



Honours Project Report

Prejudice, discrimination and acculturation of Gangpiao: A case of

Mainland Chinese undergraduates in HKIEd

Submitted by

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1. Project title

Prejudice, discrimination and acculturation of Gangpiao: A case of Mainland Chinese undergraduates in HKIED

2. Literature review

The prejudice and discrimination against Mainland Chinese has been a longstanding issue in Hong Kong with a great complexity of historical, political, economic and social factors behind (Faculty of Social Science, 2005; Law & Lee, 2006). It has been proven by massive studies that when thinking of Mainland Chinese, the majority of Hong Kong people tend to associate negative, insulting descriptions include “Poor hygiene”, “Impolite”, “Lazy”, “Poorly educated” and “Having little manner” with this group (Faculty of Social Science, 2005). These prejudices and discriminations, in particular, are aimed at those Mainland Chinese immigrants or visitors who have obvious interest conflicts with local people in multifarious perspectives (Ye, Zhang & Yuen, 2012; Kennedy, 2012; Chou, Chow, Wong & Yip, 2013). Common examples include new arrivals (新移民) who are considered as mostly relying on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or competing with locals in labor market, double non-permanent residents (雙非) who are spoken as stealing local tax-payers’ money to get free access to medical and education services, parallel traders (水貨客) who are disgusted as robbers of local resources and individual visitors (自由行) whose image is usually presented as nouveau riche with little manner and respect to social rules. Apart from these separated groups, a humiliating name serving as a collective description for the entire Mainland Chinese group—“locust”, has become widely popularized in Hong Kong and densely used in media since early 2012 (Tsui, 2013). In

short, the prejudice and discrimination against Mainland Chinese is deeply-rooted and prevalent in Hong Kong society.

While compared to the above hotly-debated groups, a newly-rising and growing group —the Mainland Chinese students studying at Hong Kong’s universities have hardly won the attention of public. The past 15 years have witnessed an evident soar in the population of Mainland Chinese students pursuing their tertiary education in Hong Kong. This tendency, rather than a coincident, is the direct consequence of a series of talent-admission policies introduced by the Immigration Department (2014). Since the first launch of “Study Visa” which permits Mainland Chinese students to pursue full-time undergraduate study in 1999-2000 academic year, Hong Kong government has further relaxed the requirements by allowing Mainland Chinese students doing part-time job and staying for another 12 month after graduation for job-seeking, greatly increasing their likelihood of being employed and obtaining permanent residency in Hong Kong. Hence, the series of policies have successfully triggered a “Hong Kong Hit” among Mainland Chinese high school graduates. Based on the official figures offered by the Immigrant Department (2014), the number of Mainland Chinese undergraduates enrolled in Hong Kong’s tertiary institutions has risen exponentially from 633 in 2002/03 to 6,315 in 2012/13. And the latest statistics released by University Grants Committee (2014) also says 11,376 Mainland Chinese students, including both undergraduates and postgraduates, were admitted by the eight public-funded universities in Hong Kong in the academic year of 2013/14, accounting for around 15% of the total student population (Education Bureau, 2015). Of this gradually-expanding group, approximately 32% consist of undergraduate students who come to Hong Kong at around eighteen and have the most comprehensive schooling experience there (University Grants Committee, 2014). Together with other Mainland Chinese professionals imported through the

“Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals”, they were given the name “Floating population in Hong Kong” (“Gangpiao” 港漂 in Chinese) by mass media as a special elite group with good education or professional skills, which no longer match with the general poorly educated, impolite “benefit seeker” image of Mainland Chinese. The most valuable feature of this term is its contribution to distinguishing this “talent” group from other “traditional” Mainland Chinese groups (呂大樂, 2013).

Narrowing the focus down to Mainland Chinese students within this “floating” group, the restricted number of relevant studies can be roughly divided into two types: One highlights their motivation of studying in Hong Kong, graduation plan and career choice to track their path (杜安娜和楊洋, 2012a; Gao, 2014). The other tends to investigate the adaptation problems in their cross-cultural transition to an unfamiliar context (張雅詩, 2004; 岳曉東和張宙橋, 2011; 鄭佩和許曉雯, 2011; 劉緣和王枳, 2012; 杜安娜和楊洋, 2012b; Lam, 2006; Gao, 2007; Gao, 2008; Pan, Yue and Chan, 2010; Yi & Tsang, 2010; Cheung, 2012; The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2014). It has been indicated in the second type of studies that despite Mainland Chinese students’ identity as desire talents whom are supposed to be taken good care of, they still have confronted a variety of challenges in terms of language barrier, academic work, financial pressure, cultural difference and social interaction. While those studies have successfully listed Mainland Chinese students’ difficulties in cross-cultural transition, there has been very little research analyzing the reasons causing their adaptation problems in detail. In most cases, the reasoning just stopped by quoting “cultural differences” stated by the informants directly, which is definitely insufficient and oversimplified according to other studies related to cross-cultural experience and adaptation.

In the extant studies examining cross-cultural experiences and adaptation, a significant proportion of them have adopted the concept of acculturation to interpret the process, which has also been adopted in Mainland Chinese students' case for a few times (Pan, Yue & Chan, 2010; Yi & Tsang, 2010; 岳曉東和張宙橋, 2011). Acculturation is always interpreted as cultural integration. The most widely used definition of acculturation created by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936: 149) is "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups." The characteristic highlighted in the definition is that acculturation is a continuous process resulting in changes in cultural patterns, such as cultural practices, cultural values and cultural identifications, which are especially apparent in the non-dominant group. To look at how those changes may come about, Berry has proposed an acculturation strategies model, assuming that the way in which individuals acculturate is based on their attitudes in dealing with two fundamental issues: the first one is the extent to which individuals regard maintenance of their heritage cultural and identity important or not, and the second issue is in relation to how important individuals regard contact with members of other cultural groups and participation in new society (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis & Sam, 2010). Based on the combined answers of the above two issues, one can eventually be categorized into one certain acculturation strategy among the four: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization as the way he or she acculturates. Furthermore, acculturation strategies have been acknowledged to have great influence on one's adaptation by numerous studies undertaken in different countries involving different acculturating groups. Among the four strategies, integration is the most preferred one leading to best adaption, while marginalization is the least (Castro, 2003; Berry, Pinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006). Berry has

further emphasized that the acculturation strategies are not free to be chosen, they are usually unavoidably influenced by public attitudes and public policies, of which the most notable influence factor is probably prejudice and discrimination. Vast studies have examined the role of prejudice and discrimination in acculturation and come to a conclusion that when individuals experience discrimination, they are likely to reject close involvement with the new society and be more oriented to their own ethnic group, or in other cases, become ambivalent about their involvement. Besides, prejudice and discrimination has also been found to do harm to individuals' successful adaptation (Berry, Pinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006; Torres, Driscoll & Voell, 2012; Liebkind, Jaakkola & Reuter, 2006). However, due to the dominance of quantitative studies in this field, there seems to be a dearth of qualitative studies examining the process how prejudice and discrimination influence the individuals acculturate in empirical detail, namely, what concrete changes have taken place on acculturating individuals who perceive prejudice and discrimination in terms of their motivations of contact, participation as well as maintaining heritage culture and identity (Lindert, Korzilius, Vijver, Kroon & Toth, 2014; Berry, Pinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006)

Meanwhile, notwithstanding the negative relationship between prejudice, discrimination and acculturation proven by a deal of research, it is still puzzling whether prejudice and discrimination will necessarily eliminate individuals' motivation of integration if borrowing the concept "Otherness" to explain the question. Duncan (1993: 45) defined otherness as the result of a "discursive process" by which a dominant "in-group" (the self, us) constructs one or many dominated "out-groups" ("Them", other) by stigmatizing a difference—real or imagined. The implication of otherness is not rare in the studies of international students according to Marginson (2013), who provided a holistic summary of existing research literature on

international students' cross-cultural experiences. What Marginson (2013: 14) pointed out is that during cross-cultural transition, international students were "often conscious of their own changing subjectivities, working critically using feedback from themselves and others". The feedback received from others, which could be seen as a product of otherness, was key to help students gain a critical "self-consciousness" and make corresponding transformation. Based on Marginson's assertion, Chinese scholar Yang (2014a) has further emphasized the role of otherness by implanting self-other relationship in his study of PRC scholars in Singapore. Inspired by the words of philosopher Paul Ricoeur "one cannot be thought of without the other", which implies that self-consciousness cannot be gained simply by oneself before going through the eye of the needle of the other, the study of Yang has proven that it is the encounter with others that eventually incited among many PRC scholars a critical self-consciousness of being "very China", which evoked a desire that pushed them to transcend their limiting subjectivities and achieved identity transformation. For instance, a number of the informants mentioned to Yang that through the prejudice and discriminations the local society had against them, they were like looking into a "mirror" constituted by words of others. Through the "mirror", they realized their clumsy Chinese-accented English, lack of polish in social manners and other "very China" behaviors, and thus generated a desire to discard all of them. In this case, the prejudice and discrimination motivated by otherness, were partly recognized by PRC scholars and raised their self-criticism and transformative desire. Ultimately, their desire usually finds its goal in the negation of otherness, hence they took being mistaken as Singaporean as the greatest compliment. In another article written by Yang (2014b), the prejudice has also been regarded as a result of otherness to arise PRC scholars' critical self-consciousness, which varies from

manner, speech and to deeper level like the value of using “Guanxi” (the Chinese term for the practice of favoritism based on personal connections and instrumental changes).

With respect to the case of Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong, even though acculturation has already been applied to investigate Mainland Chinese groups including new arrivals and university students in previous studies (Pan, Yue & Chan, 2010; Yi & Tsang, 2010; 岳曉東和張宙橋, 2011), none of them has ever glimpsed into the influences of prejudice and discrimination on their acculturation, let alone the concrete influencing process detected as a gap in international studies. Probably it is the distinctive features of Mainland Chinese students that separated them from the commonly-known subject of prejudice and discrimination, while it must be acknowledged that the real picture is more complicated: In Yang (2014b)’s study about the predicament of PRC scholars, an interesting finding is that some general negative perceptions in Singapore society over Mainland Chinese migrants, such as the prejudices of Chinese young women as prostitutes or of low-skilled male Chinese workers as dishonest, can have an unconscious “spill-over” effect by influencing local people’s imaginations of PRC scholars. Would this also be applicable to Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong? In fact, despite being named differently from other Mainland Chinese groups, drawing an explicit line between Mainland Chinese students and other groups all the time is not an easy job for both Hong Kong people and the students themselves. On one hand, discriminating Mainland Chinese as a whole group based on ethnicity is still prevalent in social discourses without specifying a certain type (Ng, Cheung & Tsang, 2012). On the other hand, for Mainland Chinese students, especially the undergraduates, three or four years’ life in Hong Kong could still be insufficient to either erase their identity as Mainland Chinese or recognize themselves as Hong Konger. Considering their eighteen years’ life and education in Mainland China, it is reasonable to assume that a

considerable part of Mainland Chinese undergraduates' identity still remains tightly connected with being Mainland Chinese.

Taking this ambivalent situation into consideration, it is natural to wonder if Mainland Chinese undergraduates would feel indifferent to the prejudice and discrimination against other Mainland Chinese groups who share ethnicity with them, or they would also be influenced and take the prejudice and discrimination personally, feeling resentful and sympathetic? The answer to this question is essential to analyze Mainland Chinese undergraduates' integration status and foresee their prospects, which help to review the effectiveness of government's talent import policy. Besides, since Mainland Chinese undergraduates represent part of "imported talents" or "Gangpiao", the study of them could be somehow expanded to the whole talent group in Hong Kong. Therefore, based on the literature review and Hong Kong's context, the first aim of this paper is to contribute towards plugging a gap in current research concerning by examining the process that prejudice and discrimination influence the acculturation of Mainland Chinese undergraduates.

Apart from the first question, taking inspiration from Yang's research in Singapore, if seeing prejudice and discrimination as byproducts of otherness, would Mainland Chinese undergraduates, like Yang's PRC scholars, become more conscious and critical of their original identity and change their acculturation attitudes accordingly? This paper additionally contributes to the existing discussion by incorporating the concept of "otherness" to provide an additional angle when investigating the influence of prejudice and discrimination.

3. Methodology

The study was done in the form of indepth interview. Eight Mainland Chinese undergraduates from The Hong Kong Institute of Education who have stayed in Hong Kong for at least three years were selected for the interview. The Hong Kong Institute of Education was picked because indepth interview is easier to be done there due to the author's social network. Simultaneously, selecting informants from a single university could help avoid other influential factors deriving from the differences between institutions. While the number of informants is small, it is still able to represent the whole group to some extent as the informants came from a variety of geographic locations, ensuring a good coverage of the whole country. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, recorded with consent and transcribed as such before they were translated into English. The interview questions range from the informants' experiences during the past few years, their perceptions of prejudice and discrimination and attempts to integrate into Hong Kong society, changes in their attitudes of involving in local society and the reasons behind these changes. For a more detailed profile of these informants, please refer to Table 1 in Appendix.

4. Analysis

4.1 Prejudice and discrimination

When talking about Mainland Chinese undergraduates' perceptions of prejudice and discrimination, their feedbacks seemed to vary according to the closeness and relevance of the target group or individual with themselves. As long as they had sufficient contact with the target being prejudiced or discriminated, or they felt being victimized by the prejudice or discrimination, they would tend to have stronger perception of the prejudice or discrimination which might not specifically aim at their own group.

Among the several major Mainland Chinese groups, parallel traders is the group the students had the least direct contact with and felt the most distant from. The majority of the informants admitted that their knowledge of this group was largely gained from media and was no more than average Hong Kong people. *'I always saw them flowing in the train and Manning every time, talking with each other in unintelligible dialects loudly. They were often busy with their tasks, and I have never had any conversation with them.'* Ma (Informant 2), a girl from Yunnan in her last year of study, described her encounters with parallel traders in a cold and distant form.

Similar to Ma, other informants also had no or very few contacts with parallel traders and only felt their presence via television. Without much hesitation, all the informants indicated that they did not have any strong emotional feedbacks and were somehow indifferent towards prejudice and discrimination against parallel traders, just as Lin (Informant 3), an extravert girl from Fujian pointed out directly, *'I treated their conflicts (the conflicts with some Hong Kong people) simply as a piece of news...not really my business'* Moreover, quite a few informants even expressed their understanding of Hong Kong people's resentment and shared feelings with them. A final

year student majoring in Chinese Language Education, Zeng (Informant 7), cited one of the short novel she wrote for a course when asked to describe her feeling. In the novel she was walking in the carriage of East Rail Line, pulling a big luggage. On the way she saw a lot of parallel traders with their “trophy” occupying every bench and aisle. And eventually the moment she got off the train, she abandoned her luggage and walked away without turning around. *‘I felt released the moment I let go my luggage’* she said, *‘Probably it implied my unconscious dislike towards parallel traders, I dumped my luggage as I did not want to be like them.’* Agreement was reached in this case that it is parallel traders who disrupted social order and damaged local people’s right by most of Mainland Chinese undergraduates, they did not naturally lean to parallel traders simply because of their shared ethnicity.

Yet when switching the subject to a group that Mainland Chinese undergraduates have had more direct and deeper contact with, they seemed to be more likely to develop stronger sentiments towards prejudice and discrimination against that target group. Among all the common Mainland Chinese groups, individual visitors and double non-permanent residents were the two which my informants found easier to feel connected with and sympathetic for. For individual visitors, it was not hard for the informants to associate this group with people they were familiar with back in Mainland China. Xing (Informant 4), a Chinese-majored girl from the northern part of China, explained the way she saw the tension between individual visitors and some local people as follows:

‘Every year there were relatives from my hometown travelling to Hong Kong...they were also the so called individual visitors hated by many Hong Kong people. For me, it was really strange to connect those familiar people with the distorted image of individual visitors in media. I could imagine that they might have done something wrong in Hong Kong

since they were not used to following rules, but in general they were still nice, kind people who worked hard and cared about family if you got to know them for a longer time. I felt it was unfair to distain people merely by some of their behaviors during a specific period....'

Although Xing recognized the possibility of individual visitors' misbehaving, she believed she was the one knowing better what kind of person those people really are, she felt offended for local people's unfair contempt to individual visitors only because of their manner. It was the deep contact between Xing and individual visitors from her hometown that led to her displeasure and slightly strong perception of the prejudice and discrimination. Additionally, through the required teaching practice in local schools, some informants have had double non-permanent children as students with whom they had deeper contact. Consequently, their perception of prejudice and discrimination against this group was found to be more sensitive compared with those without such experience. Lin (Informant 3) is studying English Language Education in HKIEd. She had already heard of abounding cases of double non-permanent residents in her hometown Fujian which is famous for its massive exporting of migrants, but she did not started to have direct contact with them before her one semester's teaching practice in a local primary school. Among all the informants, she is the one who showed the most unpleasant emotion when asked about feeling towards double non-permanent residents' issue:

'There were several double non-permanent children in my class at that time ...they could not speak fluent Cantonese and their grades, especially English, were lower than average ...But they were tough kids, one of them living in Shenzhen who travelled two hours to school was even the earliest one arrived every morning... They have already had difficulties catching up with the class and travelling between two places, extra pressure from discrimination is

just too much for them to bear...I certainly disagreed with those unreasonable discriminations. It is not the children who should be blamed.'

The knowledge gained of double non-permanent children and the personal relationship built between Lin and her students made her no longer an outsider in this issue. As a result, now Lin certainly has negative emotional reaction to prejudice and discrimination against double non-permanent residents and shares feelings with those being discriminated to some extent.

In all the derogatory names of Mainland Chinese groups used in Hong Kong, “Locust” was undoubtedly considered as the most prominent one arising strong, negative feelings for most of the informants. For “Locust” has been widely used on the Internet as an analogy to the whole Mainland Chinese group, though Mainland Chinese undergraduates knew it was not them who robbed the resources from Hong Kong and disrupted social orders, they still identified themselves as victims of this discrimination. All the informants defined “Locust” as a name targeting at all Mainland Chinese but not a certain group. Therefore, as long as “Mainland Chinese” still constitutes a part of their identity, they would be inextricably aware of prejudice and discrimination pertaining to the Mainland Chinese group. What has been revealed from the interviews is that Mainland Chinese undergraduates still had strong identification with “Mainland Chinese” (Or “Mainlanders”内地人), which they might hardly realize in the past.

One common experience could provide the evidence for their self-identification is when they were asked the question “Where are you from” together with Hong Kong counterparts by a foreigner. Ma’s story is one of the typical ones. She participated in an overseas summer school program with several Hong Kong students in Korea and they were once asked about nationality by a Korean girl:

'...I answered "China", while my Hong Kong friends said "Hong Kong". The girl happened to have some knowledge about the handover and got confused by our different answers. Then my Hong Kong friends spent a long time emphasizing that Hong Kong was different from China and they did not like to be called "Chinese". I was shocked by their answer, for me it was an undeniable truth that Hong Kong is part of China and they are Chinese as I am. But now it was like they were trying to draw a line in between to prove they were superior to you...Later they explained to me that they did not want to be thought of uncivilized, as some restaurants hanged "No littering" sign in simplified Chinese here, which meant Mainland Chinese did not enjoy good reputation...I understood their concerns, there were a lot of "uncivilized" people in China, but I still felt unhappy about their comments on China.'

Ma's story has indicated her sense of belonging to China and strong identification with "Chinese" brought by her eighteen years' life in Mainland China. She naturally felt unpleasant about her friends' negative comments on her homeland and found it hard to persuade herself to ignore their dislike of being Chinese. Another informant, Shi (Informant 1)'s story could further demonstrate Mainland Chinese undergraduates' inclination in self-identification. Shi is a Shanghai girl who enjoyed going shopping, she vividly recalled her memory of an encounter with a Mainland Chinese visitor in Shatin Newtown Plaza. The visitor was an old man, he sat in front of the display window of a clothing store and had bitter quarrel with clerks who asked him to leave:

'I felt very embarrassed, even though people did not know I am also a Mainland Chinese. It was this kind of people (the old man) who ruined the image of Mainland Chinese here, I felt ashamed for him. But seeing him being surrounded by crowd who kept blaming him, I could

not stop feeling very sympathetic: no matter what he did, he was still my compatriot (他還是我的同胞), at that moment I felt closer to him than to those local onlookers.'

Shi's self-identification as a Mainland Chinese offered accounts for her ambivalent feeling and stronger emotional link with a strange visitor from Mainland China compared to local people. Although this does not appear to every informant, it could be presumably concluded that a significant part of Mainland Chinese undergraduates' identity remains connected with being Mainland Chinese.

Lastly, another unsurprising finding is that all participants reported the prejudice and discrimination specifically towards them and their groups were relatively minor and not that negative. Their experiences in Hong Kong were said to be generally positive and enriching. While they were all more or less aware and had experience of being prejudiced, a large disparity comes concerning the times they acclaimed to be personally discriminated. Only three informants reported they had experienced discriminations during the past four years. A noteworthy common point is most of the discriminations happened outside campus during their first year of study when they could not speak Cantonese, when their identity as students was unknown to others. Therefore, in most cases, they were actually discriminated as "Mainland Chinese" but not "Mainland Chinese students". Though the frequency of direct discriminations is lower, they stayed in the informants' memory and could be recalled vividly after years. In other word, their influence seemed to be exceptionally prominent for the informants. Zeng, who was once told "You are not in Mainland!" by a local when walking with her friend who carried a luggage, admitted that it was since that day that she started to gradually lose interest in getting a permanent residency in Hong Kong. And Shi, who had been impolitely treated by some clerks when she spoke Mandarin to them, tended to exaggerate the prevalence of radical Hong Kong

people and carried a strong antagonistic mood along the interview. In short, despite the fact that such hostile experiences reported in contexts where Mainland Chinese undergraduates are the target of discrimination were virtually unheard of in the interview, serious personal discrimination does play an exceptionally significant role in shaping students' overall perception of Hong Kong and amending their future plan.

To sum up, on the whole, Hong Kong proves to be an environment that Mainland Chinese undergraduates find friendly and secure compared to Chinese students studying in western countries due to less personal prejudice and discrimination perceived (Yang, 2014b), but sometimes Mainland Chinese undergraduates could still perceive indirect prejudice and discrimination against their “compatriots” from Mainland China depending on their closeness to that certain group. Moreover, more direct prejudice and discrimination against all Mainland Chinese or their personal unpleasant experiences would be taken seriously and have prolonged effect on their acculturation, which is going to be thoroughly analyzed in the following parts.

4.2 Contact and participation

Contact with friends from the majority group and participation in the new society are central to one's acculturation as stressed by Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis & Sam (2010). Result from the plentiful quantitative studies reveal that greater levels of intergroup contact are generally associated with lower levels of prejudice, whereas lack of contact could result in difficulties in sociocultural adaptation (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). To examine how prejudice and discrimination influence Mainland Chinese undergraduates' acculturation, firstly the

possible impacts they have on the motivation of having intercultural contact and involving in local cultural groups need to be studied.

For most of the informants, non-personal, indirect prejudice and discrimination were considered as less important in influencing their motivations of contact with local people. Nevertheless, this weak influence was found to be mainly due to Mainland Chinese students' superficial relationship with locals in the first place. When asked about the reason for it, a common answer could be well represented by Mo (Informant 6), a male student from Shanghai who had extraordinary academic performance and was said to be welcomed among both Mainland and local students '*...because I seldom had long talks with Hong Kong students about stuffs other than study, most of the time we just had quick, necessary conversation. And both of us avoid talking about politics.*' According to Mo and other informants, trivial conversation and superficial relationship seemed to be able to be perpetuated even without deep, meaningful contact and consensus.

Regardless of the unchanged superficial contact, some informants admitted that they had hesitations to develop close friendship with locals who have prejudice and discrimination towards Mainland Chinese or China the country, especially when they failed to offer good reasons. While if they knew the locals enough to believe their prejudice were not personal, then its influence on their friendship would usually be quite minimal, such as Lin, who still managed to getting along with several local good friends in spite of knowing their prejudice against "Mainland Chinese":

'I still felt uncomfortable after knowing their reasons...but there was nothing I can do with because those prejudices were rooted in their mind, at least for most of the Hong Kong

people I knew. So as long as they are rational, they know there are different types of people in China, and they do not have prejudice against me, there is no need to end our friendship.'

Yet, if the informant did not know the local well enough, their fragile friendship would be likely to collapse due to prejudice and discrimination. Ma has shared her experience in a local school where she worked with other seven local students. After they formed a Facebook group, she found five of them had used the “Yellow Umbrella” as personal profile pictures, and eventually she only added the remaining two as friends:

‘I do not know exactly why I chose not to add them (those five students) ...but the image (Yellow Umbrella) did remind me of some radical discourses and people ...I was thinking, they must also had negative feelings toward China and Mainland Chinese, and that was the reason why they supported that movement’

Though Ma failed to explain the reason behind her act explicitly, her association of “Yellow Umbrella” with “the dislike of Mainland Chinese and China” is rather clear. The use of the image, for her, stands for the possible negative thoughts of China, the country which composes a major part of her identity. As a result, she unconsciously shut the door between this “risky group” who might be destructive to her self-esteem in the future. While in the former case of Lin, her relationship with local friends outweighed their prejudice against China as her knowledge of them persuaded her to believe they are still worth to make friend with.

Other than being influenced by prejudice or discrimination, a reciprocity of influence that deep contact has on eliminating negative impact of discrimination has been detected from the interviews. A typical case was found on Li (Informant 8), who was told ‘Mainland Chinese are not welcomed here’ by a local man when he was speaking Mandarin with friends on the street.

After sharing his frustration and resentment of this incident on Facebook, many of his local friends made comments to condemn that local man and comfort Li. With a sense of pride, Li told me:

'My friends always told me that I have reversed the image of Mainland Chinese in their heart, and I was no longer a Mainland Chinese for them. Their replies calmed me down and made me believe most people here are still good in nature, and I think as time goes by, they will develop a more rational idea of Mainland China.'

Conversely, if the informants lacked sufficient communications with local friends, personal experience of discrimination could easily elicit their continuous negative feelings and reduce motivation of having deeper contact with locals. Unfortunately, with limited face to face contact time, Facebook and other SNSs (Social Network Sites) have become the major tools for the majority of Mainland Chinese undergraduates to peep at their local friends' lives outside campus. Due to widespread posts containing discriminative words on Facebook, it was not hard for Mainland Chinese undergraduates to discover that their local friends have prejudice towards Mainland Chinese or China through the pages they liked and articles they shared. Seeing those posts continually made Mainland Chinese undergraduates suspect the truth of their relationship, doubting if their local friends also hold the same prejudice on them. The story told by Yu (Informant 5) from Beijing well revealed the doubt shared by other informants:

'One time I was surfing Facebook, and accidentally clicked into a page called Passion Times (熱血時報). The articles on that page were all super radical and illogical, I was just wondering what kind of person will subscribe to a page like this, but to my surprise, I saw it was liked by nineteen of my local friends...For some of them, I thought we were kind of

close, but there is no way I would think they have read those things. Their subscriptions somehow show what they really think inside, and inevitably have impacts on their values, and I have never found out when I was with them. It is really horrible to find the other side of your classmates, the real side.....So how do they really think of me? Are they hiding something negative? I have no idea...Who are they? The things they liked are so different from what I have known about them, for a moment they seem like complete strangers. Even though in HKIED we shared a space and a period of time, I still don't know what kind of person they really are.'

For Yu who lacked deep contact or close relationship with locals, information from Facebook could easily reverse her views on those friends or acquaintances she did not know much about and doubt if they were judging her in the same way. While she had worries, she did not spend more time with locals to verify her suspicion but let it grow stronger, which then made her more cautious about their relationship and widened the gap.

The impacts of prejudice and discrimination were more evident when regarding to social participation. A large proportion of the informants admitted they had little or no motivation to participate in activities organized by local societies in school or communities outside if most of other members were not of similar background or from the university. Just as Mo put, *'I am neither capable of nor interested in participating in local activities, unless other Mainland students go with me.'* Though they all agreed that locals in university held less prejudice against Mainland Chinese undergraduates, this is not always the case when stepping out the campus. It was always their experiences of being discriminated outside school that made them lose faith in integration. *'People in school are usually more rational and treat us well, they are better educated and know us more, but you have no idea what people outside could think of you and*

what problem you may have communicating with them.’ Zeng, who was verbally discriminated against twice outside school analyzed the risk as so.

Based on the analysis, my findings seem to suggest that superficial daily contact with local could be maintained easily. Yet, since prejudice and discrimination against Mainland Chinese could provoke Mainland Chinese undergraduates’ suspicion, they are more likely to resist deeper contact with those in the “risky group”, resulting in a fade of their willingness of establishing close friendship and participating in local activities. Simultaneously, friendship and contact could help to reduce the negative impacts brought by discrimination. In general, prejudice and discrimination negatively influence Mainland Chinese undergraduates’ motivation of developing deep contact and engaging with local society.

4.3 Maintenance of culture and identity

In addition to contact and participation, the other essential issue in one’s acculturation is the maintenance of culture and identity, or the change in cultural identification. The extent to which acculturating individuals consider the maintenance of original cultural identity as important plays a crucial role in shaping their attitudes towards acculturation and influencing future adaptation. In Mainland Chinese undergraduates’ case, a notable finding is that their maintenance of culture and identity seemed to be rather selective: Most of them chose to discard some useless parts while maintained the more valuable parts left. Some prejudices or discriminations, serving as a mirror of otherness, helped them to gain a critical self-consciousness to realize both their deficiencies and strengths and decide what they want to preserve and abandon. As a result, the informants’ identity as a “Mainland Chinese” was usually weakened due to changes in manners

and perceptions of some sensitive issues, such as the June Fourth Incident. Meanwhile, they tended to develop a stronger “Chinese” identity which on one hand, helps them to distinguish from pure “Mainland Chinese”, and on the other hand, enables them to benefit from the rise of Mainland China.

Before commencing their study in Hong Kong, Mainland Chinese undergraduates were mostly unaware of the negative impression Mainland Chinese left for local people. It is Hong Kong that gave them a critical consciousness of their original identity. By simply observing local people’s behavior and comparing with themselves, it did not take long for them to realize the bad manners they had and decide to remove them. *‘In Hong Kong I am extremely cautious in manner, I require myself to be even more polite than local people.’* Ma who paid extra attention to her manner emphasized. Lin also complemented her uncomfortable experience during the first summer vacation spent in her hometown. *‘I am becoming more and more intolerant of people cutting in line...though I used to be one of them... The first time I thought I was more like a “Hong Kong Yan” was when I was pushed by others rudely in my hometown.’* Almost every informant had similar uncomfortable experience when re-encountering with their “compatriots” who kept the way they used to behave in Mainland China.

Aside from superficial changes in manner, most informants also mentioned changes in their perceptions of some sensitive political issues, such as the June Fourth Incident, the sovereignty of Taiwan and so on. Due to the single party system and lack of press freedom in Mainland China, Mainland Chinese undergraduates were usually considered as blindly patriotic by their local counterparts. Having been asked by curious locals for too many times, Mainland Chinese undergraduates desired to reverse their patriotic image to break this annoying stereotype. Lin’s narrative illustrated her changes in this aspect.

'When they first met you they liked to ask you a lot of things about the June Fourth Incident. They thought you did not know anything and were deceived by Communist Party...though they enjoyed asking you, they actually did not know much about that incident and they did not care, either. What they would like to hear from you was quite obvious, but sometimes I did not want to satisfy them. I am trying to prove that my background does not necessarily make me blindly patriotic and unconditionally support everything Communist Party does.'

The prejudice has pushed Lin to think critically about the incidents and her standpoint over and over again. Eventually she adopted a more rational and open attitude to view those things and got rid of locals' stereotypes.

Being equipped with good manners and rational mind separated Mainland Chinese undergraduates from other Mainland Chinese groups being discriminated by Hong Kong people, which provides a sound excuse for their indifferent attitudes towards prejudice and discrimination against other groups. When asked about their origin, most of the Mainland Chinese undergraduates would intentionally mentioned their study experience in Hong Kong to imply their distinctiveness from "pure Mainland Chinese". However, with some transformations taking place, they still could not find a new identity more appropriate for their situation. Most of the informants chose to locate themselves somewhere between "Mainland Chinese" and "Hong Konger", whereas none of them thought it was possible to become "Hong Konger" even after obtaining permanent residency. Other than their cultural differences, the prejudice and discrimination also contribute to deteriorating the situation as elaborated by Mo:

'On TV You can always see 'Hong Konger' arguing with 'Mainland Chinese', they seem like completely opposite...Sometimes things got extreme and they said all the Mainland

Chinese were bad...that made me annoyed and wanted to defend for Mainland Chinese and China'

And Yu, who earlier defined herself as right in between Mainland Chinese and Hong Konger, refused to become a Hong Konger firmly later:

'They don't treat us as compatriots, so why should I? I have never thought myself as a Hong Konger, I am not and I won't be. I am from Beijing, and I also want my child to be a Beijinger, or Chinese.'

Mo and Yu's cases have proven that sometimes the overall prejudice and discrimination could damage the impression of local people in Mainland Chinese undergraduates' mind and create more distance between them. The immature and implicit identity of Mainland Chinese undergraduates was found to fluctuate according to the external environment.

Under this circumstance, there is an evident trend for Mainland Chinese undergraduates to identify themselves as "Chinese" rather than "Mainland Chinese". The reasons for them to pick "Chinese" lie in the particularity of "Chinese" identity. "Chinese", as a broader concept compared to "Mainland Chinese", satisfies the demand of sense of belonging and security that Mainland Chinese undergraduates yearn for. As mentioned by several informants, when facing with prejudice and discrimination, they were used to standing at the moral high ground by think Mainland China as the generous donator and Hong Kong as the ungrateful receiver. In this case, being Chinese gave them strong backup and a sense of pride to defend themselves against discrimination. At mean time, being Chinese provides accounts for them to escape from the conflicts between Hong Kong people and other Mainland Chinese if they do not want to engage in.

The experiences of Mainland Chinese undergraduates and the analysis have depicted a more complicated picture of the developmental trajectory of identity: they have not completely lost their original identity, meanwhile, they do not develop towards the identity people in the new society usually have. Instead, they compromised to a broader, intermediate one which can benefit them the most at current stage.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Supported by the extensive stories and evaluations of Mainland Chinese undergraduates, this study is able to locate the ambiguous position of this young talent group under the growing tension between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Besides, it also illustrates the complicated process of how prejudice and discrimination influence their acculturation from two dimensions: contact, participation as well as cultural and identity maintenance. It appears that although the “Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals” seems like a clear-cut policy to distinguish these students from other Mainland Chinese groups, the reality often involves more ambiguity and complexity. In most cases, Mainland Chinese undergraduates still perceived prejudice and discrimination against groups they were familiar with, hence reduced their incentive to deeply engage with local Hong Kong society and people.

For the contact and participation perspective, firstly, it has been found that a good utilization of friendship could diminish the negative influence of discrimination to a great extent, which corresponds with the previous research findings suggesting that social support from friends could act as a buffer against stressful and frustrating life experiences (Chou, Chow, Wong & Yip, 2013). Nevertheless, the study also detects a possible oversimplification of Berry’s acculturation

strategies model by identifying a difference between superficial contact and deeper contact. Though superficial contact between Mainland Chinese undergraduates and local counterparts does not seem to be influenced by prejudice and discrimination, it becomes a completely different story in terms of deep contact. The successful maintenance of superficial contact does not necessarily progress to deep contact, which is more significant in helping one integrate into a new environment. When motivation of contact is set as the first critical issue in determining one's acculturation strategy in the model, it does not specify which level of contact should be used here. The nuance between superficial and deep contact could easily be overlooked, and thus diminish the accuracy and predictability of acculturation strategies model.

Regarding the changes in cultural identification aspect, on one hand, the answers of the informants have proven the bi-direction characteristic of acculturation: Mainland Chinese undergraduates were found to identify with part of the new culture without necessarily losing their original culture (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis & Sam, 2010). On the other hand, their changes in culture and identity also reflect a second potential bias existing in the original acculturation strategies model: Due to the complex layers of identity, it is too absolute to let people tell if they wish to hold on their original identity or not. In most cases, people choose to discard some parts of their identities while still value and desire to keep the rest parts. A more delicate measurement of people's cultural identification considering this subtle difference will help to improve reliability of the model.

For a final evaluation, the negative influences of prejudice and discrimination definitely deserve more attention. Many informants during the interviews reported they barely had Hong Kong counterparts whom they could comfortably call "close friends." Except from the large distance

between these two groups, most of the informants also reflected little incentive to deeply involve in local society and considered Hong Kong as a “springboard” in their future development. Hong Kong seemed to be less attractive for them after a “honey month” period, and even though most of them chose to stay after graduation, they did intend to leave after obtaining the permanent residency. This could not be caused merely by prejudice and discrimination but a combination of a variety of factors. In the Policy Address 1998, the recruitment of 150 Mainland Chinese students annually into undergraduate programmes since 1999 was proposed in the hope that ‘the admission of non-local students facilitates the cross-fertilization of skills and ideas, injects an element of healthy competition for local students and broadens our students’ outlook on the Mainland and the region as a whole’ (Tung, 1998: para. 13), however, this goal could not be achieved without sufficient interactions and mutual perceptions between Mainland Chinese students and Hong Kong people, which requires a breakthrough of their current superficial relationship. Lastly, the study calls for an expansion of institutions and informants to better cover the “Gangpiao” group and examine contextual differences. In addition, for the study only talked from Mainland Chinese students’ side, the way the majority of Hong Kong people regard this group is also worthy of being studied.

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Appendix: Table 1: Profile of informants

Informant No	Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Programme (Year of study)	Hometown
1	Shi	Female	23	English Language Education(4)	Shanghai
2	Ma	Female	23	Chinese Language Education(4)	Yunnan
3	Lin	Female	22	English Language Education(4)	Fujian
4	Xing	Female	22	Chinese Language Education(4)	Shandong
5	Yu	Female	23	Chinese Language Education(4)	Beijing
6	Mo	Male	22	English Language Education(4)	Shanghai
7	Zeng	Female	23	Chinese Language Education(4)	Guangdong
8	Li	Male	23	Liberal Studies Education(4)	Heilongjiang

Declaration

I, *SHEN XINYI*, declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of *Dr. CHAN KIT WA Anita*, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Signed _____

Student Name: SHEN XINYI

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