an imbalanced power relations among us, which in turn, may affect the interviews, because they regarded me as their teacher, and there might also be some conflicts of interests as there were examinations for that course. For others, since I was the tutor of their children, this might also affect the interviews conducted.

I think this point should not be denied. However, to minimize these problems; first, I tried to start inviting them for interviews only after the end of the course and examinations; and at the end of the tutorial programs. Second, I stressed that the interviews conducted were voluntary in nature. Third, I told them I would not be their tutor for the coming season, so that they would not 'offer me help' because of

certain interests at stake.

8.13 My interview experiences

This was the first time I conducted in-depth interviews on my own. I had my first interviewing experiences during my undergraduate studies, and they were guided by one of my senior fellow apprentices. Nevertheless, even when I started interviewing my informants after knowing them for about a month or even longer, I was still a bit nervous. Preparing for the interviews was not merely about preparing the interview guidelines and questions. I had to envision how to respond their questions because such interviews were not conducted in a one-way manner in which I asked them questions and they answered me. Instead, it was scheduled as some informal conversations among us. Therefore, I needed to very careful not to disclose my research intentions because it might influence what they would tell me.

There are also some problems about the places where I conducted the interviews. Two of the centres provided meeting rooms for me to conduct interviews. It was more comfortable to sit there and talked to my informants. Most importantly, our conversations could be tape-recorded with a better quality. On the other hand, the meeting room was not a familiar place for them, and I noticed that they behaved a bit differently than usual. Thus, I needed to make a of effort to warm them up before starting the interviews. The presence of the tape recorder, of course, constituted

another influence to them, but it was difficult for me to give up recording the whole conversation as I met them for two to three hours every time. Thus, I had to explain to them why I used the tape recorder for our conversations. Some of them requested me to keep them anonymous in writing up my assignment and I had to assure confidentiality about their real identities from time to time.

As for those interviews conducted in centres, but not in the meeting room, those informants seemed more comfortable in talking to me. They usually initiated the specific locations in which they would like the interviews to be conducted. Often, they suggested a place that was familiar to them. The presence of other people, especially other female migrants also affected the interviews. There were some interruptions from other female migrants during interviews, but luckily, it was not so frequent.

Sometimes, interruptions from other female migrants may be a good thing for tapping the thinking of my informants. For example, when I conducted the first interview with Informant 2, she talked about her perception on Hongkongeses. She told me that Hong Kong people were good. Their opinions may be skeptical because the interviewer – who is also the tutor of their children – is a Hong Kong person, and my informants might feel embarrassed to say anything negative about Hong Kong people. The interruption of her friends helped clarify her thought. Here is part of

the dialogue:

Informant 2: I think Hong Kong people are good.

Her friend: Do you really think in this way? It seems not like you! I think many Hong Kong people are bad!

Informant 2: Not all of them behave like that.

Her friend: Hong Kong people despise us from the very beginning. You also told me you had such experiences! Have you already forgotten about it?

Informant 2: Of course I remember. But I disagree with what you've just said. We've got some good people in this centre. Ms. Yuen is good, right? Some of them are good, though some are bad. Whoever helps us is good. Those social workers are good! Ah Man (that is, me) is also very nice. She is only a volunteer. Even she receives no money, she treats our children very nicely, right?

This helps her articulate clearly which type of Hongkongeses she was referring to, and why she thought these Hongkongeses are good. Of course, without the interruptions from others, the task of questioning her would be mine. But to be honest, I could not challenge their views so often, as this might have adverse effect on our relationships and they might not want to have interviews with me next time. Hence, instead of always questioning or challenging them, the techniques that I employed in figuring out their perceptions is to repeat what they said in previous interviews and to see if they would agree or disagree with it, or add supplementary information to it. Of

course, many of them are very careful in presenting their stories and views without any or much inconsistencies. But in case there are inconsistencies, I would try to point it out, but sometimes, it may not be as direct as what did other female migrants or their friends did.

Experiences in conducting interviews in my informants' homes are quite different. I paid home visits for interviewing most of the Group 2 informants. All of them did not have husband and were receiving CSSA. When I first entered their homes, most of them earnestly took the initiative to show me how small and dirty their homes were, and the hardships in their everyday lives in a very detailed manner. At the same time, they told me they were contend with what they had. It is difficult to tell whether it is because of their dependence on the CSSA or my presence at their residence that inclined them to present themselves more humbly when I interviewed them. It is noticeable that they were less eloquent and articulate than those informants that were interviewed in the community centres, or those who had an intact family and did not have to apply for the CSSA.

It is hoped that these contexts are useful for understanding my informants and the way they presented themselves throughout the interviews.

8.2 Limitations

8.2.1 Limitations in conducting research on cultural citizenship

As citizenship formation involves a lot of factors, tracing how one constructs one's cultural citizenship is not a simple task. Although I entered different sites and became familiar with my informants before conducting interviews with them – and I normally did two to three interviews with every informant each of which lasted for about two to three hours – it does not necessarily mean that I could get all the information I need for my research.

I tried to know more about my informants by asking them questions about their background and lives in the Mainland, how they knew their husbands and why they decided to marry them; the process of applying their right of abode in Hong Kong; the initial situations after residing in Hong Kong; their everyday lives; their social networks; the use of language and dialect in Hong Kong; their perception about Hong Kong's culture, society, people, government, social policy and social security system; their relationship with local people; their living environment; their career aspiration; their decision related to reproduction; their knowledge about the rights and responsibilities of Hong Kong citizens; their aspiration about their future; changes in their thoughts about Hong Kong before and after residing in here; their comparison of Hong Kong and the Mainland, and so on. But as stated in the very outset, the aim of this research is not to find the causal relationship between factors, which would be difficult to prove. What I could do is to map what one has subjectively articulated

with some of her backgrounds, so as to give some clues for understanding why she constructed her identities in certain ways. Yet, I have to admit that this inevitably involves my own subjectivities.

8.22 My subjectivities

As a researcher, I had some presumptions and expectations before approaching my informants. This affected the way I planned my semi-structured in-depth interviews with them. For instance, political participation is one important aspect contributing to the construction of cultural citizenship. I did include this part in formulating the research guidelines. Some of my informants were willing to talk about political issues with me, or even initiated talking about this. However, for many others, they were skeptical about why I asked them questions related to politics. When I encountered such situation for the first time, I did try to persuade her to talk about it. I was frustrated by her unwillingness or even refusal to talk about this aspect, as I might not be able to have a more thorough account of their cultural citizenships.

Participation in interviews is voluntary in nature, and even if I force my informants to talk about it, if they are very reluctant to do so, what they tell me may not be what they really think. Respectability is one of the most important things in the research process, for my informants and I should have an equal power relations,

and I do not have any right to force them to answer questions they do not want to answer.

When asked about their opinion about the social security system and the welfare policy in Hong Kong, and the latest development suggested by the government, not all of them said that they knew about these issues. As a feminist researcher, I believe it is not a taboo to give knowledge back to my informants, as this may empower them to a certain extent. However, I understand that I have to be very careful in presenting the background information to them, in order not to give a biased account of the issue or influence their perceptions in an intended or unintended way. In view of this, I had written a careful guideline for briefing my informants about those issues they do not know without conveying my personal stances.

Interestingly, many of them did ask my opinions about those issues during the interviews. As stated at the very beginning of interviews, I asked them to relax and just treat the interviews as a kind of chitchat. In that case, asking me questions or answering their questions seem to be the normal parts of a friendly conversation. I found it awkward to refuse responding to their questions. Whereas some of them, particularly those who are CSSA recipients, would belittle themselves by saying that "well, I know very little", "actually you know better than me. Why do you have to ask about my opinion?" or "I know that XXX (some other female migrants) know

more about this than I do”.

As a matter of fact, there are contentious debates over whether a ‘good’ feminist researcher means “simply to let women’s accounts speak for themselves”. I agree with some researchers that if we want to contribute to feminist politics, it is insufficient just to let the informants speak. Relating our understanding about “gender and power relations implicated in patriarchal way of thinking and behaving” to our informants is also crucial¹⁴².

To strike a balance between this feminist goal and the search for “truth”, I usually encouraged them to talk about what they thought first, and told them I would think over what they had asked me and answered them or even discussed with them later on – usually at the end of all the interviews. For those informants who always said that “you or XXX know better than me”, I usually tried to encourage them to be more aware of what was happening in this society and to articulate their way of thinking by discussing more with others.

It is undeniable that some of them were incurious about what was happening in this society because they have not taken root yet or did not have the will to take root in Hong Kong; and what I suggested them to do might not be what they really wanted.

I tried to explain to them that paying attention to this society may be conducive to

¹⁴² Forrest, L. and Giles, J. 1999. “Feminist Ethics and Issues in the Production and Use of Life History Research”. In *Women’s Lives into Print: The Theory, Practice and Writing of Feminist Auto/Biography*. Polkey, P. ed. Macmillan Press Ltd. pp. 53.

improving their livelihood in Hong Kong. Moreover, since their children had lots of contacts with local people and would encounter issues about Hong Kong both at school and through the media, their ignorance about societal issues might affect their communications with their children. As a matter of fact, one of my informants did express problems in communicating with her children.

8.23 Subjectivities of informants

When asking them questions about the social security system and welfare policy in Hong Kong, some interesting observations were made. For those informants who were CSSA recipients, they seldom said that they knew about these aspects well. For this reason, it was difficult to seek their comments about these policies. They tended to emphasize how tough their lives were after they were divorced or widowed, and how they juggled between their works and taking care of their young children at home. They also took the initiative to tell me that they did not know anything about the social welfare or CSSA scheme before. They only knew about it after being introduced by social workers, or some Hongkongese they knew in their former work place. Besides, they would also stress that they did not take the initiatives to apply for the CSSA, but were persuaded by those people mentioned.

When I told them the new proposal suggested by the government in these policy areas, they thought the government's move was correct, and said the Hong Kong

government was indeed very good. They were unwilling to comment further even if I tried to question persistently. To some degree, their status as CSSA recipients did psychologically restrain them from commenting on the government and her policies.

When I asked those informants who have not applied for CSSA whether they knew about the social security and welfare systems in Hong Kong, and their views on the latest development, the majority of them did not answer my questions directly. Similar to those CSSA recipients, they would tell me they did not know about these well in the first instance. But after talking with them for a longer while, they started giving lots of comments about them. They also criticized those female migrants who were CSSA recipients by telling me the 'real' stories they knew. For some of the stories, they told me that they really knew those women. But for many, they said that they only heard about them from other friends, but usually reaffirmed their truthfulness by saying something like: "that's also what the TV and newspapers said, right?". It seems that, tempered by their understanding of the values cherished in this society, they tried to present their comments and perceptions towards certain issues in accordance with the prevailing expectations of what a good citizen should be like.

Sometimes, instead of merely saying things they thought I would approve, some informants would also present another version that they felt comfortable with. Take those informants who are not CSSA recipients as an illustration, although they

criticized some female migrants who were CSSA recipients, in other instances, they also showed their empathy towards some of them, and thought that the government's proposal was a kind of discrimination towards them. As such, another version of the self was sometimes presented to me.

8.3 The Implication and Contribution of this Study

Since this is a pioneering and preliminary research on Mainland female migrants in Hong Kong, its significance lies in setting up an ethnographic database for further study. It also provides new perspectives for understanding female migrants other than the one-sided views portrayed by the government or the media. Echoing the theories discussed in Chapter 2, the identities of these informants are fluid, and subject to change in different contexts. The data generated in my fieldworks suggest that through narrating themselves, they did exercise their agency, which made their identities more fluid.

Largely because of the specific historical moment and relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland, some of my informants did successfully find a way to empower themselves during the time I interviewed them. This is not the case for researches conducted in an earlier time frame, particularly those conducted during or right after the right of abode controversy. The research done by the Christian Family

Service Centre concluded that the number of respondents who adopted pessimistic methods, for example, escaping, pining the blame on oneself for being Mainlanders, and the like, in dealing with problems were more than those who used optimistic method¹⁴³.

In addition, some of my informants are traitorous to their original identity as peasant women. When condemning the peasant women who came from the Northern or peripheral areas of the Mainland, they either blurred their original identity or exaggerated the differences between themselves and the 'Other' Mainland women. But the truth is that most informants in Group 1 had been peasant women before going to other provinces for better jobs. Without asking them questions insistently, nearly all of them would not tell me their lives as peasants.

Many of them used traits most appreciated in the Hong Kong society to tell apart themselves and others. But this does not mean that the making of the Self-Other distinction was disassociated from class-related characters. In articulating how immoral, barbarous, unhygienic and bad some women are, the subtext is that these women are of a lower-class status and possess a wide range of bad traits shared among peasant women from poorer areas.

Province of origin seems to be a determining factor for these women to construct

¹⁴³ 同上。十九頁。

a sense of 'us' against some implied or explicitly identified 'others'. The North-South imageries are so prominent among some of them. It may be due to the fact that most of them were originally from southern provinces. Most of my informants have resided in Hong Kong for less than two years, which means most of them came here around 2000. Data obtained from the Survey on New Arrivals from the Mainland done by the Home Affairs Department in First Quarter of 2000 indicate that most of their respondents (80.6%) resided in the Guangdong province before coming to Hong Kong¹⁴⁴.

From the data presented by the Home Affairs Department and Immigration Department, there is a significant decrease in migrants who come from Guangdong, from 82.4% in 1999 to 42.2% in the fourth quarter of 2003. Those who came from the Hunan Province soared from 2.3% to 13.1% over the same period of time¹⁴⁵. The shift in the place of origin of migrants from predominantly Guangdong to other provinces may be an interesting point for future observations. It may be anticipated that the construction of the in-group and out-group among female migrants would be changed, and the North-South imagery may fade away gradually because fewer of them will come from the more industrialized and prosperous provinces in

¹⁴⁴ Home Affairs Department, *Survey on New Arrivals from the Mainland*, First Quarter of 2000. pp. 2. downloaded from http://www.had.gov.hk/tc/public_services/services_for_new_arrivals_from_the_mainland/surveys.htm.

¹⁴⁵ Home Affairs Department and Immigration Department, *Statistics on New Arrivals from the Mainland*, Fourth Quarter of 2003. pp. 3. Downloaded from, Ibid.

Guangdong.

One important element constituting cultural citizenship is the national identity of the informants. It is a bit weird to apply the term 'national' identity in the Hong Kong context. Even after the resumption of Hong Kong sovereignty to China, the 'Hongkongese' identity is still dominant among many Hong Kong people. On the other hand, many of my informants pointed that Hong Kong is part of China, and since all of 'us' belong to the same ethnicity (of course, they ignored that some Hong Kong residents are of different ethnicities), they think that both the so-called Hongkongese and new migrants should be known as Chinese. But they added that, it is normal for them to use their place of origin to identify themselves in front of other Chinese. Hence, it is difficult to elicit a sense of Hongkongese identity or belonging for them. It should be admitted that their identity and cultural orientation do contribute to how they perceive their own identities.

8.4 Unanswered Questions and Interesting Points for Further Studies

Mainly due to limited resources and time, some questions remained unanswered in this research, which are worthy of further studies. First and foremost, most of my informants have resided in Hong Kong for just a few years, too short for new arrivals to adapt to the new environment. The informants are really 'new' to a certain extent,

and this may affect their sense of belonging to the host community. It will be better if a study can be made to compare those female migrants who are new arrivals, and those who have been living in Hong Kong for a longer period of time.

The second area worth studying is to compare female migrants whose family income are lower or around median family income of Hong Kong, with those more affluent ones, such as those belonging to households of middle class background or above. With the growing economic integration between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the number of professionals and businesspeople of Mainland origin (many of whom may even be quite westernized owing to their experience of living and studying abroad) are bound to grow in number. This will facilitate our understanding of how different niches such as class and education play a role in affecting the construction of cultural citizenship among them. Although the income difference between Group 1 and 2 already illustrates this point, such aspects were not systematically investigated in this research.

Thirdly, no systematic effort has been made to explore the political factors that influence the cultural citizenship of my informants. As mentioned, since most of them were skeptical about the purposes underlying my questions about political issues, few of them were willing to talk about it openly. However, it is still possible to have a general grasp of how the Hong Kong government builds a sense of appreciation if

not political allegiance among these migrants, as it has presented itself as benevolent to new migrants during the debate for welfare and CSSA cutback. Director of Social Welfare Ms Carrie Lam contended that “the SAR government is actually making a rod for one’s own back since, all over the world there is no government which is as generous as ours, which devotes so much resources on new migrants in such a bountiful way”¹⁴⁶. Another official, the Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health), Mr. Thomas Yiu, put forth that governments of other countries would not subsidize non-permanent residents in medical care, while the SAR government was very benevolent as it promised that in case of sudden illness, it would provide treatment to the patient disregarding their residency status¹⁴⁷. Although many of my informants had unhappy experiences with government officials in applying for CSSA or other social programs (such as public housing), as a whole they still perceived the Hong Kong government as good and appreciated the help given to them. On the one hand, it is because they really got financial support from the government, which is of paramount importance to them. On the other hand, criticisms and discussions about how unqualified they were to enjoy Hong Kong’s welfare do influence their way of thinking to a certain extent. Since many of them

¹⁴⁶香港經濟日報。二零零三年三月十日。「3 個失業開工不足 1 領綜援 周永新：涉 1 3 萬人比長者問題嚴峻」。社會要聞 A17 版。

¹⁴⁷香港商報。二零零三年三月一日。「居港滿七年方享福利建議不改 林太冀新移民自力更生」。香港新聞 A07 版。

agreed that they did not contribute much, they perceived the assistance provided by the government not as their citizens' rights, but charities bestowed upon them. As such, they appreciated the government much even if they were stigmatized.

Lastly, understanding the process of subject-making requires attention to the migrants' experiences and perceptions prior to and after residing in the host community. Although efforts have been made to study their life experience when they were in the Mainland, aspects such as the socialization they received during childhood and the like have not been intensely explored. Thus, this study may only be an (over)simplified analysis of the making of cultural citizenship for those female migrants.

8.5 Conclusion

It is encouraging to see that some perceived marginalized group like the female migrants in this research tried constantly to subvert the enforced identities given by the mainstream society and create a sense of self-worthiness for themselves. This gives positive effect on their lives in this new environment. However, one should not deny the fact that, some of the female migrants narrated and responded in that way because of the unacceptance and marginalization they experienced in Hong Kong. I strongly feel the need for the government and media to stop portraying and distorting this group of people only for the sake of its financial problem. Meanwhile, people

should be critical to what they read and listen from them. Lastly, it is interesting for “Hong Kong people” to rethink the labels used and boundary drawn by them over the “Mainlanders” and “Hong Kong people”.

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Appendix 1

☺ 訪問新來港婦女之問題大綱 ☺

你好！我係中文大學既學生，我叫吳子敏，你可以叫我做阿敏既。而家我做緊一份功課，係想了解多 d 新來港婦女既生活處境，經驗，適應既情況。咁好多謝你願意抽時間同我傾計！

響呢度我想強調，如果你希望自己既真實姓名同身份，以及你響訪問裡面提及既人既真實姓名同身份保密既話，係絕對可以既，所以請你放心。

另外呢，我驚自己抄唔切你所講既野呀，唔知道我可唔可以錄音呢？做完份功課之後，我會立即洗番盒錄音帶架喇，所以你可以絕對放心架！如果響訪問其間你有 d 問題係唔想答既話，你係冇權提出既。

咁響度好多謝你願意同我分享你既經歷先。

訪問程序：

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---|------|
| 1. 開場 | <input type="checkbox"/> | } | pp.2 |
| 2. 未來港前 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 3. 決定申請黎香港 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 4. 剛抵港 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 5. 每日既日常活動 | <input type="checkbox"/> | } | pp.3 |
| 6. 出街買野 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 7. 朋友(社文圈子) | <input type="checkbox"/> | } | pp.4 |
| 8. 興趣／嗜好 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 9. 文化及語言 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 10. 對香港既認識 | <input type="checkbox"/> | } | pp.5 |
| 11. 對香港人既觀感 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 12. 與屋企人相處（家務安排等） | <input type="checkbox"/> | } | |
| 13. 與丈夫之關係／與親戚之關係 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 14. 住屋情況 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 15. 就業 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 16. 教育／進修 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 17. 照顧子女，托兒服務，其他支援 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

18. 生育問題
19. 經濟／福利／支援
20. 公民責任／權利
21. 價值／期望 pp.6
22. 對自己睇法

開場：

1. 黎左香港有幾耐
2. 黎香港既原因
3. 適唔適應？
 - ♥ 邊方面較易／例子
 - ♥ 邊方面困難／例子
 - ♥ 點樣處理

未來港前：

4. 居住
5. 工作
6. 有冇接觸過香港既事物／途徑／感覺
7. 對香港印象／途徑／香港有乜野吸引既地方

決定申請來港：

8. 點衡量可能會遇到既困難
9. 最終決定黎香港係邊個／考慮因素／感受
10. 手續邊個安排
11. 有冇黎過香港了解呢度既生活情況／留左幾耐／做過 d 乜野／感覺如何

剛抵港：

12. 形容一下：
 - ♥ 入境處情況／職員態度／感覺
13. 有冇家人接你
14. 初次到屋企既感覺／家人態度
15. 認唔認識鄰居／住左幾耐識／做唔做到朋友／原因
16. 對比來港前後對香港印象／有幾相似／有幾唔同／例子

→ 每日既日常活動（譬如由起身到夜晚訓之前會做 d 乜野 Y）

日常生活（出街）：

17. 邊個負責買餸煮飯既金錢安排／幾耐出去買一次／慣唔慣

18. 有冇試過遇到問題（如：態度差）／例子／點處理／感受
19. 覺得點解會遇到咁既問題
20. 點克服

社交：

朋友圈子：

21. 有冇識下其他朋友／係乜野人／認識途徑／識左幾耐
22. 夾唔夾／響邊方面夾／唔夾／例子
23. 佢地既處境同你有幾相似／幾唔同／有冇影響你地交往
24. 呢 d 朋友對你重要嗎／原因
 - ♥ I) 重要性 II) 影響力
25. 響佢地身上，覺得學到野？／原因／例子
26. 如果佢只係識一 d 新來港既朋友，就問：
 - ♥ 想唔想認識響香港土生土長既朋友／原因
 - ♥ 會覺得識佢地易唔易／實際上有冇試過去認識／原因

閒話家常：

27. 多唔多同朋友傾計／原因／話題／聯誼活動／次數
28. 對比未黎香港前既社交活動
29. 邊 d 人緊密 vs. 疏遠

興趣／嗜好：

30. 有冇興趣／幾耐做一次／覺得自己有乜野得著
31. 對比未黎香港之前有冇呢樣嗜好
32. 有冇其他活動有興趣想試下／有冇試過／原因

文化及語言：

33. 想象 vs. 現實：同與不同
34. 學習易唔易？點解？例子
35. 有冇必要學？原因
36. 學左之後對適應呢度既生活重唔重要？原因／例子
37. 對比大陸既文化：相同與不同
38. 對比大陸語言：相同與不同

對香港認識：

39. 覺得自己對香港既

i) 生活環境	有幾了解？
ii) 新來港婦女政策	邊方面會了解多 d ？
iii) 新移民政策／福利	例子

iv) 社會性問題

40. 邊方面了解唔夠？例子
41. 想唔想了解多 d？點解？
42. 需唔需要了解多 d？點解？
43. 覺得_____方面有幾影響到你既生活？點解？
44. 發生響邊一個階層既事情，會最影響到你？點解？（對比起大陸呢？）
45. 享唔享受響香港生活？點解？
46. 你覺得自己既根響邊？點解？

香港人觀感：

47. 乜野係香港人？形容
48. 未黎港對香港人有乜野印象／途徑
49. 邊 d 係香港人／原因
50. 想像 vs. 接觸到既香港人，相同與不同／例子
51. 會唔會用“香港人”形容自己？點解？
52. 鍾唔鍾意“香港人”呢個身份？點解？
53. 日常生活中，有幾經常覺得自己係“香港人”／“新移民”？原因？同一 d 經歷有冇關？例子
54. 同其他人接觸時，覺得對方點睇你？
 - i) 政府福利官
 - ii) 中心社工
 - iii) 中心義工
 - iv) 小販／售貨員 ~ 點解會點覺得？經歷有冇關？例子
 - v) 香港認識既香港人 ~ 覺得佢地當你香港人／大陸人看待？點解？例子
 - vi) 香港認識既內地人 子
 - vii) 鄰居
 - viii) 親戚
 - ix) 丈夫

與家人之關係：

55. 同 d 乜野人一齊住
56. 同屋企人既關係
57. 你最關心你子女乜野問題
58. 幫子女安排日常生活上有冇遇到 d 乜野困難／點處理／感受
59. 同丈夫相處
60. 家務分工安排／考慮因素／有冇試過反抗／原因／定務之壓力／想唔想重新安排分工
61. 同親戚既關係／多唔多見／傾談話題／相處情況／對佢地既睇法／覺得佢地

對你既睇法

62. 屋企裡遇到一 d 困難，有冇人傾談／幫忙／處理方法／原因

關係:

63. 丈夫：

- ♥ 形容同佢既關係／點解
- ♥ 點認識／識左幾耐結婚／響邊度結婚
- ♥ 係咪同子女一齊黎
- ♥ 多唔多同丈夫傾計／點解
- ♥ 覺得同佢溝通足唔足夠／點解
- ♥ 覺得同佢相處時間夠唔夠／點解
- ♥ 黎左之後，同佢既關係有冇轉變
- ♥ 同佢意見上有唔同時，會點處理／原因

64. 與丈夫親戚

65. 黎左呢度之後令你最開心既人／事／例子／原因

黎左呢度之後令你最唔開心既人／事／例子／原因

住屋問題:

66. 住邊／大小／類型

67. 滿唔滿意／點樣滿意／唔滿意／例子

68. 未黎之前有冇考慮呢度既生活／居住情況／原因

69. 未黎之前清唔清楚呢度既生活／居住情況

就業:

35. 而家有冇做／邊區／全職還是兼職／行業／工作性質／平均一日工作時間／一星期番工日數

70. 搵工易唔易／途徑／搵左幾耐／有冇遇過乜野困難／最深刻既例子

71. 遇困難有冇搵人幫／原因

72. 覺得點解會遇到咁既困難／點解有咁既想法

教育:

73. 學歷

74. 有冇進修／原因

支援服務：(如幼兒托管)

75. 平時邊個負責照顧子女／點解有咁既安排／覺得有冇問題

76. 如果社區中心有托管服務，會唔會將你子女擺落去／原因

77. 響你同丈夫都一齊響屋企時，邊個負責照顧子女／原因／安排原則／你既睇

法

78. 照顧子女既感受

經濟／福利／支援服務：

79. 屋企裡面財政安排係點樣決定出黎／邊 d 由你決定／邊 d 唔係
80. 如果經濟上遇到困難，會點樣處理／會唔會同丈夫傾／原因
81. 會否從其他途徑尋求協助／原因
82. 清唔清楚香港既福利政策
83. 知唔知有綜援
84. 如果不幸失業，會否考慮申請／原因
85. 而家香港既經濟唔好，有冇影響到你？／邊方面／例子
86. 對於政府新政策既睇法（主要問改變申請綜援及享受醫療服務既問題）

公民責任，權益：

87. 香港政府對市民有冇責任？點解？
88. 香港公民對社會應該有乜野責任？點解？
89. 香港公民應該享有乜野權利？點解？
90. 覺得自己係咪香港公民？點解？例子
91. 覺得自己而家響香港有乜野責任？例子／點解？
92. 覺得自己而家響香港有乜野權利？例子／點解？
93. 實質上覺得自己係咪真係有呢 d 權利？例如／點解？
94. 對比未黎香港之前，想法有冇唔同？例子／點解？

價值／期望：

95. 對你黎講乜野係生命中最重要／原因／對比未黎香港之前有冇唔同
96. 對你黎講響生活上乜野係最重要／原因／對比未黎香港之前有冇唔同
97. 如果有機會俾你自由咁去選擇，你希望自己係一個點解既人呢？（想邊方面既發展？）
98. 你最大既願望係乜野呀？（有關：家庭／事業等方面，邊一方面呢？）
 - ♥ 對比未黎呢度前有冇唔同／原因
 - ♥ 覺得自己可唔可以達成呢個願望／原因
99. 覺得乜野係理想既家／例子
100. 覺得乜野係理想既家庭生活／例子
101. 覺得乜野係理想既婚姻生活／例子
102. 對丈夫既期望／原因／有冇同佢講過／原因
103. 對子女期望／原因／有冇同佢地講／原因
104. 你覺得你丈夫對你既期望／用乜野途徑向你表達／例子／感受／有冇去實踐／原因

105. 你覺得你子女對你既期望／用乜野途徑向你表達／例子／感受／有冇去實踐／原因
106. 你覺得你丈夫親戚對你既期望／用乜野途徑向你表達／例子／感受／有冇去實踐／原因

對自己既睇法：

107. 覺得自己同其他土生土長既香港人有幾相似／唔同／原因
108. 有冇想過希望自己可以同一個土生土長既香港人一樣／點解
109. 如果而家有冇問你，“你係乜野人呀？”你會點答佢／原因／同你既一 d 經驗或者價值有冇關
110. 覺得自己有乜野長處
111. 覺得自己有冇短好處或者係缺點／原因／有冇諗過改善／做唔做到／原因
112. 有冇邊個人令你最欣賞／羨慕／原因
- ♥ 希唔希望自己可以好似你欣賞 o 個個人咁／原因
 - ♥ 會唔會響言談舉子上模仿呢個人／原因

問問題技巧：

- ↳ 盡量對比一下未黎香港之前同之後既相同與不同既地方／例子／原因
- ↳ 如果佢話有諗過，就問：“點解有諗過既？同你之前既成長環境或者經歷有冇關呀？”跟住就叫佢：“不如你而家諗下 Y！”
- ↳ 唔知有冇邊方面既野我有提及到，而你又想同我分享一下既呢？
- ↳ 或者你有冇 d 乜野野係有興趣傾既，都可以傾下架喎！

結尾：

咁或者今次我地傾住咁多先 Y，好多謝你抽左咁多寶貴既時間同我傾計呀！日後仲想再跟進同你傾計呢，唔知道你樂唔樂意呢？（多謝你先呀！）

問聯絡方法

Follow-Up Questions

- ♥ 你幾時開始有咁既想法架？
- ♥ 係聽邊 d 人咁講架？
- ♥ 係咪有人教你咁樣，所以你會咁諗呀？
- ♥ 呢個想法有冇轉變呀？點解既？
- ♥ 未黎香港之前係點諗架？點解既？

A. 讀書：

問題：

-
1. 以前響內地讀書既時候，有冇老師教授過既野係令你印象最深刻架？例子／原因
 2. 呢 d 思想到而家影唔影響到你呢？例子／原因
 3. 對你黎講，你覺得接受教育重唔重要呀？原因

B. 工作：

問題：

-
1. 你未黎香港之前有冇做過野架？
 2. 其實點解會選擇去_____做野既？（為左生計／唔鍾意鄉下既生活／其他？）
 3. 比較鄉下同 o 個度既生活，你喜歡邊度多 d 呀？（邊方面喜歡多 d，有冇邊方面又有咁喜歡？例子）點解既？
 4. 你點睇 o 個份工作呀？（鍾唔鍾意呀？原因）
 5. 你覺得 o 個陣時份工呢，算唔算一份理想既工作呢？原因
 6. 對你黎講，乜野先叫做一份理想既工作呀？（有乜野條件：如進升機會，性質，滿足感，薪酬等？）
 7. 你鄉下 o 個度多唔多人出去城市做野架？點解既？
 8. 多數係男多定係女仔多出去做野架？點解既？
 9. 咁你未去_____之前，響鄉下有冇聽過人講 o 個度係點架？對 o 個度有冇乜野印象既呢？
 10. 咁你自己想唔想去_____架？點解既？
 11. 你而家有冇工作呀？點解既？（有冇試過搵？點解會遇到咁既問題？）
 12. 對你黎講，你享受做家务多 d，定係出去工作多 d 呀？原因（幾時開始有咁既想法？）
 13. 對你黎講，你覺得做家务有意義 d，定係出去工作有意義 d 呀？原因（幾時開始有咁既諗法呢？）

C. 內地 → 香港：

問題：

-
1. 咁其實係未黎香港之前，對香港有乜野印象呢？
 2. 呢 d 印象係響邊度獲得架？
 3. 響大陸既時候，你有冇試下唔同方法去接觸香港既事物架？
 - i. 用左乜野途徑呀？
 - ii. 點解你會想接觸香港既事物既？
 4. 咁你當時其實想唔想接觸香港既事物架？鍾唔鍾意呢 d 接觸呢？
 5. 咁黎左香港之後，你覺得香港同你未黎之前既印象有幾相似，又有幾唔同呢？
 - i. 邊 d 方面最似？
 - ii. 邊 d 方面最唔似？
 - iii. 感覺係點架？（失望／後悔／其他）
 6. 對比起大陸同香港，你鍾意邊度多 d 呀？原因（邊方面鍾意多 d，邊方面有咁鍾意，例子）
 7. 其實香港有乜野吸引到你黎架？
 8. 決定黎香港之前，係點樣衡量黎到之後要面對既困難呢？
 9. 香港近年黎經濟轉壞，失業率不斷咁上升，呢 d 情況點樣影響到你黎香港既決定呀？
 10. 咁比你再選擇，你會想留響內地生活同做野，定係黎香港呢？點解既？

D. 朋友：

問題：

-
1. 而家響香港認識既朋友對你黎講重唔重要呀？（邊方面對你黎講重要呢？）原因／例子
 2. 對比起響大陸既朋友，邊度既朋友你覺得對你黎講重要 d 呀？點解既？
 3. 你點衡量一個朋友對你黎講重唔重要呀？（有冇 d 乜野條件／原則？）
 4. 響你相識既人當中，多唔多本地既朋友架？點解既？
 - i. 你覺得有冇需要識本地朋友呢？
 - ii. 你覺得認識一 d 本地既朋友對你黎講重唔重要呢？
- 原因

E. 中心社工：

問題:

-
1. 你點睇中心裡面既社工(譬如係__姑娘)呀?
 2. 對社工有乜野睇法呢? 係朋友定係提供協助服務既人士呢?
 3. 覺得社工對你重唔重要呀? 原因

F. 點解揀而家呢個丈夫：

問題:

-
1. 你鄉下仲有細佬妹架? 咦, 你細妹嫁左未呢?
 2. 佢地多數會嫁 d 乜野人架? 你想唔想你妹妹或者朋友嫁黎香港呢? 點解既?
 3. 你會唔會反對佢嫁內地人/香港人呀? 原因
 4. 其實你當初點解會揀而家呢個老公既? 當時除左佢之外, 仲有冇其他選擇呀?
 5. 如果俾你再揀多次, 你會唔會選擇一個香港人嫁呢? 點解既?
 6. 咁我知道你有__個仔/女, 如果佢地第二時話要番內地娶老婆, 你點睇呢? 點解既?
 7. 未結婚之前呢, 有冇同你丈夫傾過結左婚之後, 屋企裡面既財務安排點決定架? 點解既?
 8. 未嫁俾佢之前, 你清唔清楚丈夫響香港既生活環境呀, 家庭背景係點樣架? (點解會了解/點解唔去了解多 d 既?)
 9. 而家你有冇同你丈夫傾下 d 錢點運用架? 你考慮 d 乜野同佢傾/唔同佢傾呢?

G. 對香港認識：

問題:

-
1. 覺得自己對香港

i) 生活環境	a) 有幾了解?
既	b) 邊方面會了解多
ii) 新移民政策/福利	d ? 例子
iii) 社會問題/時事	
 2. 邊方面了解唔夠? 例子
 3. 想唔想了解多 d ? 點解?
 4. 覺得需唔需要了解多 d ? 點解?
 5. 覺得____方面有幾影響到你既生活? 點解?
 6. 發生響邊一個階層既事情, 會最影響到你? 點解? (對比起大陸呢?)

H. 評價：香港人，大陸人，香港政府，大陸政府

問題：

香港人：

1. 你覺得自己係乜野人呀？點解會咁覺得既？
2. 你平時接觸得最多既香港人係邊 d 呀？你覺得佢地點呢？
（對佢地既評價）
3. 你覺得擁有 d 乜野特質先叫做一個香港人呀？點解你會咁
諗既？未黎香港之前係咪已經咁諗架喇？

香港人／大陸人身份：

4. 咁對比起大陸人既身份呢？邊個會身份你會喜歡多 d 呀？
點解有咁既想法呢？（幾時開始有咁既想法架？）

香港／內地發展：

5. 你點睇而家內地既發展呀？（經濟，政治，文化）點解會咁
諗既？
6. 你點睇而家香港既發展呀？（經濟，政治，文化）點解會咁
諗既？
7. 你覺得香港有冇 d 乜野優點架？例子（呢 d 優點吸唔吸引到
你呢？原因）
8. 你覺得大陸有冇 d 乜野優點呀？例子
9. 你覺得香港呢個地方俾唔俾到希望你呢？點解既？（呢個諗
法同未黎香港之前有冇唔同呀？點解有咁既轉變既？）

香港／內地政府：

10. 對比起香港同內地既政府，你鍾意邊度多 d 呀？原因（呢個
思想係幾時開始有既呢？）
11. 如果要你形容一下香港同中國既關係，你會點形容呢？點解
既？（呢個想法係幾時開始有架？有冇轉變過？原因）

政治：

12. 你對於民化大革命有冇 d 乜野深刻既印象呀？
13. 你點睇當時共產黨做既野呢？（呢個係你而家既諗法定係當
時都咁諗架？有冇轉變？）
14. 你點睇六四天安門事件呀？原因（呢個想法係幾時開始有
架？）
15. 有 d 人批評大陸政府貪污腐敗，你自己有乜野睇法呢？（幾
時開始有呢個想法架？有冇轉變？原因？）

16. 咁亦有人批評大陸政府剝削人民既自由同埋人權，你自己有乜野睇法呀？（幾時開始有咁既想法？）
17. 你點睇香港回歸中國呀？原因（呢個想法係幾時開始有架？）
18. 你點睇七一大遊行呀？原因
19. 你覺得身爲一個負責任既政府，應該具備乜野條件呢？原因（令人民得到飽足／有自由／有人權／搞到福利？）
20. 呢個想法係幾時開始有架？（對比未黎香港之前有冇唔同呢？原因）

I. 經濟資助／政府政策：

問題：

1. 你點睇拎綜援既新來港人士呀？
2. 咁有 d 人批評佢地係懶人，你有乜野睇法呢？點解既？（未黎香港之前，係咪都咁諗架？有冇轉變？點解？）
3. 咁你覺得家人或者係朋友既幫助叫唔叫做幫助呢？同政府既幫助有乜野唔同呢？
4. 乜野情況底下你覺得可以接受申請經濟援助呢？
5. 你有冇朋友拎緊綜援呀？你點睇佢地呢？
6. 你覺得乜野叫做對社會有貢獻呀？點解有咁既想法既？
7. 有人批評新來港人士既素質低。你有乜野睇法呀？原因
8. 你覺得乜野人叫做質素高既人，乜野叫做質素低呀？點解會咁諗既？你幾時開始有咁既想法架？
9. 對你黎講，點樣先叫做一個有用既人呀？點解會咁諗既？呢個諗法係幾時開始有架？（有 d 乜野影響到你咁諗呢？）

J. 對現況評價 vs. 理想

問題：

1. 對你黎講乜野係生命中
- a) 最重要？原因
- b) 對比未黎香港之前有冇唔同？原因／經歷
2. 你最大既願望係乜野呀？對比未黎香港前有冇唔同？點解？
3. 你覺得自己呢個願望可唔可以達成？點解？
4. 你覺得乜野係
- | | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|-------|--------------------------|
| { | i) 一個理想既家 | } | 原因／例子 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | ii) 理想既家庭生活 | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | iii) 理想既婚姻生活 | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | iv) 理想既人生 | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|--|
| 5. 你對 | {
i) 丈夫
ii) 子女
iii) 丈夫既親戚
iv) 自己既家人 } | a) 有乜野期望呀？原因
b) 幾時開始有咁既想法架？ | <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. 你覺得自己既 | {
i) 家庭生活
ii) 婚姻生活
iii) 人生 } | a) 同你理想既說法，有幾相似呢？例子
b) 有幾唔同呢？例子
c) 覺得有冇可能實踐到呢？原因
d) 覺得你自己有冇能力可以實現到呢？原因 | <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> |

K. 對自己既睇法：

問題：

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. 你覺得自己對於你屋企人重唔重要呀？例子／原因 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. 你覺得自己對於屋企有冇貢獻呢？例子／原因 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. 你覺得對於呢個社會有冇貢獻呢？例子／原因 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. 你覺得乜野先叫做對社會有貢獻呀？例子／原因（呢個想法係幾時開始有既呢？） | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. 你覺得自己有乜野長處？ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. 你覺得自己有乜野短處或者缺點呀？原因／有冇諗過改善／做唔做到／原因 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. 有冇邊個人令你最欣賞／羨慕／原因 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i) 希唔希望自己可以好似你欣賞○個個人咁／原因 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) 會唔會響言談舉子上模仿呢個人／原因 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. 最後想問下你有冇d乜野座右銘／做人既原則架？呢個想法係幾時開始有架？有冇轉變過呢？ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

填寫個人資料表

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