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Individual Concerns and Family Decisions: Examining Migration Decision-Making in the Latest Hong Kong Migration Wave

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Abstract

Hong Kong is experiencing a migration wave after the 2019 Anti-Extradition Law Movement. Current studies on this wave argue that political factors, focusing on post-material concerns is what drives this wave. While a sizable percentage of those who have left Hong Kong did so in family groups, we suggest any study has to cover all generations in the decision-making process. Based on in-depth interviews, this study found that concerns over post-material and material concerns could be observed, to different extents, among different generations. Emotional responses to various incidents also played a role in the decision to emigrate. The decision-making process varied according to the stage of the family's life cycle. Typically, parents' power would be shared with their children when the family moved from the child-rearing stage to the child-launching stage. Grown-up children could initiate the discussion, and even migrate alone without parent's consent. Grandparents were marginal in the decision-making process.

Keywords: *Migration, Hong Kong, Generational Differences, Family Life-Cycle Stage.*

INTRODUCTION

Migration is not a new phenomenon in Hong Kong. The most significant outward wave of migration was in the mid-1980s to 1997, as a response to the social and political uncertainty that arose from the upcoming change of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China in 1997(Skeldon, 1991; Wong, 1992). Since 2020, a new migration wave has emerged, largely seen as a response to the failed Anti-Extradition Law Movement (AELM) in 2019, and the implementation of the National Security Law (NSL) in July 2020.

Studies have been conducted explaining the reasons for this migration, and the problems encountered. With the United Kingdom (UK) as the major destination, most studies were on this group of Hongkongers (e.g., Kan, Richards & Walsh, 2021; Wong et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023). There was also a study on the return migration of Hongkongers already possessing a Canadian passport to Canada (Wong & Yan, 2022). Most of these studies argued that political reasons, concerning post-material values, were the most significant reason, followed by concern for their children's personal and future development (Yue, 2023).

Permanent cross-border migration is never an easy decision. It incurs careful assessment of costs and benefits both for the present as well for the future. People from different age groups will have diverse concerns and will weigh these factors differently. Migration often involves the entire family and different generations in the family might need to negotiate among themselves in order to reach a decision. While some of the existing studies have approached the topic from a family perspective (e.g., Lui et al., , 2022; Wong & Yan, 2022), less attention has been paid to exploring the family dynamics due to individual and generational differences in the decision-making process.

To deepen our understanding of this latest Hong Kong migration wave, this study interviewed ten respondents aged from late 10s to 50s from seven families. All respondents had already migrated overseas (i.e., Canada and the United Kingdom) at the time of the interview. Based on the findings, we observed the existence of generational differences in weighing material and post-material concerns in the decision to emigrate. Emotional

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responses, especially among the parents, played a role in inflating post-material concerns. The parents remained the key person in initiating, promoting, or simply deciding on behalf of their children to emigrate. However, such dynamics varied according to the stage of the family life cycle. The desire to achieve mutual understanding or consensus among family members concerning the ultimate decision indicates that the family maintains its important status among the respondents.

Migration Decision

Material and post-material concerns

Migration, especially permanent migration, is never an easy decision to make as it involves decisions that incur high uncertainty and risks. People must weigh an array of factors, calculating their costs and benefits, at present and in the future for themselves (Lee, 1966). According to neo-classical theory, the final decision to migrate rests on factors that could maximize economic utility and returns (Massey et al., 1993).

These factors can be categorized into economic, social and political factors. The most often cited economic factors include the availability of better opportunities and income in the host country (Hagan & Wassink, 2020). Social factors refer to a preferred living environment such as greater cultural and religious acceptance and quality social services (e.g., health and education) provided (Zhou et al., 2023). Political factors include present and potential threats to personal security due to war, terrorism, political unrest, violence, poor governance (e.g., over-bureaucratic, repressive, corruption), unfair legal system, and anti-democratic politics in the place of origin (Doerschler, 2006; Etling et al., 2020).

These three factors can be divided into two types: material concerns and post-material concerns. Material concerns refer to resource gains such as monetary rewards and better social services; post-material concerns refer to achieving a preferred lifestyle and social conditions characterized by those values, such as freedom, democracy, peace and stability, good governance and justice. In other words, material concerns are rather instrumental and often economic resources-based, whereas post-material concerns are more abstract values often related to desirable political and social conditions.

Generational differences, family life-cycle stages and decision-making

In different life-course stages, individuals will have different concerns and hence different appraisal of the same concerns. Developmental psychologists (e.g., Erickson, 1994; Havighurst, 1948) have suggested specific tasks concerning individuals in different life stages, for example, adults particularly parents will have greater concerns about jobs and income, as well as the welfare of family members; whereas younger family members might place a higher priority on their education, themselves as individuals, and career exploration, and social relationships (Arnett, 2000). Their different weighting of material and post-material concerns will impact on their migration decision.

Migration will have impacts on all relevant family members. Negotiation and arrangements among members of all generations are required, which decision-making power often being unevenly distributed among members across generations in families in different stages of the life cycle.

Glick first introduced the idea of the family life cycle as involving six stages: formation, expansion, stabilization, contraction, empty nest, and disintegration (1947). In a similar vein, Duvall outlined the family life cycle, outlining the eight stages that a family will go through from formation (i.e., married couples without children), childbearing and child-rearing further divided by the age groups of children, to dissolution (i.e., adult children leaving the family, empty nest, retirement, and death of the couple) (Duvall, 1957). Though more variations have been proposed (Poon & Bader, 2005), a similar linear pattern can be identified, typically going through family founding; childbearing, rearing, and leaving (for their own families); contraction, and termination. The power position of different generations within the family would shift as it moves from one stage to the next. While parents' authority over their children might be guaranteed by law, cultural norms or economic resources, such power (over the children and the family as a whole) could be redistributed across generations when the basis of power is modified (Williamson, 1981). When children get married, the family will be further split into separate units, and the parents/grandparents' influence on the newly formed family units could be further

minimized. The decision dynamic within a family could differ according to the different stages of the family's life cycle. Hence, a better understanding of how a family reaches the migration decision would be strengthened by exploring the concerns of different generations within a family at a particular stage in the family life cycle.

Utilitarianistic familism and its changes in Hong Kong

Most Hongkongers are ethnic Chinese but with an extensive exposure to Western culture being a former colony of the United Kingdom. The Chinese family, traditionally, is described as hierarchical and patriarchal; but given its unique social and historical contexts, scholars have proposed a different construct – "utilitarianistic familism" – to describe family culture since the late 1970s (Lau, 1978, 1981). Lau (1981) argues these features were built on the uniqueness Hong Kong society which was fueled by a "refugee mentality" (Wong, 1986) as settlers moving from Mainland China since 1949 sought a relatively stable living environment and therefore had limited expectations of the government and weak social attachment (Hoadley, 1973).

The construct's core arguments are follows (Lau, 1978, 1981; Tang & Cheng, 2022):

1. *Utilitarianism*: utilitarianistic considerations prevail in structuring familial relationships, in which norms of mutual assistance and inter-dependence, especially on economic cooperation and interchange in pooling and distributing resources are emphasized. Family members and their status in the family (core members, close relatives, more distant relatives, and non-relatives) are strategically recruited and assigned.

2. *Familism*: characterized by the primacy of familial interests above other social interests, and external contexts serve as an arena for the family to pursue its interests. Within the family, traditional forms of hierarchy and authority are diluted, while patriarchism and authoritarianism serve mainly as rituals or as one of many regulators.

3. *Family-society relationship*: primary attention is paid to the family and its members' interests, and if necessary, passive adaptation to institutional structures leading to political apathy adopted to preserve the family best interests.

However, Hong Kong society has had dramatic changes in its economic, social and political contexts since this construct was developed. The family has been increasingly nuclearized with its size reducing from 3.9 in 1981 to 2.7 in 2021. Co-residence with grandparents is rare, amounting to 4.8 percent of total households in 2021 (Census and Statistics Department, 2022). Residence pattern might have implications on assigning core member status from others, and hence whose interests could be considered as primary. Greater respect for a family member as a unique individual was observed, with hierarchical and patriarchal structures modified. Decisions were argued more often by deliberation and negotiations among family members (Chan, 2009; Kung et al., 2004).

There has been increasing adherence to post-material values, particularly among generations growing up since the 1980s (i.e., those who are now in their 40s and 50s). They experienced the early transitional period towards 1997, when they were in their 20s to 30s, a period when the former colonial government introduced limited democratic reforms, and the China government emphasized the principles of "One-Country Two Systems" after 1997. As a result, individuals have developed relatively closer relationship and attachment with the colonial and Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government established in 1997.

Scholars have found that these younger generations have stronger adherence to the values of equality, justice and democratization through greater public participation, lower trust in the government, and a stronger local Hong Kong identity (Chow et al., 2020; Wong et al., , 2017). Material concerns were challenged by these post-material values (Lee, 2018). A study by Kan, Loa, and Richards (2023) reveals generational differences on several post-material concerns, with the younger generation placing greater adherence to local identity, democracy and civic rights.

With lower satisfaction with social and political developments after the transition of sovereignty, these younger generations, compared with their parents' generation, were more active in socially and politically as observed in the series of social movements from the mid-2000s (e.g., heritage protection movements, 2012 Anti-National

Education Campaign, and the 2014 Occupy Central Movement). Lee and Lo (2020) argue that such discontent did not resolve which partially explained the 2019 Anti-Extradition Law Movement (AELM).

Increasing demand for higher participation and democratization challenged the previous utilitarianistic familism. Higher aspiration for these post-material concerns and the greater integration between family and society/politics has been observed among people who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s.

Migration waves in Hong Kong

Hong Kong has experienced prolonged outward migration from the late-1980s to 1997, with an estimated 500,000 Hongkongers migrating overseas. The peak was in 1992 when over 66,000 people left, gradually dropping to around 30,000 in 1997 (Census and Statistics Department, 2007). Canada was the most popular destination attracting over 310,000 migrants from 1984 to 1996 (Salaff et al., 2010). Wong (1992) adopts utilitarianistic familism in his analysis and argues that the motive was primarily pragmatic: people with a refugee mentality want to avoid political uncertainty by exiting for better security through obtaining a foreign passport. Hence, when Hong Kong situation stabilized (after 1997), many of them chose to return for better economic returns.

Tensions and conflicts intensified in Hong Kong in the early 2010s, from the 2012 Anti-National Education Campaign, the 2014 Occupy Central Movement, followed by the most disruptive AELM from 2019. Scholars have estimated more than one-third of the city's population participated in the 2019 protests through different means, covering all age cohorts and generations, though the people in their 20s represented almost half of all participants (Cheng et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2019). After the AELM, over 10,000 protestors were arrested. To restore the city's stability, the Central Government imposed the NSL on Hong Kong, and as of June 2023, another 260 persons were arrested.

The protest and the government follow-up action received worldwide attention. Several countries, including Australia, Canada, USA, and the UK implemented designated emigration routes for qualified Hongkongers who want to leave the city. Among those, the most popular scheme is the UK "BN(0) visa route".

Scattered figures have been released by different authorities showing the magnitude of this migration wave. For example, at the end of September 2023, there were a total of 191,000 applications for BN(O) visas, and of these, over 160,000 people have entered the UK. From 2021 to 2023, Canada had granted over 27,000 visas to Hongkongers via two designated schemes. Adding those who chose to migrate (or return-migrate) to Australia, Taiwan, and other countries, the total number would be likely more than 200,000 in three years.

There were several studies on this migration wave, including push-and-pull factors leading to (or not to) migration. Relevant factors proposed by these studies include negative perception and lower trust in the government and judicial system, declining freedom of speech and assembly, and perceived personal threats (e.g., Chan et al., 2022; Kan et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023; Yue, 2023). Political factors concerning post-material values were the most popular reasons.

There were relatively fewer studies explaining the move from a family perspective. Exceptions include the study by Lui, Sun and Hsiao (2022) which reveals parents' higher priority on securing their children's education and freedom as the major concerns. Similarly, Wong and Yan's study (2022) on return migration for Hongkongers who are Canadian citizens, found that changing life course needs of family members in specific family lifecycle stages make a difference. These needs mainly relate to having a better place (than Hong Kong) for their children to grow up in and to develop.

While a significant percentage of this population movement in this wave is family-based, there is a need to approach it from a family perspective, with a deeper understanding of different generation family members' assessment of the material and post-material concerns. It is also necessary to examine the dynamics of the decision-making process for families in different stages of its life cycle.

Research Design, Data Collection and Sampling Profile

To better understand different generations' interpretation of material and post-material concerns, as well as the family dynamic shaping the migration decision, this study adopts in-depth interviews as the data collection method. Respondents from different generations were recruited by the snowballing method and referrals. All respondents were already living overseas (i.e., Canada and the UK) at the time of the interview. In-depth interviews were conducted via online meetings from August 2022 to October 2022. All interviews were conducted in Cantonese which is the mother tongue of all respondents. Pseudonyms were assigned to respondents to ensure their anonymity. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in the original language, and transcripts were coded by themes and sub-themes developed in the process.

A total of 10 (i.e., 7 females and 3 males) respondents were interviewed. Classified by their age, four were in their late 10s representing youth, two were in their early 30s representing young adults, while the rest were in their 40s and 50s representing the middle-age group. The first group grew up after the transition in 1997, and the rest experienced the early transition and democratization attempts from the 1980s. Four respondents were single and still living with their parents which is quite common among children who were still single (even if they had reached adulthood) in Hong Kong. The rest were married and all, except one, had children. Seven respondents moved together with their nuclear (core) family members. The rest chose to emigrate first, with the rest of the family joining them. later.

In terms of the stage of the family life cycle, respondents were in three different stages: the family founding stage (i.e., Rebecca, marriage with no child), the child-rearing stage (i.e., T, David, Alison, Marie, Alex, Grace, and Emma), and the child-launching stage (i.e., Cherry and Jason) (Table 1). It was difficult to receive consent from all members of the family for an interview. Therefore, we attempted to understand the different views among individual family members and the decision-making dynamic through detailed discussion with the members who had agreed to be interviewed. We also explored the possibility of inviting their family members to join the study. In the end, we were able to interview all members of the family (i.e., Marie, Alex, Grace, and Emma). Therefore, we fully acknowledge the limitations of the study, especially the sampling method and sampling size, and our conclusion must be interpreted carefully.

Table 1. Respondent profile.

No	Name (Gender)	Age group	Family life cycle stage	Marital status	Family composition (children age in bracket)	Destination	Remarks
1	Marie (F)	Early 50s	Child rearing	Married	Husband and two daughters (18 and 20)	Canada	Entire family moved together. Wife of Alex and mother of Grace and Emma
2	Alex (M)	Early 50s	Child rearing	Married	Wife and two daughters (18 and 20)	Canada	Entire family moving. Husband of Marie and father of Grace and Emma. Job secured before migration
3	David (M)	Mid-40s	Child rearing	Married	Wife and daughter (7)	Canada	Entire family moved together. Pursuing higher education in Canada
4	Alison (F)	Mid-40s	Child rearing	Married	Husband, son (11), and daughter (13)	UK	Moved with children first, joined by husband and her extended family members (mother, sister and sister-in-law) later.
5	T (F)	Early 40s	Child rearing	Married	Husband and 2 daughters (7 and 9)	Canada	Entire family moved together. Pursuing higher education in Canada, though already holding a PhD.
6	Rebecca (F)	Early 30s	Family founding	Married	No child	Canada	Entire family moved together.
7	Cherry (F)	Early 20s	Child launching	Single	Mother (single-parent family) and no sibling	UK	Moved alone first.

8	Jason (M)	Early 20s	Child launching	Single	Parents and elder sister	UK	Moved alone first. Joined by parents and elder sister later.
9	Grace (F)	20 *(just turned 20 when interviewed)*	Child rearing	Single	Parents and younger sister (Emma)	Canada	Entire family moved together. Pursuing higher education in Canada
10	Emma (F)	Late 10s	Child rearing	Single	Parents and elder sister (Grace)	Canada	Entire family moved together. Pursuing higher education in Canada.

FINDINGS

Post-material concerns: political and social factors

The most frequently cited concerns were changing political and social conditions since 2019. Almost all respondents expressed negative comments or grave concerns about the loss of freedom of speech and of the press. They showed strong disapproval with the ways the government handled the Anti-Extradition Law Movement and COVID-19.

> *I realized the situation in Hong Kong are deteriorating, especially rapidly declining press and speech freedom which is virtually non-existent now.* (Marie)

> *There is no rule of law, which to me, is most important of all. You can still argue there are different degrees of democracy, but if there is no rule of law, then Hong Kong is dead.* (Alex)

> *(Since 2019) … in Hong Kong, counting the COVID too, the social conditions and the education environment, caused me a lot of struggles. … I feel pain when I witness, sorry, how those young people are facing (i.e., being arrested and imprisoned).* (Alison)

> *The entire judicial system cannot reflect the principle of justice. I think the judges are making judgements based on political considerations, rather than the facts.* (David)

> *Through observing what had happened in 2019 (i.e., 2019 protests), I realize some people can have disproportionate power and you cannot reason with them.* (Rebecca)

> *I pay the greatest attention to the NSL which was implemented in July 2020. This caused Hongkongers to lose confidence in the city. I do think, and I believe many people share my view too, that the NSL signifies our failure in getting what we have demanded so far. Not only this, but our personal safety has also been threatened. That's why for me, the implementation of the NSL is the most significant push factor.* (Jason)

Relatively speaking, though sharing similar concerns, the two youngest respondents showed a moderate position. While sharing their feelings about the changes, they also mentioned similar concerns about their own life.

> *When I look at my peers, some of them were just like being chased and their lives at risk. They just left Hong Kong within a very short period. It is because of that I find the social conditions so weird and awkward. I am thinking why they were oppressed to that extent. … My starting point is I do not want to study in Hong Kong. I am not happy with the studying experience with my enrolled Associate Degree program.* (Grace)

> *I feel that Hong Kong's atmosphere has become somber in recent years. I feel unhappy when all the people are talking about politics most of the time. I do not want to discuss politics all the time. That's why when they (parents) proposed emigration, I think this is good as I do not have to attempt the Diploma of Secondary Education Examination.* (Emma)

Grace also shared her observation of her parent generation's sentiment about Hong Kong. She expressed that growing up in a different socio-political context will mean different perceptions and assessment of the situation. While not sharing similar perceptions, the younger generation will follow their own assessment.

> *It is difficult for me to envisage their description of the old Hong Kong. I do not have the images that they portray in my mind. They always said it was not so the same in the old days in which hard work will pay off, and the changing political conditions*

> *too. I have not experienced the growing-up environment that they described. I do not have the ideal Hong Kong image as they mentioned.* (Grace)

As parents, it is easy to understand they have grave concerns about the future of their young children, and hence education is very important. In this study, parents were not assessing the potential financial return if they went overseas, but rather the negative impacts due to diminishing freedom of speech and expression in schools on children's personal development if they remained in Hong Kong.

> *My major concern is my two daughters (i.e., Grace and Emma). I feel that if they continue to stay in Hong Kong, they have to come face-to-face with constraints. In other words, I do not want them to live under a Communist regime, and hence I decided to emigrate.* (Marie)

> *I discussed this with my wife (i.e., Marie). If we did not have children, it would be very likely we will choose to stay as I have already passed two-thirds of my lifespan. Yet, once you have children, you will have a different consideration. I do not want them to live in this kind of environment, or they have no alternative but to stay in this environment.* (Alex)

> *Moreover, as I have a child, the education system has been affected. That is, the child cannot learn what is right and wrong in school. We hope they can develop their perspective. If they cannot have the freedom to express or face undesirable consequences once they express their views in school, they will not be able to learn what is right and wrong.* (David)

> *In overseas, they (the children) can acquire more life wisdom and enjoy wider space for their imaginations. I wish my two children could have more experiences and space to have different encounters, learn to be bold, and aspire for different kinds of freedom.* (Alison)

Seeking a preferred living space to meet their desired post-material values, rather than economic returns, was shared by all respondents. For example, T had previously lived in Canada before, and she preferred its more laidback life style for herself and her family members.

> *I hope my child can have the choice. (When they grow up) They can choose to return and stay in Hong Kong or live overseas. I just think if I can enable them to have the choices, this will be a very nice thing that I can do for them.* (T)

> *(migration) … can be a means of seeking a space for myself, a space that will be safer for me than staying in Hong Kong. Such space is also more consistent with my ideas and orientations.* (Jason)

> *I feel that Hong Kong cannot offer me the possibility of self-development. That is, I do not want to live in this environment. That is a major reason that I want to migrate.* (Emma)

Material concerns: economic factors

Migration requires substantial financial resources. This material concern has been raised primarily by the parents. Obviously, in their life stages as well as positions in the family (i.e., often as breadwinners) and associated duties to other members (e.g., children and grandparents), they should have greater concerns about the financial implications of relocating to another country. As revealed, these included the potential drop in income and the difficulty finding employment at the same level in their current career or in a different career, which imply the family could be financially at-risk after migration.

> *I understand my loss will be my high-income job. And I also understand I have to pay higher taxes in whatever country I go to overseas. With higher taxes and lower income, I believe my living standard will be worse than what I have enjoyed in Hong Kong. However, what you can get in return will be priceless: freedom and a better growing-up environment for my daughter.* (David)

Alex was able to secure a job before migration. Nevertheless, before that, he has expressed his worry about employment being a middle-aged man with a family burden.

> *You know I am at a rather embarrassing age. At my age, our major worry is that it is difficult to secure a job. … This is a very distressing issue for a person in their 50s. It will be too early to retire and difficult to continue existing careers. Finding a job is never easy even though you do not mind the job's nature. … I am rather privileged as I already have a job offer.* (Alex)

Alex's daughters – Grace, and Emma – expressed that securing a job by their father was crucial in the migration decision. As dependents, they understood continuous income was crucial for their education and lifestyle after migration.

Rebecca has made it very clear that without her parents-in-law's financial support (i.e., selling their property to generate a pool of money), they would not have had the resources to implement the plan to move overseas. She frankly shared that, "this (i.e., the sum of money) is a very substantial trigger point and you can only migrate if you have the money."

In a different perspective, T shared that his primary objective was to get a foreign passport more than a permanent settlement in a foreign country. This was similar to those who migrated in the 1980s and 1990s. She reiterated that, at present, she was "not in the state of migration" but going overseas for further studies and a passport was a natural product of it. With careful calculation of costs and benefits, she believed that staying overseas for two years for her purpose was reasonable.

It was observed that, among the respondents, none mentioned there would be better economic returns after migration, nor the migration decision was for better economic returns. It was understandable given the higher income level and lower tax rate in Hong Kong than those popular destinations, the chance to have better economic returns, at least in the short term, was not feasible or possible. Material concerns raised, though relevant, seemed not as significant as post-material concerns in explaining the migration decision. In a sense, material concerns could be traded off for gains in post-material concerns, a preferable living environment with greater freedom of speech and democracy, and a preferable education environment for their children. This indicates a shift, though not a total breakaway, from utilitarianism.

Emotion as catalyst

In reviewing the findings, all respondents expressed strong emotional responses to the changing political and social situation in Hong Kong, which challenged their ideal Hong Kong and preferred post-material values. Three types of emotions could be observed: fear and threat; frustration and sadness; and pessimism about the future and a sense of political inefficacy.

As described above, the changing political situation, and particularly lower trust in the judiciary system and law enforcement, engendered fear among some of the respondents. For example, Rebecca, being a journalist, observed what had happened in 2019 and concluded that "some people were so powerful that they will not be reasoned, and this kind of unchecked power will put some people's lives in great danger." She further commented that,

> … *people would not be safe simply by reasoning (with the authority) or not committing any offense. And, in fact, I have a feeling of fear, and I do not know how the current policies will be developed. I am afraid I might commit any offense. I am afraid if I return to Hong Kong, I might accidentally step on the landmine. I might be monitored by someone. I have this worry. I really have no sense of security.* (Rebecca)

David used to work in the media industry, and had observed many examples of oppression of the media and journalists where they were threatened with legal consequences of their actions.

Respondents also expressed their sense of frustration and sadness over the recent changes in Hong Kong. Marie described her feeling as "desolate, and very desolate". Rebecca called her experience a "trauma, a major trauma with lots of wounds". Grace found herself "disheartened" as she considered that there was nothing she could do to remedy the situation. Other respondents shared their negative feelings over the changes in Hong Kong, the city that they described as "home" for themselves and their family.

> *Is Hong Kong still my home? No longer!* (Marie)
>
> *The Hong Kong that you loved is no longer the same. It's already gone!* (Alex)
>
> *In mid-2019, I can feel the pressure increasing. And my feeling is "no way, this is not right". This is not my home.* (Alison)

I think that this place is no longer a home… In my life, my finite life, it is not possible to be home again. (David)

At the time of the interview, all except T had either decided not, or were reluctant to, return to Hong Kong for settlement. Some might return to Hong Kong for a short period, simply to visit relatives and friends. They have no faith in the future of Hong Kong." Grace found herself unable to initiate any change, and "people will be charged if they express a different opinion". Similarly, Jason was convinced that "even though I find it difficult to detail the future of Hong Kong, I believe there is no room left that Hong Kong can be saved."

These negative emotions were a result of negative cognitive assessments of the political and social conditions in Hong Kong, which in turn, serves as a catalyst reinforcing their decisions to migrate. As observed from these respondents, negative emotions inflate the concerns of post-material values and the worries if they continued to stay. On another hand, it might also be valid to suggest that these emotions served to reduce material concerns while prioritizing their post-material concern which led to an increase their financial risk tolerance.

Family lifecycle stages, dynamic and decision-making

The respondents mentioned the family members who had been involved in the decision-making process including parents (couples) and children; and occasionally, grandparents and parents' siblings. It seems that, following the nuclearization of family and separate residences, there was a subtle boundary dividing core members (i.e., parents and children) and close relatives. For the former, this refers to the family in the childrearing and launching stages. For the family-founding stage case, the boundary between the core members (i.e., couples) and grandparents were more flexible. Relationships between parents and their siblings were more remote.

Concerning the decision-making process, for those with children who were young or adolescents (i.e., Alison, David, and T), there was not much discussion and deliberation among the parents and children on the migration ideas and decisions. David expressed that the decision was made between him and his wife, though an explanation was given to their children which was primarily for their interests. In Alison's case, she held discussions with her children about the pros and cons of the move. The process was more on presenting them with the potential benefits of the move (e.g., a better living and education environment). As expressed by these parents, their children agreed with the decision. To some of these children, they might have peers who had moved overseas, and in that case, the decision was more acceptable to them.

Interviews with Alex's family offered us greater details on the negotiation between parents and more grown-up children. Alex initiated the idea and this was shared by Marie. A "roundtable discussion" was then held with Grace and Emma as they were considered grown up and thus had to be involved in the decision. Nevertheless, it was observed that Alex played an influential role in the decision-making process and discussion was more likely to persuade the daughters to accept the idea. As expressed by Grace and Emma, though they did not share all their parents' concerns, they found the idea acceptable in the sense that they could have their preferred education environment. All family members also agreed that securing a job in Canada and removing the economic concern smoothed the decision-making process.

Rebecca did not have a child at that time, and the decision was easily reached with her husband. For the families at the child-launching stage, single young adults Cherry and Jason initiated and discussed with their parents the possibility of migration, and eventually received their support. Cherry mentioned that she shared this idea with her mother who held similar political concerns and offered full support to her. However, as the grandmother insisted on staying in Hong Kong, her mother has no choice but to stay behind and take care of her. Cherry put her interests as primary and decided to move without her mother. Jason initiated the idea and presented this to her parents as "to experience living overseas" and to acquire a foreign passport. This was to avoid unnecessary arguments over political issues among them, even though Jason was confident that his parents would understand and accept his proposal. In fact, he considered himself an independent individual and would go ahead even if his parents did not support his decision. Eventually, his parents joined him in the UK after a few months, which showed the primacy of family and parents' reversed dependency on children.

Though there were slight differences among the generations in assessing and weighting of the political and economic concerns, these differences did not cause many difficulties among the family members in reaching

the decision. This is possibly due to a general consensus on the changing the social and political conditions in Hong Kong.

This might also be due to the power imbalance between the parents and children. Children and adolescents in the childrearing stage families were still dependent on their parents will thus have limited power. Nevertheless, parents tried to involve their children in the decision-making process by offering information about a potential move. Persuasion replaced imposition in the process, though the final decision still rested with the parents. Given the parents' grave concern over their children's welfare, this is an understandable attitude.

As revealed from our interviewees, children who were older and in the young adult stage and even though still single and co-resided with their parents, had enjoy greater independence. This reflects the power balance had shifted to the side of the children, disregard the parents accept it or not. Power further shifts to the children when they form their own nuclear family, even without their children.

Grandparents were the most frequently referred to as close relatives by the respondents in the decision-making process. However, evidence revealed that they did not have a strong influence on the migration decision. Grandparents were not actively involved or being involved in the decision-making process. As presented, the grandparents usually did not show strong opinions on their political concerns. Most grandparents showed understanding of the decisions, with the belief that this will be good for their children and grandchildren (e.g., Cherry and Alison). In Rebecca's case, her parents-in-law even sold their property so that they could have enough resources to finance their move. In David's case, his mother had grave concern for his safety and therefore clearly supported his the decision to migrate.

However, some respondents who have emotional bonds with these family members showed their worry about leaving them in Hong Kong. For example, David expressed his feelings of guilt when he no longer provided care to his parents but was relieved when his siblings showed the willingness to share the burden. Cherry's mother decided to stay to take care of the grandmother, and hence Cherry had to move alone. Grace expressed her disappointment when her grandmother decided to stay but was very glad that she chose to join her later. The feeling of being a "complete family" was also shared by Alison when her mother (as well as her sister's family) later joined her in the UK. From these cases, grandparent's welfare was a concern, but such concern ultimately did not deter the respondents from taking the action.

As shown in these cases, the decision to migrate was primarily made by core family members, and often by the parents in the childrearing stage. The situation was modified with greater power shared by the grown-up children in child-launching stage families who intended to make their own decision. Hence, parents then gradually retreat to an equal or marginal status. While there was no strong disagreement within the families, the decision was generally accepted, or at least received no strong objection from core members and close relatives. Negotiations were not that difficult in making the decision to migrate, but the dynamics of negotiation still varied across families in different stages of the life cycle.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that utilitarianistic material concerns were not the most important factors explaining the decision to migrate in this migration wave, and post-material concerns related to political and social aspirations were more significant echoing similar studies. The study also revealed that emotional responses played a role in moderating the weighting of post-material (e.g., freedom of speech and of the press, democracy, and rule of law) and material concerns (e.g., career and income). In a sense, individuals could be more risk tolerant and more willing to accept economic risks. The migration decision, at least among this group of Hongkongers, was not a purely cognitive assessment but one of mixed emotions.

There were slight differences in concerns across generations. Nevertheless, perceived deteriorating social and political conditions as well as looking for an alternative (especially for the children) were their common ground which smoothed the decision-making process. Power inequality was observed across generations though evidence showed that the decision-making process was not entirely hierarchical and authoritative. Parents' power diminished when their children became adults, even though they were still single and co-resided with

their parents. However, grandparents' status and interests were marginalized while core members' interests ranked first, which reflect the core family's boundary, as well as the shifting power within the families in their different stages. In these cases, the family was still occupied center stage, but no longer utilitarian. Moreover, the society-family relationship was transformed and the two were not distanced from each other.

We understand that these cases only reflect certain types of family and can only represent those who chose to migrate within a short period of time indicating their urgency. It is valid to suggest that, as time passes, the objective contexts as well as the subjective assessment of all concerns and emotional responses will differ. More studies should be conducted to examine the differences across generations and the negotiation process, if there is such a process, within different types of family. It has been commonly perceived that the youngest would hold the strongest views on the Anti-Extradition Law Movement which seemed not consistent with these findings. Further investigation is suggested to reach a more comprehensive picture. While the percentage of those leaving is still, and very likely, a minority in the city's population, it is also necessary to investigate those who have decided not to move, and their assessments of the social and political conditions.

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