

What sets them apart?

Parents of border-crosser students, Shenzhen



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What sets them apart? Parents of border-crosser students, Shenzhen.

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*"If there was no border,
Hong Kong would not
be that much better
than Shenzhen.
Just the same
as Shenzhen."*

(mother of border-
crosser student)

Abstract

Thousands of parents that live in Shenzhen have gone to neighbouring city Hong Kong to give birth. Children that are born in Hong Kong are automatically assigned with Hong Kong citizenship and forced to get an education in this city as well, even if their parents live in Mainland China. As it is difficult for most Chinese parents to migrate to Hong Kong, many of them have stayed in Shenzhen and are sending their children across the border every day to go to school. This research gives a better understanding of the background, perspectives and motivations of these border-crosser parents. It is found that they can be divided into two different types who distinguish themselves from other Chinese parents in varying degrees. Border-crosser parents of the *reactive type* were predominantly motivated to go to Hong Kong because of the one-child policy and indicate that they have to overcome more difficulties in their daily life than other parents. Border-crosser parents of the *proactive type* use Hong Kong as a steppingstone to give their child better opportunities. These parents also distinguish themselves from 'uneducated' Chinese people. All the border-crosser parents are positive about the border. Its existence offers them opportunities they would otherwise not have and they realise this.

Keywords

Border-crosser students, border, Hong Kong, education, distinction

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1. Introduction



Shenzhen is a modern Chinese metropolis, known for the explosive growth of its population and economy during the last thirty years. Shenzhen is the direct neighbour of another metropolis: Hong Kong. After the United Kingdom handed Hong Kong over to China in 1997 it became relatively easy for Chinese people to cross the border that divides the two cities. However, the border has been preserved because the former colony never became a regular part of China. Instead it maintained its autonomous status. After “the Handover”, many Chinese parents who were living in Shenzhen decided to give birth to their child in Hong Kong. This way, their child automatically received the status of a Hong Kong ‘permanent resident’. There are several arguments that can explain their actions: China has had a one-child policy since the 1980’s, a policy that does not exist in Hong Kong. So the parents could go to Hong Kong to have their second or third child. Another reason is that the quality of hospitals in Hong Kong is significantly better. The same goes for the education and social welfare system. And moreover, it is far easier for people with a Hong Kong passport to travel to other countries than it is for people from Mainland China.

All these advantages seem to make it a quite obvious decision. However, this decision has major consequences for the whole family. A child with Hong Kongese citizenship cannot go to a public school in China. And even though the parents can cross the border with Hong Kong easily, it is quite difficult for most of them to migrate to this city. Even if they can, living costs in Hong Kong are much higher than in Shenzhen. So the parents usually stay in Shenzhen and their child has to cross the border to go to school.

There are currently thousands of these ‘border-crosser children’ who undertake a daily travelling process of several hours. Even though the cities are located fairly close to each other, it takes time to travel to the border, go through customs and travel from the border to the school in Hong Kong. Most children go to school from the age of three, which means that they also start travelling at this age. Apart from the fact that crossing the border takes time, these children are also moving back and forth every day between two places that are different in many ways. These differences will be discussed later.

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The children find themselves in an exceptional position, which makes this an interesting topic. But maybe even more interesting are the parents. They are the ones in charge. They made the decision to give birth in Hong Kong and subsequently send their child to school in this city. Hence, this research will focus on the parents of the border-crosser children. A couple of studies have already been done with respect to school children crossing the border. The majority is specifically about Chinese students and mostly written by researchers from Hong Kong. However, this phenomenon still triggers many questions, especially about the 'border-crosser parents'. Firstly, what factors were of overriding importance when they made their decision? They did not choose the easy route for their child: the whole process requires time and money. It is not clear if the parents have thought about the impact it has on their child. Did they think it would have any impact and did they think their child would be just as happy as a child that goes to school in Shenzhen? What is the image these parents had of the education systems of Shenzhen and Hong Kong and has it changed? It is interesting to find out whether parents expected that their children would gain an advantage from going to school in Hong Kong and what that advantage would be. Has the decision of border-crosser parents influenced their lives and the way they see themselves?

This study provides information about the views and behaviour of people living in borderlands. Furthermore, it offers a view on the social and economic background of border-crosser parents and to get a better understanding of their motivations and perspectives. The group of people who took the decision to give birth in Hong Kong *distinguished* themselves from other parents-to-be when they made their decision. Now, their children travel across the border every day. Do the parents still distinguish themselves from other parents, and how? To answer this question, a theoretical distinction will be made between *pragmatic motivations* and *cultural motivations*. The former consists of a broad range of factors that could offer the parents a personal gain or benefit their children. The latter refers to factors that might not seem pragmatic directly. These motivations are inspired by cultural values and ideological convictions. Comparable studies about this subject will also be discussed. All this will lead to a research question and several sub-questions that will be answered in the subsequent chapters by means of the fieldwork that has been carried out in Shenzhen.

2. Two countries, one city



Before going more deeply into this phenomenon, it is necessary to describe the context. Shenzhen and Hong Kong are both cities with a remarkable history. Their unique characters most likely have a large impact on the course of many current events.

The cities of Shenzhen and Hong Kong are neighbours, divided by a border. Both cities are under the sovereignty of China and they both enjoy a special status in China. Before 1980, the area that is now Shenzhen consisted of not much more than wasteland and a couple of fishing villages. But this all changed when this region was designated to become one of the first Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in China. In 1978 president Deng Xiaoping had introduced the 'open door policy', which was meant to transform the country into a 'socialist market economy'. To stimulate this market economy, the government started to set up several SEZ's. These zones can have lower taxes and fewer regulations to attract foreign investments (Zacharias & Tang 2010: 214). Shenzhen had been chosen as an SEZ because of its close proximity to Hong Kong. It was immediately a huge economic success. It could offer the things that Hong Kong was starting to lack at that time: space, cheap labour and cheap housing (p. 215). Hence, Shenzhen increasingly received direct foreign investments, mostly in industrial enterprises. The majority of these investments originated from Hong Kong (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau 2002: 76).

When Shenzhen was starting to become a large city in the 90's, Hong Kong had already established itself as a metropolis. Hong Kong was able to take advantage of its historical background as an English colony and strategic position in South-east Asia as trading point (Kwok & So 1995:41). Even though Hong Kong was handed over to China by the British government in 1997, the city is still a Special Administrative Region within China and it knows a much more liberal system than the Communist system of the mainland, both politically and economically. This was implemented as a period of transition and will remain so until 2047, when Hong Kong will fully return to China. President Deng Xiaoping referred to the maintenance of Hong Kong's special status as: "*one country, two systems*".

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So even though Hong Kong has officially been part of China again for almost twenty years now, in practice it still feels like a different country in many ways. There are large distinctions between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Obvious things that any visitor would recognize, like the difference in language or the fact that people in Hong Kong drive on the left of the road while in China one has to drive on the right side. And even in the way people in Hong Kong queue in a store compared to people in Shenzhen who just flock together. There are also more subtle differences that are not so easy to distinguish by an outsider, but are important in how people distinguish themselves from each other. However, at the same time Shenzhen and Hong Kong have become increasingly intertwined economically, socially and physically during the last two decades, becoming an integrated cross-border region (Yang 2005: 211).

Cross-border birth

So how can women from China who give birth in Hong Kong lay claim to Hong Kong citizenship for their child and the accompanying social services? Most nations in the world determine citizenship at birth based on the citizenship of at least one of the parents. However, a minority of nations assign citizenship when a child is born within the territorial boundaries of that nation, regardless of the citizenship of the parents. This is called 'jus soli' or 'birthright citizenship' (Price 1997:73). Many countries have lifted this type of policy a long time ago. The United States are a famous example of a country that still maintains it, and so does Hong Kong.

However, since Hong Kong is officially not a nation-state it also does not have an exclusive national citizenship. Instead, people are given the right of abode under a separate status as 'Hong Kong permanent resident' (Ku 2001: 260). After "the Handover" of Hong Kong to China in 1997, mainland residents were able to cross the border much easier than before and increasingly visited the territory (Yam 2011: 6). Some of the visitors gave birth in Hong Kong and subsequently requested permanent resident status for their child. However, it took until 2001, after Chinese parents had taken the matter to court and were backed by the verdict, for children from non-local parents to receive the right of abode without conditions. The verdict was based on Article 24 in Hong Kong immigration law that was put in there because before 1997 no Chinese residents in Hong Kong had an automatic right of abode (Cheng 2007: 982). Hence the right of abode in Hong Kong follows the principle of birthright citizenship.

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Figure 1: map of the Shenzhen–Hong Kong area (Future Timeline).

After the legal process in 2001 border-crosser births took flight: from 5,830 in 1997 to 26,132 in 2006. The increasing influx of non-local women giving birth resulted in a protest by 50 local pregnant women who claimed that hospitals were becoming so overcrowded that they could not be helped properly (Yam 2011: 6). Since the border-crosser parents live in Shenzhen, they also live in very close proximity of the border. As a result of the strong economies in Guangdong province and the interaction between Shenzhen and Hong Kong this border is one of the busiest in the world. There are fifteen different checkpoints, which handle the largest flow of people and goods in China (Shenzhen Government Online 2015). The three checkpoints that are mostly used by the border-crosser children are: Luohu; Futian and Shenzhen Bay Control Point. Luohu checkpoint is the busiest checkpoint of the city. It is also

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the largest land border crossing in the world and the largest and most complicated metro hub project in present China (Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre 2015). The border runs parallel with the Shenzhen River for a large part. Most of the checkpoints are spread out along the river with customs buildings at both sides. People that cross the border here cross a bridge on foot that is marked as a 'neutral zone'. The only exception is the Shenzhen Bay checkpoint in Shekou, Shenzhen. At this checkpoint, both Shenzhen and Hong Kong customs are located in the same building. The building is connected with Hong Kong via a bridge that spans the Shenzhen Bay.

For citizens of Shenzhen and Hong Kong it is relatively easy to cross the border. Nowadays, they can arrange the right travel documents to go to Hong Kong via the Internet. Everyone has to apply for a new visa every year. Up until a few years ago the documents could only be physically collected and people had to stand in line for a long time. Since then, the provision of travel documents has been improved, along with other improvements to speed up the process. Especially the introduction of the 'e-channel' had large effects. Citizens of Hong Kong and Shenzhen that travel can use these channels and only have to scan their finger to get through. The Hong Kong immigration department first implemented them and not long after that Shenzhen followed. Where 'regular' citizens still have to stand in line sometimes at the border checkpoints, especially during rush hour, it is even easier for the border-crosser children to cross. In 2005, special lanes were set up for the children travelling to school to guarantee an even swifter passage.

The number of students travelling daily across the border to attend kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools in Hong Kong as at September 2014 was 24,990 (Hong Kong Education Bureau 2015). Over the last decade the number has increased drastically and are expected to keep growing vastly for the next few years to come (Zhao 2014). One of the consequences is that a large industry of so-called 'nanny buses' has come into being. These buses pick the children up from home and take them to their schools in Hong Kong while escorted by nannies. The demand for this service is so big that prices have continuously increased over the last decade (Ximin 2012: 2). Nevertheless, this phenomenon will not continue indefinitely. As of 2013, the government of Hong Kong implemented a new border policy that denies pregnant women to cross the border (BBC 2012). Hence, after an expected

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peak in 2017, the number of border-crosser children is likely to decline again since Chinese parents can no longer go to Hong Kong to give birth.

Timeline

- 1898: Start of British colonial rule in Hong Kong.
- 1978: 'Open Door Policy'. Start of a 'socialist market economy'.
- 1980: Shenzhen is designated as one of the first Special Economic Zones.
- July 1997: "Handover" of Hong Kong to China. Start of the Special Administrative Region.
- July 20, 2001: Verdict in the Chong Fung Yuen 'Right of abode' case.
- December 16, 2004: Introduction of E-Channels.
- December 21, 2005: Shenzhen Border Control Point sets up special channels for border-crosser students.
- January 1, 2013: Hong Kong government starts to deny access to pregnant women at the border.
- April 13, 2015: China limits visits by residents of the city of Shenzhen to Hong Kong.

Interaction between Shenzhen and Hong Kong

The interaction between people on both sides of the border has changed throughout the last decade. In the early 2000's, the value of the Hong Kong Dollar was still much higher than the Chinese Yuen, as well as the average wage in Hong Kong. In general people in Hong Kong were significantly richer than people in Shenzhen. The Hong Kongese visited Shenzhen at that time to buy cheap products. But all of this has changed. The currency rates turned around and Shenzhen kept on growing, becoming increasingly richer.

Now Hong Kong is visited more and more every year, mostly by people from Mainland China. Especially the number of people who cross the border to go shopping has been growing drastically (Choi e.a. 2008: 811). There are several reasons for Hong Kong's popularity amongst Chinese shoppers. Firstly, products from Hong Kong are considered to be of higher quality and there is a broader range of supply. Secondly, many things are cheaper due to lower taxes and the exchange rate. Thirdly, people have more trust in products from Hong Kong than products from China. This is the result of several scandals that occurred in China over the past

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years, including the infamous incident of the poisoned milk powder in 2008 that caused the death of six infants and the hospitalization of over 50.000 others. Incidents like these have led Chinese people to distrust homegrown products.

With the lower currency, lower taxes and higher quality of the products Hong Kong also became a booming business for traders who buy as many products as they can take across the border each time, which they sell for a profitable price in China. Over the last few years, people in Hong Kong have increasingly started protesting against the influences from the mainland, like the traders, the border-crosser children and political interferences by the Chinese government. The largest demonstration so far lasted from September until December 2014 and consisted of large groups of people occupying main streets in the city-centre. At its peak, over a 100.000 people participated. Many people in Hong Kong seem to be fed up with their Chinese visitors.

The context is important to understand the phenomenon this research focuses on and the individuals that are involved. Now the related studies and theories will be discussed.

3. Theoretical framework



Research on border-crosser students

Parents with children that have to cross the border and travel for hours to go to school are not very common, but the phenomenon does exist in a few other places in the world. A comparable case is that of children who are born in the United States from Mexican parents but live in Mexico in places spread out along the border and also cross it every day to get their education. They are called *transfronterizos* in these regions. Relaño Pastor (2007) describes the *transfronterizos* between San Diego in the US and Tijuana, Mexico. These children find a sense of belonging in border crossing as a way of life. Also, the *transfronterizos* distinguish themselves from second-generation Mexican-American youngsters who live in the US, since they do not share their bilingual proficiency and biculturalism. For the same reason there is also a distinction with the children from Tijuana, who do not cross the border and are usually not able to speak English (p. 275). This study provides an interesting perspective for the Shenzhen-Hong Kong case, even though there are contextual differences.

Huang and Yeoh (2005) examined the case of *study mothers* in Singapore. They state that an increasing number of families in East and Southeast Asia, especially Chinese families, made the education of their children an important 'project' that requires at least one of the family members to move abroad with them. This is usually the mother and she makes an enormous sacrifice to pursue the future goals she has set for her child by suspending her own career and personal ambitions. Of the identity of the mothers that migrate with their children remains but little more than being 'mother' (p. 397). The case of border-crosser families in Shenzhen is comparable in the sense that contextual factors enabled them to have their children in Hong Kong and send them to school here. It remains to be seen whether these families sacrifice as much as the *study mothers* do.

A few examples of border-crosser students can be found around the world. However, scholars have described none of them as extensively as the border-crosser students between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. The research on this subject is done pre-eminently by researchers from Hong Kong. Wong (2001) researched the phenomenon in an early stage, when there were about 2,200 border-crosser students going to primary schools in Hong Kong. At this time, the

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children had at least one parent who was also a Hong Kong resident, usually the father (p. 3). Wong notes that already in this phase schools in Hong Kong were asking for more resources.

In 2006, Kwan Hung performed a case study among border-crosser students in a public school in Hong Kong. Most of their parents are Hong Kong residents. They had a low social-economic status in Hong Kong and claimed to have moved to Shenzhen to enjoy bigger living space and better life quality in general. However, the fathers usually still live and work in Hong Kong, not in Shenzhen (p. 49). This is an important difference with the focus of my study, which will not include parents who are originally from Hong Kong. These families have the possibility to live in Hong Kong, but they prefer to stay in Shenzhen and tolerate the fact that their child has to cross the border. The border-crosser students do not seem to mind crossing the border every day. Kwan Hung observes a slight drop in numbers of border-crosser students (p. 96). However, he concludes that the border crossing of Hong Kong children from Mainland China is a most undesirable situation that should be addressed as soon as possible. He urges the governments of both Shenzhen and Hong Kong to come up with an alternative for the students (p. 97).

Yuen (2010) looked at the atmosphere for border-crossers students in school in Hong Kong. The majority claims they can easily make friends and their parents have positive opinions on the teachers. Furthermore, it is found that Cantonese, the official language in Hong Kong, is not a barrier for most of the students except some who still have an accent. The younger students are seemingly doing better than the older ones. Yuen also observes a perceived superiority of Hong Kong citizenship, especially among the Chinese Mainland mothers of the border-crosser children (p.19). Yuen's research also only looks at children who have a father with Hong Kong citizenship. Hence the border-crosser children living in Shenzhen in this research already have a background of Hong Kongese culture.

In a different study, Yuen (2011) observes the existence of a serious policy gap, which leaves it up to individual schools and teachers in Hong Kong how to deal with border-crosser students. This leads to significant differences. She also finds that teachers are increasingly aware of the transitional needs of students but lack the professional background to help them with this. Yuen urges the Hong Kong government to take fitting measures to provide better support for border-crosser students, as Hong Kong risks losing wider educational and societal cohesion

(p. 262). In the light of these conclusions, it will be interesting to compare views from the parents of border-crosser students on how they feel their child is treated in school and the quality of education in Hong Kong.

My research will focus on the parents of the border-crosser students. These parents distinguish themselves from other parents by giving birth in Hong Kong and subsequently sending their child across the border to go to school in Hong Kong. Three factors have to be studied to explain their decision. Firstly, the background of the border-crosser parents could have influenced them. Secondly, I will look at their perception of the border and their relationship with Hong Kong, and whether this has changed over time. Thirdly it is important to find out which motivations the parents had. A distinction will be made between pragmatic motivations and cultural motivations, on which I will elaborate in this chapter.

Shenzhen and Hong Kong: borderland

In this study, the line of demarcation between Hong Kong and Mainland China is referred to as 'border'. However, there is a difference in which terms the authorities in Mainland China and in Hong Kong refer to the border in English. The term 'boundary' has been of common use in Hong Kong since the nineteenth century (Graddol & Danielewicz-Betz 2014: 4). For this reason the students that cross the border with Hong Kong every day are called 'cross-boundary students' in most articles, since the majority of the authors have a background in Hong Kong. In this study the term 'border-crosser students' is used, since in Shenzhen it is more common to use the term 'border' when speaking English and the fieldwork took place in this city.

Borders are politically and socially constructed. They serve administrative purposes, are the cause as well as the consequence of regional identities and moreover affect land-use and spatial structures. These different aspects implicate an important influence of the people living around them. There are four reasons why the border between Mainland China and Hong Kong is a unique case in border studies.

1. This border does not have the status of a national border. But Hong Kong is also not a breakaway province; in fact it is not even a province.
2. Its sovereignty is ambiguous but at the same time not under dispute, neither internationally nor internally.

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3. Even though it is an internal border, it is heavily guarded. And at the same time it is one of the most crossed borders by people in the world.
4. The border already has a clear “expiration date”: in the year 2047 it is expected that it will be abolished; reunifying Hong Kong and China (Breitung 2004: 8).

Breitung describes the difficult integration process in Germany, when the border was suddenly abolished and the country reunited again. It had a disruptive effect, leading to a collapse of the economy and identity crises of many people. To let the convergence with Hong Kong pass off more smoothly, a period of transition was introduced whereby the city was made into a Special Administrative Region. Integration between the two sides of the border has increased during the late nineties (p. 9).

Breitung notices that, on a small scale, especially residents of the northern New Territories in Hong Kong tend to go to Shenzhen to buy goods and services because of lower prices. However, he argues that, on a larger scale, there are several contextual factors that hinder the integration process between Shenzhen and Hong Kong, among which are a significant wealth gap and the mentality of people in Hong Kong as being not very open towards integration (p. 16). Breitung’s article was written a decade before this study was performed. It offers the opportunity to reflect on how the situation of the border-crosser parents was influenced by this context and to see whether things have changed.

The border in its essence functions to keep people in their own space and to prevent or regulate the interactions among them. Borderlands are the frontline zones of contact (Martínez 1994: 3). This implicates that these areas also offer opportunities that other areas cannot offer. Martínez made models of four different borderland types, which are shown in figure 2. This categorization depends on the degree of cross-border movement and the forces behind it. The models tell us something about the stability and interaction in borderlands. Figure 2.1 shows an *alienated borderland*. This means that the border is functionally closed off, so cross-border interactions are almost or completely absent. Tensions prevail and people on both sides are like strangers to each other. Figure 2.2 represents a *co-existent borderland*. In this case the border is opened up slightly, allowing limited interaction between both sides. Borderlanders develop closer relationships with people on the other side than their compatriots. Figure 2.3 shows an *interdependent borderland*, implicating a situation that prevails to be stable most of the time.

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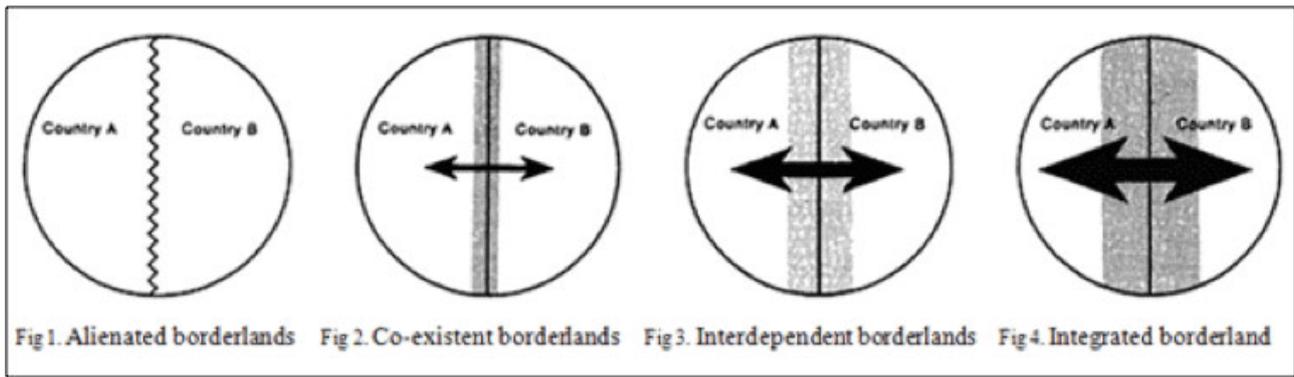


Figure 2: borderlands (Martínez 1994).

Cross-border interaction is increased by economic and social complementarity and the borderlanders have strong relationships with each other. The last type is reflected by figure 2.4. This *integrated borderland* knows a strong and permanent stability. This goes hand in hand with unrestricted movement of people and goods across the border and the borderlanders perceive themselves as being part of one social system (p. 6). Kwan Hung (2006) notes that the relation between Shenzhen and Hong Kong used to be practically non-existent before the ‘open door policy’ and fitted best with the model of *alienated borderlands*. He states however that the status quo changed into something else that can best be characterized as somewhere between *interdependent borderlands* and *integrated borderlands* (p. 17).

How would border-crosser parents perceive the borderland they live in? Martínez (1994) explains that, in most cases, borderlanders have to function in different worlds: the world on their side of the border and the one on the other side. Individuals who do not have to cross the border also have no need to develop such *multifaceted human proficiencies*, or even be knowledgeable to the perspectives of other people. This creates a sense of *otherness* between these individuals. The exposure of borderlanders to interactions and culture that are transnational enables them to develop versatility in their human relationships. Being within reach of a foreign economy also offers extra employment possibilities and consumer choices (p.25). So being able to cross the border could provide several benefits to the people that do this on a regular basis. But even though the children cross the border every day, it is not clear how many times the parents do the same. What is the relationship of the border-crosser parents with Hong Kong? For instance, how often do they visit Hong Kong and for what reasons? And ultimately: what if there was no border?

Pragmatic motivations

So what explains the parents' decision? Being born in Hong Kong could offer several advantages to both child and parents. As a matter of fact, many different motivations can be found to explain why parents would give birth in Hong Kong. This section elaborates on the *pragmatic motivations*, implicating a personal gain for the parents or for their child.

A major contextual factor that is likely to motivate the parents to give birth in Hong Kong is the Chinese one-child policy. This policy was introduced in 1979 and had large effects on a society in which parents used to have many children (Fong 2004:3). In the meantime, the economic reforms removed many of the social facilities people used to have, leaving having children as their only alternative retirement plan (p. 138). This is intertwined with *filial piety*, a concept that is important in societies with a Confucian heritage and characterizes many parent-child relationships in China (Ho and Yang in Bodycott 2009: 351). *Filial piety* is all about reciprocity: parents will do everything for their child to ensure they are brought up in the best way possible. In turn the child is expected to repay this by long-term love, respect and especially by taking care of his or her parents. The child is expected to carry out wishes of the parents (Ho in Bodycott 2009: 351). It could very well be that the parents expect their children to be better off as Hong Kong citizens, hoping for a better reciprocal treatment in their future life. And having more than one child offers a significant improvement of the retirement plan when this consists of being taken care of by your children.

There are more reasons that could explain the decision. Ling Sze Leung (2012) argues that parents might prefer an education in Hong Kong for their child, for which she has two explanations:

1. Parents have more confidence in the Hong Kong education system due to bilingualism and higher evaluations.
2. Hong Kong provides parents with subsidies to meet the education fees (p. 265).

Do the border-crosser parents agree with these arguments? Historically, the Chinese education system has always been very hierarchical and mainly focused on examinations (Dello-Iacovo 2009: 241). There has been widespread criticism on schools within China but so far attempts to reform have proven to be very difficult. The structure remains elitist, meaning that teachers spend most of their time on the promising students while overlooking others. This puts a high pressure on the children to perform at school, which is further increased by

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the economic reforms and increased stratification of society (p. 242). Do the parents also believe that schools in Mainland China put too much pressure on children? And how did they experience their own education when they grew up?

Cross-border birth is the only way into the Hong Kong education system for Chinese parents. There are two main types of schools in Hong Kong. The public schools have Cantonese as the first language. Then there are also private schools that follow the British education system. There is a strong competition between schools. The most popular schools teach in English. School attendance is not everything; there are many industries popping up in the city that offer extracurricular activities to the students (Karsten 2014: 4). Karsten interviewed dual parent middle-class families in Hong Kong. Her respondents widely discussed the high pressures of the Hong Kong school system on children. The parents that she spoke with did not want to put too much pressure on their child, but also felt like they had no other choice sometimes. The public schools that use Cantonese as first language are commonly regarded as too demanding as they have strict discipline and excessive homework regimes. The private schools with a British educational system focus more on creativity and critical thinking and have less homework demands. This makes the British schools significantly more popular amongst Hong Kong parents. However, the parents who succeed to get their child to a British school paradoxically find that there is a lack of discipline here, describing it as 'too much playing'. So as compensation, they schedule extracurricular activities for their children. The parents like structural learning programs, which are offered by external market-driven learning centres. Many of these parents work as professionals in internationally competitive organisations. They are aware of the insecurities of the future (p. 11). It is not clear whether the parents from Shenzhen send their children to Cantonese or English schools in Hong Kong, and if they had a choice. Does it matter to the border-crosser parents which type of school, or which school they send their children to? Are there similarities with the wishes and concerns the parents from Hong Kong have, as described by Karsten?

Bodycott and Lai (2012) describe how cross-border higher education is important for Chinese families. It does not only offer opportunities for a student from the Chinese Mainland, but is also literally an investment in the future of the family. The exclusiveness of cross-border education facilitates social and cultural capital that serves to exclude other locals from the

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mainland (p. 255). These conclusions could also apply on the cross-border students that are described in this research, since they also have their education in an exclusive context.

Tamis LeMonda e.a. (2008) describe how societal-level value systems can impact individual-level developmental goals. In general, the changes caused by globalization, immigration and technology expose people to different values and behavioural systems from the ones they might have been used to (p. 203). When looking at China, the rapid social, political and economic changes may cause a new balance of developmental goals and patterns of associations in workplace and family that lead to new ways of thinking and acting (p. 204). Are these new ways of thinking and acting already visible in the border-crosser families? It depends on what the parents consider to be the best way to prepare their children for the future.

It seems desirable for someone from Shenzhen to move to Hong Kong since it is the more established city, with its international allure, higher wages and wide variety of high-quality consumption products. Hong Kong has tightened up its migration policy since the Handover. Now, the quickest way to obtain Hong Kong citizenship is by investing in a Hong Kong based company. According to the Hong Kong Immigration Department (2015), these investments start at well over €1.1 million. Another motivation for the parents could be to evade the migration policy in Hong Kong, which states that once a child with a Hong Kong passport is grown up, its parents can apply for migration to Hong Kong with their child (Community Legal Information Centre 2015). So having a child in Hong Kong can make it much easier to migrate.

Cultural motivations

Apart from the many different *pragmatic motivations*, other incentives could be involved as well. In the competitive society that is China, the border-crosser parents have distinguished themselves from other parents by choosing a relatively more difficult path for their child. Could it be that subconsciously or consciously they also did this to get ahead in society? And if that is the case, do they believe that they are still on the right trail? To answer this question, this study will also look for *cultural motivations*. These motivations are more abstract and may not seem all that pragmatic, but mainly have a symbolic value.

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For his book 'Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste' (1984), French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu studied the lifestyle and cultural taste of a large group of people. He used his research to show that the tastes and practices of people are not simply a personal preference but, moreover, they can be an expression of a sense of belonging to a certain social class. He argues that *class* is determined by three things: "*volume of capital, composition of capital, and change in these two properties over time (manifested by past en potential trajectory in social space)*" (p.114). *Capital* is a crucial concept to understand *class*. Bourdieu discerns four forms of *capital*: economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. *Economic capital* concerns straightforward financial assets; *cultural capital* is more abstract: it is mainly institutionalized through education and intellect and *social capital* consists of social connections (Bourdieu 1986: 243). *Symbolic capital* refers to a degree of prestige, status and authority (p. 255). The possession of a certain volume of these different forms of capital enables people that are part of a certain social class to distinguish themselves from other social classes. In other words, seeing yourself as being different from others. The act of giving birth in Hong Kong and sending a child to school across the border implicates that parents are willing to put in a certain degree of effort and money. The question is whether the parents that behave this way are a specific group, or class, of people and whether they also perceive themselves as being different from other parents?

Ball e.a. (2006) argue that parents' choice in education is systematically related to social class differences and the reproduction of social class inequalities. They conclude that despite some commonalities, there is a distinctive variation in the meanings of choice between classes (p. 44). Can the choice of border-crosser parents for education in Hong Kong be explained by wanting to belong to a certain class? Vincent and Ball (2007) state: "*Acts of consumption and 'taste' are used to maintain, strengthen or sometimes challenge social boundaries*" (p. 1066). Sending your child to school in Hong Kong could be a classificatory practice that may strengthen or challenge social boundaries that might exist between parents living in Shenzhen. Do the border-crosser parents experience this in the same way?

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4. Methodology



So far, most of the research on border-crosser students was performed by scholars from Hong Kong. The study I carried out provides new perspectives for different reasons. Firstly because I am not from China, unlike other researchers. Secondly, the context that was described in earlier studies also has changed during the last couple of years, due to changes in policy and the still on-going development of Shenzhen. And thirdly because the focus of this study is also slightly different from earlier research since the children were not interviewed. Instead, most of the attention was given to the perspectives of the border-crosser parents. These parents distinguished themselves from other parents when they decided to give birth in Hong Kong and have their child follow an education in Hong Kong as well. The essence of this research is to find out whether these parents still distinguish themselves from others and how.

Research question:

How do the parents of border-crosser students in Shenzhen distinguish themselves from other parents in the city?

To find whether border-crosser parents perceive a degree of distinction between themselves and other parents in Shenzhen, it is necessary to look into different aspects of the life of their lives. To accomplish this, three sub-questions have been formulated. The first sub-question is essential to see the experiences of the border-crosser parents and their motivations in the right perspective. The second sub-question is mainly descriptive and helps to understand the context of this phenomenon. The third sub-question looks for both the *pragmatic motivations* as the *cultural motivations* that the parents might have.

Sub-questions:

1. What is the social and economic background of border-crosser parents?
2. How do the border-crosser parents experience the presence of the border and of neighbouring city Hong Kong?
3. What motivated the border-crosser parents to have their child born in Hong Kong?

Operationalization

The following concepts will be used to operationalize this research:

Border-crosser parents: the term that is used to describe the parents of border-crosser students. They live in Shenzhen and are born in Mainland China, but have a child with Hong Kong citizenship.

Social and economic background: characteristics of the background of border-crosser parents.

Perception of the border and Hong Kong: the opinion that border-crosser parents have about crossing the border and different aspects of Hong Kong: its people; the culture and the city as a whole.

Pragmatic motivations: factors that could offer the parents a personal gain or benefit their children.

Cultural motivations: factors that might not seem pragmatic but have a symbolic value.

Distinction: expressed through the perception of the border and Hong Kong and pragmatic motivations and/or cultural motivations.

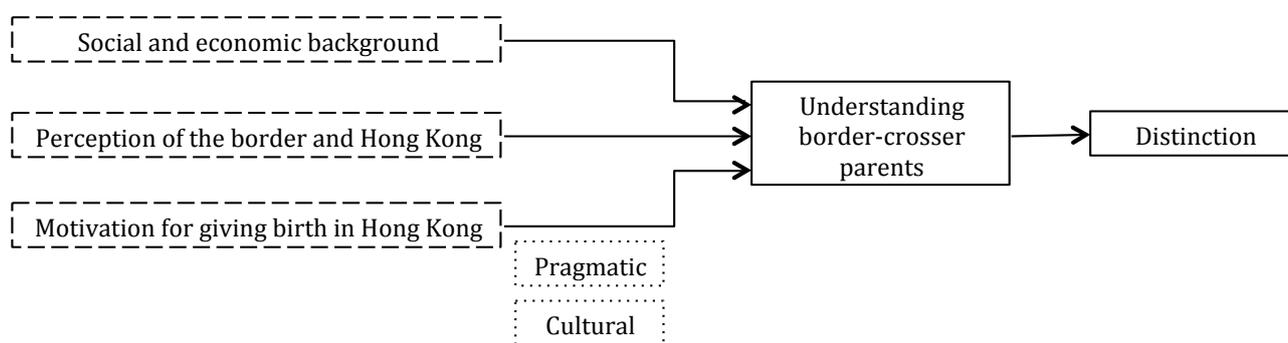


Figure 3: conceptual scheme.

Collection of data

Earlier research about border-crosser children was mainly concerned with the situation in schools in Hong Kong and children with parents that are originally from Hong Kong themselves (Kwan Hun 2006; Yuen 2010; Yuen 2011 & Ling Sze Leung 2012). Therefore I have chosen to focus on Chinese parents with border-crosser children. This choice has its benefits. It makes it possible to meticulously describe the experiences of a specific group. However, it also implies that other views will be left out of the picture. This matter will be discussed in the discussion part in Chapter 9. Regarding the problem statement, a research of qualitative nature was chosen. Hereby I will apply a case study design, more specifically distinguished as

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a *unique case*. This implicates that the respondents find themselves in an extraordinary situation that only occurs in a few other places in the world (Bryman 2008:55).

Since this study is mainly descriptive and explores a specific case group, the fieldwork was aimed at accomplishing two things, namely to create a complete picture of the border-crossing process and to learn about the perspective of Chinese border-crosser parents and how they see themselves. For this reason I have chosen to do *in-depth interviews*. As a form of triangulation, and to be able to use more information to describe the context of this phenomenon, several *street interviews* were held with parents who were picking up their children at the checkpoint of Shenzhen Bay Border. These street interviews were short and were carried out by presenting statements to parents, to which they each had two options for answering. The border-crossing process of the children was *observed* at different checkpoints on different times, both in the morning when the children were on their way to school as well as in the afternoon when they were travelling back home. I have also accompanied one of the children and her mother across the border to school to get a better impression of the travelling process.

The data that was ultimately gathered consists of in-depth interviews with parents (N=17), short interviews based on statements (N=11), one interview with a consultant from the Border-crosser Education Service Centre and observations at different border checkpoints. The in-depth interviews were spread out over fifteen sessions, which means that there were two sessions with two parents at the same time. In these double-interviews, the respondents sometimes discussed their answers together, but did not agree with each other all the time. Most of the interviews were with one of the parents, but there was also one interview in which both parents participated. The majority of the interviews were with mothers. Only two interviews were with a father. The interviews took place on a location that was chosen by the respondent. Sometimes this was at their home, but most of the times they preferred to meet in a café or restaurant near their home or I met with them at their workplace since most of the parents have a busy schedule.

For the recruiting of respondents I have used *theoretical sampling*, which implicates that a goal-oriented selection of respondents is made, that proves to be relevant for the research (Silverman 2010:308) For the creation of the sample, two selection criteria were used. Firstly,

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at least one of the parents had to be Chinese. In 15 of the respondent families both parents are Chinese. There were two interviews with mothers who are married to a foreign husband. Secondly, the respondents had to not only have a child born in Hong Kong, but also send it to school there. This implicates that all the parents have experience with sending their children across the border daily. There were a few exceptions made, as some parents in the sample have bought or hired an apartment in Hong Kong. They were still added to the sample as most of their children did cross the border daily in the past and they also have experience-based opinions on the travelling process and other aspects of this phenomenon.

To find the respondents, contacts were made throughout my stay in Shenzhen on different occasions, in different parts of the city. These contacts helped me to reach the parents that were interviewed. This way a random sample group was created, in which most of the respondents do not have any links amongst each other. The respondents live in different places in the city, spread out over five different districts. A sample existing of seventeen respondents is a small basis for general conclusions about all the border-crosser parents. However, comparing their opinions and perspectives, especially by looking for variation or overlap, can be valuable and tell something about what kind of people border-crosser parents are.

Prior to the research, it was expected that at least about 15 interviews would be necessary to create a reliable image of border-crosser parents. This estimation turned out to be true, since around the fifteenth interview *theoretical saturation* started to occur (Bryman 2008:416): new interviews did not seem to shed new light on earlier findings. Nevertheless, I chose to continue and with more interviews. These last interviews generated results that were to a large account in line with earlier results.

In-depth interviews

The duration of the interviews varied strongly, from thirty minutes to almost two hours. To create an interview guide (appendix 2), the theoretical framework was used to distinguish the different concepts and categories that were expected to be of importance for the research. This led to the composition of *sensitizing concepts*, which are meant to provide 'a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances' (Bryman 2008: 373). In this regard the fieldwork started mainly deductive (Bryman 2008: 9). During the process of

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the fieldwork, findings of the latest interviews were constantly compared to earlier findings and the related theory. This mode of operation of constant comparison is also known as the *Grounded Theory* method (Silverman 2010). This method enabled me to discover the themes that turned out to be of importance to the parents and incorporate these in subsequent interviews. Hence the interview guide was constantly slightly updated.

Since most of the parents do not speak English, translators have helped with twelve of the interviews. The remaining five interviews were held in English and no translator was used. Unfortunately, due to financial- and time restrictions it was not possible to employ a single translator for all the interviews. This would have been beneficiary for the value of the data as well as the continuity of the data. Instead, ten different translators were asked to help. To make sure that continuity and objectively comparable data would still be achieved, the interviews in Chinese were very structured and questions were translated beforehand, so different translators still used the same questions. A disadvantage was that this mode of operation made it difficult to ask further questions on some of the subjects, as this could easily create a misunderstanding between respondent and researcher. The interviews in English were different from the Chinese interviews in many respects. The same information was gathered as in the Chinese interviews, however several subjects were discussed much more thoroughly. Another difference was that English-speaking parents were more eager to share their opinion on different subjects and also told several things without being asked about it. In these interviews the interview guide was used less, even though great care was given to make sure all the important topics would be addressed. So these interviews became semi-structured to an increasing extent (Bryman 2008:436).

To analyse the interviews, they were transcribed and subsequently processed with the use of the program Atlas.ti. To process the transcripts, all parts of the text were allocated with codes. Primarily, these codes were mostly summarizing. But throughout the process more overlap between answers was found and overarching codes could be made. When new codes were made, the earlier processed interviews were read again to see whether these new codes also applied. This constant comparison of the data, which is a distinctive feature of the grounded theory method, ultimately led to several groups of codes that showed the most important concepts throughout the different interviews.

Evaluation of quality

To assess the quality of qualitative research, it is necessary to discuss the different aspects that are involved here. Guba and Lincoln provide primary criteria that are pre-eminently applicable to qualitative research: *trustworthiness* and *authenticity*. These criteria implicate that multiple truths can exist, depending on which perspective is taken. This way they leave more room for different interpretations of the findings (Bryman 2008:377).

Trustworthiness can be distributed over four different criteria. The first one is *credibility*. To reach this, I have used different research methods. This *triangulation* consisted of complementing in-depth interviews by short street-interviews and observations. A professionally involved consultant was also interviewed. This way I have aimed to obtain a complete picture of the phenomenon that was studied and its context. The next criterion is *transferability*. The respondents were, to a large extent, selected randomly. I have not looked for any specific characteristics. A potential bias is that almost half of the parents that were approached have refused to cooperate. These parents might have had a different opinion from those who did want to be interviewed. It is hard to comment on it, other than that the sample group still displayed a wide range of opinions. This strengthens my impression that all relevant opinions have still been heard. Since the sample group is very small compared to the total research population, the *transferability* of this research is limited. However, that does not mean this research is not relevant. Focusing on a limited group also brings advantages; it enables a thorough study of the different experiences of border-crosser families. In this way it can contribute to the scientific knowledge about people that live under these specific circumstances. The *dependability* was achieved by using quotes from the respondents throughout the text and the enclosure of the interview guides that were used for the in-depth interviews (appendix 2) and the street interviews (appendix 3). Ultimately there is the *confirmability* of the research. I have tried to pursue this by making sure to refrain from personal opinions during the interviews and showing any values of judgment.

Apart from the *trustworthiness* of a research, its *authenticity* is also of importance. Guba and Lincoln indicate that this mainly concerns being objective while describing the results and aim to reflect on all the different perspectives that were encountered during the fieldwork. This will be accomplished by ensuring that when a topic is described, all the different opinions from the respondents will be discussed.

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Obstacles

The first two weeks of fieldwork were mainly used to create a social network through which the respondents could be reached. This network turned out to be useful. However, it was more challenging to persuade the people that I approached through different contacts to be interviewed, even though anonymity was guaranteed. Many parents were approached and many did not want to cooperate with an interview. They often stated they were too busy for it. Others refused the interview because they found the topic too sensitive, or they claimed to be afraid that the Chinese government would find out they had more than one child. Overall about ten possible respondents rejected the invitation for an interview. One of the respondents who did agree to be interviewed would not have it recorded and set great store by staying anonymous, claiming that she was afraid of responses on the internet. However, most parents who were in the sample group did not mind to share their information and also did not worry about being anonymous at all.

Now that the methods of this research have been discussed and its quality has been evaluated, we can move on to the chapters that will describe the empirical data.

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5. The border-crosser parents



In this chapter the parents who cooperated with this research will be introduced and their background will be discussed. Most of the parents will be quoted throughout the writings. The respondents are all referred to by pseudonyms to grant their anonymity. To make it easier for the reader to know which interviews were done with the help of a translator and which were not, all the respondents that spoke English are given Western names. The respondents who did not speak English have Chinese names. Two of the parents in the sample are not quoted. The fifteen others who are, are described shortly below.

Ai has a son who is born in Shenzhen and a daughter who is born in Hong Kong. Her daughter is the youngest with 11-years old and travels across the border alone. Ai tells that she is often worried about her daughter when she is on her way to school.

Barbara went to Hong Kong for the birth of both her children. So far she has sent them to an International School in Shenzhen. She also works in this school herself, as an assistant teacher. In the next school year her daughter will start crossing the border, because Barbara finds the school fee in Shenzhen too high.

Cuifen and her husband have three children. The youngest is born in Hong Kong and crosses the border. During her childhood she used to be very poor and did not always have enough to eat. At the time of the interview she and her husband were looking for an opportunity to start a new restaurant.

Dianne is divorced and works part-time as a primary school teacher. She also runs her own business that provides after school classes for children. Her oldest daughter is born in Hong Kong, and her second in the United States. Her oldest daughter travels to school on a so-called 'nanny bus'.

Ehuang has one son. She and her husband bought an apartment in Hong Kong, where her son lives with his grandmother on weekdays. But she is planning to let him cross the border when he is older, so he can live at home with his parents again.

Fuhua is a company owner and also bought an apartment in Hong Kong. On weekdays, his children live there together with his wife. Both his children go to a prestigious International School in Hong Kong.

Guang has a son and a daughter and, like Ai, her daughter is born in Hong Kong. She is 8-years old and takes a taxi together with other students after crossing the border.

Huang Fu is co-owner of several companies, among which a chain of Chinese preschools. He is in the process of opening a preschool in Hong Kong as well. Huang Fu had his first son in Shenzhen and the next in Hong Kong. He regrets not having them both in Hong Kong because he likes the Hong Kongese education system so much.

Irene also had both her children in Hong Kong. Her oldest daughter used to cross the border, but now her daughter lives in a rented apartment in Hong Kong with her grandmother so she can live close to school on weekdays.

Janine works for a Hong Kong based company. She is very outspoken and also the only one who has experience in crossing the border daily herself. Her son has been crossing the border since he was three years old but she is looking for an alternative.

Kai-Ying also uses a nanny bus to send her daughter to school in Hong Kong. Kai-Ying was afraid of negative reactions because of the interview for this research and very keen to stay anonymous.

Laura and her husband both obtained Hong Kong citizenship. They have three children and their youngest is born in China because the renewed policy made it impossible to have her in Hong Kong. Currently the family lives in Shenzhen, but they are planning to move to Hong Kong in the near future because they do not want their children to cross the border.

Meilin was interviewed together with Laura. She used to send both her sons across the border to school, but now she lives with them in an apartment in Hong Kong during weekdays because it gives her children more leisure time.

Ning had her first child in Shenzhen and her second in Hong Kong, to avoid the one-child policy.

Honesty

Sometimes it could be difficult to estimate the true value of the answers by different respondents, especially when the interviews were held in Chinese. Several people who I discussed this topic with told that Chinese people are traditionally polite to strangers. Being interviewed by a foreign researcher might even have strengthened their politeness. One of the respondents, Janine, also gave her opinion on this: *“The people who don’t speak English, they are just being polite. It’s not necessary to show you the many problems that occur in their lives.”* With these problems she refers to whether the travelling process can be expensive, as well as cultural differences with people from Hong Kong. It is important to keep this in mind when judging the different responses of the respondents. In Janine’s opinion, parents were not compelled to complain to me: *“You’re not from the government. If you’re from the government they are going to complain much more, I promise you.”* The border-crosser parents have been framed badly in both Hong Kong and Chinese media during the last decade. In China because of the tiring travelling process they let their children go through. In Hong Kong the parents are accused of filling up all the schools illegitimately. It might have encouraged the respondents to paint a nicer picture than it really is.

However, it should be mentioned that none of the parents was solely positive about their situation during the interviews. Every respondent had varying opinions about the subjects that were discussed. But there was a notable difference in the degree of complaining. The English-speaking respondents did complain notably more, and also had stronger opinions about the way the Chinese government functions and how they perceive the system and society of China.

Age of the children

Of the parents that were interviewed, the youngest child currently crossing the border is five years old. Four of the respondents have a child born in Hong Kong that is now at the age of three or younger than that. But none of these children are sent across the border because they are still in a private preschool in Shenzhen, or because they live in an apartment in Hong Kong during weekdays. However, most of the parents that were interviewed did send their children across the border everyday from the age of three. This is the normal age from which the

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border-crosser children start going to school in Hong Kong. Figure 4 shows that the respondents' children that were born in China are generally older. This implies that they usually already had a child before they gave birth in Hong Kong. Eight of the parents gave birth to their first (sometimes only) child in Hong Kong. The other ten had their second or third child in Hong Kong.

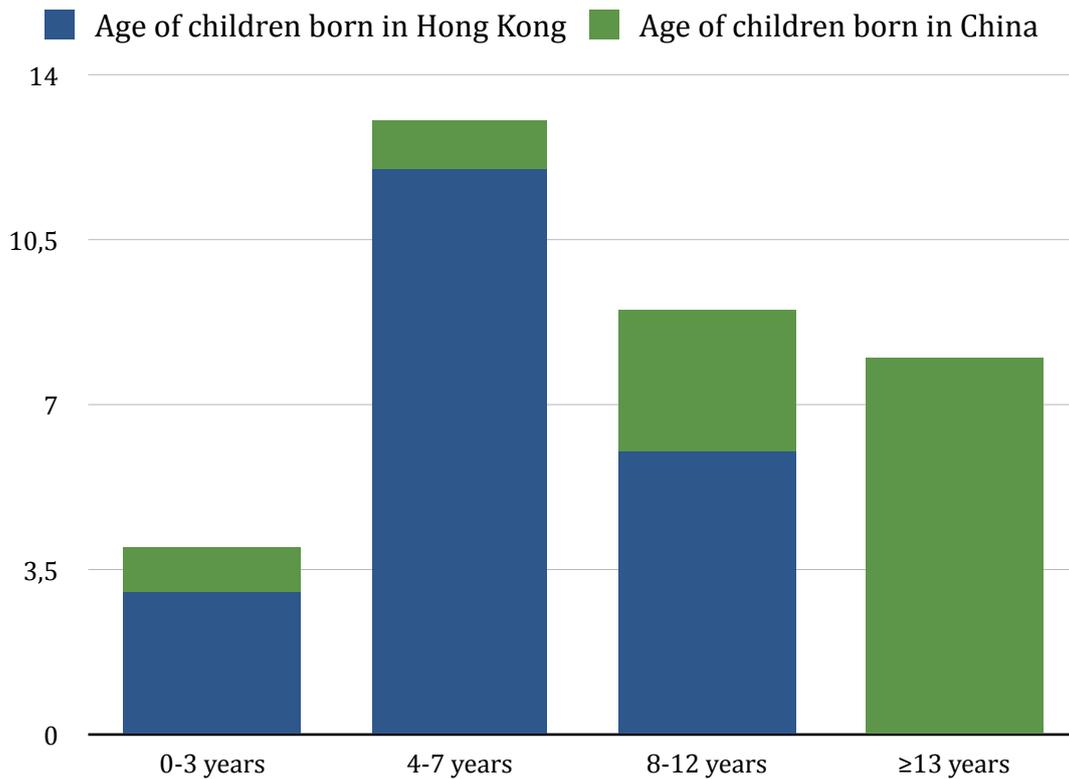


Figure 4: age of the respondents' children.

Background of the parents

Of the parents that were interviewed, six are not from the province of Guangdong originally. And of the eleven interviewees who do have their hometown in Guangdong, six grew up in Shenzhen. So about one-third of the parents are from Shenzhen, two-thirds are from Guangdong and a remaining third migrated to Shenzhen from different places in China. Figure 5 shows the birthplaces of all the parents, both the respondents and their partners. They were all in their twenties when they moved, which they usually did after graduating from college. Most of the parents came looking for work. In other cases, family-members had already moved to Shenzhen after which they followed. Two-thirds of the parents have a university education. The remaining third finished high school or middle school.

5. THE BORDER-CROSSER PARENTS

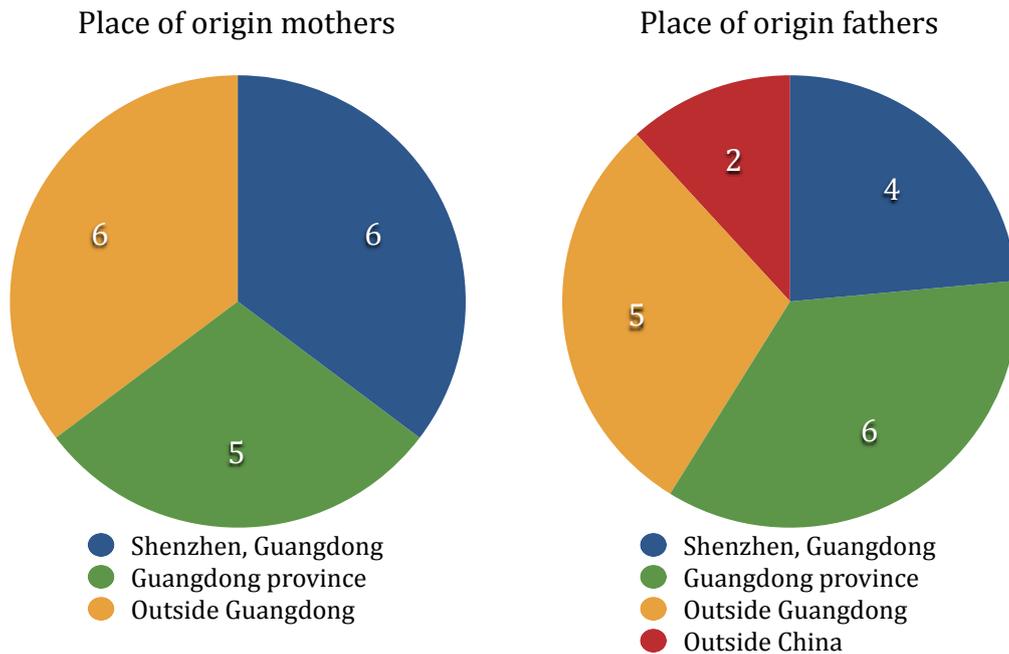


Figure 5: the places of origin of the respondents and their partners.

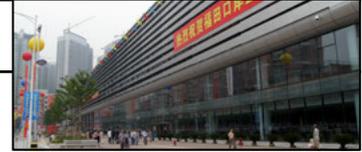
Many of the parents in the sample have origins in Guangdong province. Those respondents who grew up in Guangdong feel a strong connection to the Cantonese culture. Janine calls herself “*kind of Hong Kongese*”. In her opinion, the culture is also “*exactly the same*”. Most of the parents in the sample visit Hong Kong quite often. They go to visit the school of their child or to buy things. Almost all of the parents indicate that they have either friends or family, or both, living in Hong Kong. Only three of the respondents claim they have neither. So obviously, the majority of the parents not only have ties with the city through their child’s school, there are also personal ties.

Many things changed in China during the last decades and especially in Shenzhen. This had a great influence on the childhood of the parents that were interviewed and on that of their children. The youngest generation is growing up in prosperity and only have known economic growth. But some of their parents grew up in a time when there was still a high poverty rate. When asked about how life was in the past and how it is for their children now, all the parents indicate without a doubt that things were completely different. Some of them did not always have enough to eat and they all claim that they are richer now than they used to be, which enables them to give their children a better, happier life. Cuifen is one of the parents who

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describes her childhood situation as being very poor. Now, she believes that some rich families send their children to school but do not really care whether they also study hard. She, however, states that she does her best to support her children's studies. She does not say it directly, but Cuifen clearly expects of her children to work hard and find a good job in later life, so they will never end up in the same situation that she used to be in. Overall, most of the parents clearly have high ambitions for their children.

6. Perception of the border and Hong Kong



In this chapter the travelling process of the children of the border-crosser parents will be discussed. It will also be discussed whether the children like their school, have friends in school and if they are happy in general. Subsequently, this chapter will elaborate on the view of the border-crosser parents on the border and zoom in on the role of Hong Kong in their lives and how the parents relate to this neighbouring city that is so different from their own.

Travelling process

On a regular weekday, Dianne's daughter wakes up at 5:50 am. Her grandma has prepared breakfast and gets her ready for school. At 6:20 am, the nanny bus drives by her home in Shekou district and picks her up. At 6:45 am the bus arrives at the Shenzhen Bay Border Checkpoint. Around this time all the children are pouring in. They also come by bus, or are dropped off by their parents with a car or scooter. The children gather in front of the departure gate of the checkpoint, where the nannies from the school buses to Hong Kong are already waiting for them, making sure that the children form up in groups in orderly fashion. Once the groups are complete they move into the checkpoint building to cross the border. On the other side of the building Dianne's daughter gets on the bus again. About an hour later she arrives at school, at 8 o'clock. She is well on time: school starts at 8:15, which is also the time the entrance gates are firmly shut.

This daily process happens all over the city, as the children travel across different checkpoints spread out along the border to get to their school. Some of the parents bring their children to the border. Others do not have the time to do this and let the grandparents go with their children or hire a nanny bus that picks the children up at home. Only three parents out of the sample of this research use the nanny bus service in Shenzhen. After arriving at the checkpoint, the children cross the border on foot in small groups. The children use a special lane that was installed especially for them, ensuring that they do not have to wait in long lines. After crossing the border, most of the children get on another school bus that brings them to their destination in Hong Kong. Some use other means of transport: they share a taxi with classmates or take public transport by themselves when they are a little older.

The parents that pay for the nanny bus service find it quite expensive. The parents that have their child going all the way from home to school by a nanny bus pay around €300 to €350 per month. In recent years the prices have increased drastically due to the rapidly growing demand for nanny buses. Dianne tells that she pays €330 per month now, where it used to be €175 per month only two years ago. The parents that only let their children take a school bus in Hong Kong only pay about half the price: around €175 per month. Usually when the parents stated that they find the bus expensive, they also say that the school subsidies alleviate the burden and make the travelling process affordable. Some claim that they just do not have another option, like Huang Fu: *"It might be expensive, but my time is also expensive."* Another reason to use the nanny bus is that it is much safer for the children. The parents worry about the children being abducted. But with the nanny bus, the children are under permanent surveillance.

Life of border-crosser students

The total travelling time of the border-crosser children from home to school and back again varies between a total of 2 to 4 hours. In the interviews, the parents unanimously believe that travelling every day is a tiring process for the children. Barbara admits that it is tough for her daughter, but she thinks the travelling time would not be much different if the school would be in another district of Shenzhen. Dianne agrees with her on the assumption that there is not a big difference with other children. One morning, a neighbour called her daughter a 'poor girl' when she was on her way to the border.

Dianne did not agree and responded: *"Why would you think she's so poor? She's ok, having fun. She has a lot of friends; she talks to different people every day. We are doing the same thing, we are in the same elevator and you do not wake up later than me, no. We are all the same."*

Barbara, Dianne and other parents believe that the travelling process is not ideal, but should also not be exaggerated. However, the parents that have bought an apartment in Hong Kong have a quite contrasting opinion on this matter: they claim that travelling across the border was 'terrible' for their children and that they 'always got sick on the bus'. Laura says that they made the decision for the children to never cross the border already before they were born.

She thinks it is too tiring for her children and is now planning to move to Hong Kong with the whole family. In other words, it is a matter of cognitive dissonance.

A mother whose son still is crossing the border, he started at three years old, and is also negative about it is Janine. She used to work in Hong Kong full time while living in Shenzhen and therefore she claims to know from own experience how hard it can be to travel this much every day:

“All these Chinese parents, they have a second or third child. They’re rich. They don’t need to work, all those women. They’re not like me. All these people, they don’t know their children physically suffer.”

Janine is not happy to see her son getting on the bus every day. She thinks that he suffers and that it is too tiring for him. She also believes that most of the border-crosser parents, especially the mothers, have no idea how tough the travelling process can be for their children. Another thing that dissatisfies her is the difference in the daily life between children in the school in Hong Kong. After class is finished, the local children usually stay in school a little longer to finish their homework, while their classmates are already on their way to Shenzhen. During rush hours, the checkpoints can become rather busy when large groups of children are crossing at the same time. This is something that worries the parents, especially those who do not send their child on a nanny bus.

The children usually have homework every day, also when they are in preschool. On average, they need about an hour to finish their homework. That means that there is not much leisure time left for the children, as travelling is also a major part of their day and they have to go to bed early because they get up early as well. The children clearly have a busy schedule. Nevertheless, as it is very common among Chinese parents to send their children to after-school classes, many of the border-crosser children attend these as well. Since there is not much time left during weekdays, this takes place in the weekend and usually consists of an extra Saturday-afternoon of lessons in English, for example. Some of the children even go to Hong Kong for their extracurricular activities, so they cross the border six times per week.

Not all the parents are positive about the extracurricular activities. Janine thinks the school in Hong Kong alone is already very demanding so she opposes against all the additional activities of the children: *“All my son’s classmates follow so many extra courses: English; guitar; taekwondo; ballet; piano... I don’t let him do all that! [...] I just want him to enjoy.”* Dianne states that usually parents demand of their children to learn extra things like piano or ballet. But to her it is most important if her daughter wants to do it and she thinks she is a bit different from most parents in that sense.

Almost all of the parents claim that their children like going to the school in Hong Kong. Kai-Ying is the only one to say her daughter does not really like it because the school is so strict. But all of the others declare that the teacher is very friendly, and that their children are at ease in their school. It was also discussed whether the children have friends in their school and if these are only the fellow border-crossers, or local children as well. Also in this case, the majority of the parents believe that their children get along well with both. Yet Laura thinks that most of her children’s friends also cross the border. Not because the local children are unfriendly but because they just have more in common with the border-crossers, she believes. Janine states that the contact between the local children and the others is not good at all.

She explains: “So we send the children to school in Hong Kong. We want them to adapt as early as possible. But the truth is, the Mainland Chinese kids only play with each other. The parents only communicate with each other. We are separated.”

With ‘we’, Janine refers to the Chinese border-crosser parents, and she also thinks that communication with the Hong Kong parents is not very common. In her opinion this is also because she herself is highly educated while most of the Hong Kong parents, who all live in the New Territories, have a relatively lower education. She thinks they are not ‘her kind of people’.

Perception of the border

Most of the parents in the sample agree that crossing the border has become quite convenient compared to the past and that they are not bothered by it very much. Some of them also still see some room for improvement, especially in dispersing large crowds. Guang has a daughter that crosses the border at Futian checkpoint and especially in the afternoon standing in line can take quite a while in her opinion. Guang hopes the government can do something about

this. Barbara suggests that the nanny busses leave more spread out over different times, depending on the distance to school, to solve this. In Irene's opinion crossing the border is still a tiring thing: it is difficult to find a parking spot and there can be a long waiting time. But the introduction of the e-channel has definitely made things more tolerable in her eyes. Huang Fu travels to Hong Kong regularly as he is starting up his own preschool. He believes the Shenzhen side of the border has been arranged well, but he criticizes the organization of the Hong Kong side, claiming there are less operation windows and a much slower computer system. He thinks it is unfair and that the government in Hong Kong is doing a bad job.

During this research, the Chinese government introduced a new border-policy. It only allows Chinese citizens to go to Hong Kong once a week, instead of every day. Of course this has major consequences for those who cross the border on regular basis. The parents also discussed it. Some parents say they will find their way around the new policy. But others are upset. They are afraid that in case of an emergency, they will not be able to go to their child. Also in this case, a sense of being treated unfairly is clearly involved. Especially because these travel restrictions were not enforced upon citizens from Hong Kong travelling in the opposite direction.

Even though the parents live very close to the border and some of them even grew up close to the border, it is not a subject they often think about. Kai-Ying aptly puts it when asked about her opinion on the border: "*It is nearby*" is all she can say about it. Most of them have grown so accustomed to its presence that they have never considered how their lives would be different if there was no border. During the interviews, all of the parents were asked what would happen if the border would be opened up the next day, and there would be no more controls. Many of the parents answered that they had never thought about this. Others did not understand the question at first and when it was explained to them that this was really the question, they just stated that it is "*impossible*", so they also did not want to think about it. After some hesitations four of the parents in the sample state that it would be more convenient for them and that it would be easier to travel to Hong Kong. Four others mainly see negative effects: they believe Hong Kong would overflow with visitors from China. Cuifen thinks that Hong Kong would be "*all messed up*" by all the uncivilized people from Mainland China going there. Irene believes that the government would only take the border away if

Shenzhen would have become a much more attractive and powerful city than Hong Kong, with people from Hong Kong visiting Shenzhen and not the other way around.

Ehuang thinks that: *“if there was no border, Hong Kong would not be that much better than Shenzhen. Just the same as Shenzhen.”*

Likewise, Irene sees the existence of the border as a good thing. She is therefore not really bothered by the process of crossing it, even though she finds it tiring. From her words and that of Ehuang, it can be understood that without the border, there would also not have been a loophole in the one-child policy or a high quality education system just a stone’s throw away. And this is obviously the case for all of the border-crosser parents: they depend on the existence of the border.

Comparing Hong Kong with Shenzhen

When starting this research it was expected that the border-crosser parents have a desire to live in Hong Kong, since having a child in Hong Kong can be seen as a strategy to apply for a resident card. The assumptions on the desire to move were based on the fact that, compared to Shenzhen, Hong Kong is the more established city with its international allure, higher wages and wider variety of high-quality consumption products. The parents in the sample recognize these characteristics as well. However, most of them have no intentions whatsoever to move to Hong Kong. Those who do want to move to Hong Kong want this for pragmatic reasons, like living closer to the school of their child or because many family members already migrated to Hong Kong. However, when asked about moving, the parents were primarily encouraged to sum up the disadvantages of living in Hong Kong. The main issue for them is the size of the houses, especially compared to Shenzhen. Housing is currently a major problem in Hong Kong, due to a severe lack of housing space and increasing prices. Many parents are not inclined to give up their apartment in Shenzhen, lowering their standards to find a new home. Irene believes that life in general is also much more enjoyable in Shenzhen.

She sums up the advantages of living in Shenzhen: *“Here we can go for shopping in ten minutes, go to different restaurants. It’s very easy here. We can enjoy many social activities here. So when I compare, I really prefer to live in Shenzhen. We live in the centre here.”*

Irene also thinks that efficiency in Hong Kong is quite low because it is almost impossible to do things by car. When Meilin is asked if she would leave Shenzhen for Hong Kong she responds:

“No! I love Shenzhen. Most of the people that live here moved from everywhere in China so the atmosphere is more open, which is why I like it. But Hong Kong, in my opinion, is not open. Not friendly. They are becoming less friendly.”

The negative attitude of people in Hong Kong towards outsiders was mentioned by many parents, and it is another important reason why parents do not want to move to Hong Kong at all, and why some say they even have stopped visiting Hong Kong.

A large majority of the border-crosser parents sends their children to a school that is located in the northern parts of New Territories. These were the latest areas to be incorporated into colonial Hong Kong in 1898. Now it is still a suburban region, that comprises all the land north of the Kowloon Peninsula and a large part of it consists of rural areas. Schools that are located in the central parts of Hong Kong are so far away from the border that travelling from Shenzhen every day would be practically impossible. When asked if she has considered moving to Hong Kong, Ai points out that her daughter’s school is located far away from the city-centre, so if she would migrate she would have to live in the New Territories. But in her opinion Shenzhen is more modern than this region, so she has no desire to live there. Janine makes a distinction between the people that live in the centre of Hong Kong and those who live in the New Territories: *“In Hong Kong Island and Kowloon they are more educated and Western minded. But if you take the New Territories: they are still conservative, still traditional.”* Since her son is crossing the border, he goes to school in the New Territories. But Janine considers the area as the poorest region of Hong Kong, only accommodating uneducated and old people. She believes that since her son’s school is in this region it will have a negative effect on his education and future career.

Cultural differences

Three obvious differences between Shenzhen and Hong Kong were named in chapter 2. The subject of how these two neighbouring cities differ from each other was widely discussed in the interviews. Several parents refer to the air quality, which they think is better in Shenzhen.

As for the living environment, opinions vary. Guang states that the streets in Hong Kong are generally cleaner. Dianne adds to this that cars are also cleaner and people dress nicer.

But the parents particularly talk about the difference in culture and the ways of thinking. Two of them refer to the law system, which in their opinion is better in Hong Kong. Others explain how the lifestyle in Hong Kong is faster and more focused on money, and also more international and Western. What they all unanimously agree about is that people in Hong Kong are more civilized and often better educated. In their eyes, this brings both advantages and disadvantages. Janine, like most of the parents, goes to Hong Kong often to do grocery shopping. Every time she carries her many shopping bags, passers-by will offer help. *“Then I really appreciate the Hong Kong people. That is never going to happen in China.”* Politeness is important and the parents really appreciate this. But the fondness on civilised behaviour in Hong Kong also implicates a strict social control, which can cause difficulties for those who are not used to it. Janine finds it a bit hard to take that people are always so disciplined and that they can come across as very arrogant to people who do not behave properly in their opinion: *“When I smoke in the street in Shenzhen nobody will care. But in Hong Kong, everywhere I smoke, even in a public place they will give a nasty look. That’s not good. Not open.”*

Laura tells about how discipline is already emphasized more at a young age in Hong Kong schools: *“The children are always required to work in silence. And for example, it is considered rude to talk in the elevator, so this is also not allowed in school.”* Laura says that the Chinese schools are more open. Children are freer to behave how they want and also allowed to talk on more occasions. The different norms and values of how to behave in public or other occasions have increasingly been the source of tensions, especially since a growing number of Chinese people visit Hong Kong. They find it hard to adapt to Hong Kongese customs; like not speaking loudly in public and not eating in the metro. This often results in arguments when they are scolded for it by passers-by.

Another major difference between Hong Kong and Shenzhen is the language. In Shenzhen most people speak Mandarin, where in Hong Kong the main language is Cantonese. Originally, Cantonese was the common language in the whole province of Guangdong. But this changed since the population of the whole province started to grow as a result of attracting workers from all over the country. Shenzhen became a city of migrants. Since these people came from

other parts of China, they never learned how to speak Cantonese. Dianne's parents are originally from Hunan province, but she was born in Shenzhen and she explains how she has learned to speak Cantonese:

“Because I grew up here. The parents of my classmates spoke Cantonese. And we watched Hong Kong TV. When you speak Chinese (Mandarin), it's easy to learn Cantonese. The pronunciation and the characters are quite similar. So it's easy.”

Only two of the respondents do not speak Cantonese: Irene and Michelle are both not originally from Guangdong and never learned it. All of the other parents spoke it since they were young or they learned it later in their life after moving to Shenzhen.

Language is the most important way that local people in Hong Kong use to distinguish themselves from the outsiders from Mainland China. Many Chinese people feel discriminated when they speak Mandarin. Dianne states she will get nasty looks if she does not speak Cantonese in Hong Kong. In spite of all this, most of the parents do not see this language barrier as a problem for their children. Some of the children grow up in an environment where people only speak Mandarin and suddenly they are sent to a school where everyone speaks a different language. But most parents say that their children adapted quickly to the new language. Cuifen states that her son understood everything after two months and that it was *“not difficult”*. Laura is the only parent who thinks her daughter had a difficult time because she was so young when she started: three years old. Naturally, it is much easier for young children to learn a new language and Cantonese is closely related to Mandarin. However, it remains noteworthy that the parents send their child to a school where they speak a foreign language and do not worry too much about it.

Relation between Shenzhen and Hong Kong

As already indicated, the relation between the two cities has been subject to many alterations since “the Handover”. Many of the parents argue that people from Hong Kong have become unfriendly towards people from Mainland China. Huang Fu thinks that this mainly happened because the economy in Hong Kong has been going down, while in Mainland China it is going up. He believes that people in Hong Kong do not handle this very well, and he thinks it caused the media to start framing Chinese people in a negative way.

Janine adds to this: *“They (people in Hong Kong) blame the Chinese people for overcrowding Hong Kong and increasing all the prices for daily life things like vegetables. And property prices were raised a lot, so now many local Hong Kong people can’t afford a house anymore. That’s why they really hate Chinese people. And Chinese people make everything messy.”*

Several of the parents explain that they understand why people in Hong Kong are not happy with their Chinese visitors. Irene refers to the traders who cross the border, who in her opinion affect the lives of people in a very negative way because they buy out shops in Hong Kong. Others also mention this, and they talk about the bad manners of many uneducated Chinese people who are not from Shenzhen. But the parents are also upset about the bad relationship between the people from China and from Hong Kong, which they consider as not fair. Laura mentions how Hong Kong was helped by China during the economic crisis in 1997. Janine thinks the Hong Kongese still benefit from the proximity of Shenzhen because it enables them to make use of the cheaper real estate, daily life products and many facilities like karaoke bars, spas and massage centres.

Apart from feeling wronged about the way Chinese people are treated in Hong Kong, it also has a more direct consequence on the lives of these parents since their children travel across the border every day. Some of them are a bit concerned about this, however most of them have never experienced anything bad happening to their child. Others say it does not worry them at all because they trust the teachers and the nanny service will take good care of their children.

As mentioned earlier, five of the families in the sample were able to buy or rent an apartment in Hong Kong. The children live in Shenzhen in the weekend and are accompanied by their mother or grandparents during the rest of the week. The reason to buy the apartment was to relieve their children from the travelling process across the border. It gives their children the chance to participate in more after-school activities and also have more leisure time. Meilin is the only parent in the sample who lives in Hong Kong during weekdays with her sons, who are 6 and 8 years old. She emphasizes the benefits for her children: they are less tired and are able to do sports in their leisure time now. But she hesitates when asked if she likes living there herself: *“I don’t know... [...] The Hong Kong people find it difficult to forgive someone, even if they are kids or elder persons. If someone does something wrong, they will say it directly.”* The theme

of being treated unfairly continuously lingers around when discussing the relation with people from Hong Kong.

As Janine summarizes it: *“We respect them, totally! And now we are going to Hong Kong, spending money. And they just complain about the Chinese people. But when they came to Shenzhen we never complained. It’s really unfair. We treat them like guests. And they treat us like shit.”*

Not many of the parents like to talk with their Hong Kongese friends about the growing frictions with China and Chinese visitors. Laura says that people just do not like to talk about politics that often, they are more concerned with their daily lives. Meilin has mixed feelings about her and her children’s status in Hong Kong. She explains: *“Some part of my children is from China, some is from Hong Kong”*. This results in a feeling of not really belonging to any of them. Even though she and her children might have adapted to life in Hong Kong, when something happens that results in tensions between ‘locals’ and ‘Mainland people’, she feels that her children will always be considered as outsiders and blamed for the actions of other people from Mainland China. For this reason, Meilin does not discuss *“sensitive topics”* with her friends in Hong Kong. But she still feels like she is in an awkward position and she describes the feeling as a *“sandwich”*, caused by the different opinions that are exerting pressure on her. Huang Fu is less bothered by any of the tensions. He says he and his Hong Kongese friends do not let it become a problem because they do not focus too much on *“the bad side”*. He explains that unlike many other people who think that *“all Chinese people are the same”*; his friends have a more open mind.

The border-crosser parents in the sample that were willing to discuss it are not very positive about the large demonstrations that occurred in Hong Kong in 2014. Others were not very eager to talk about this subject, and simply answered that it is a political matter. There is only one respondent - Dianne - who was optimistic about the demonstrations. She believes that it is a good thing that people can freely speak out their mind. But other parents take the demonstrations very personal and do not like it at all. Ehuang says that the people in Hong Kong want to express their mind too much and she finds it rude. Janine calls the people who protest *“close-minded”* and thinks that they should accept the fact that Hong Kong is part of China. Janine also mentions that, since she works for a Hong Kong based company, she has

many colleagues who joined the protests. When she talked about it with them, she told her colleagues that she understands their feelings, because *“all the Chinese people are overcrowding Hong Kong”*. But she also argues that these people need more time, because most Chinese people are not very educated yet in her eyes, especially compared to people from Hong Kong.

In general, when discussing the large protests in Hong Kong, the parents do not mention one of its main goals, which was to maintain an autonomous government without any interference by the Chinese government. Instead, they see the protests as a personal attack against people from Mainland China.

Looking back ten years, the relation between the two neighbouring cities was different. During the years between then and now, China experienced rapid developments. It puts the role of Hong Kong in a new perspective for the parents. Huang Fu thinks that the city has lost its advantage on Shenzhen. Like him, many of the parents also came to the notion that even though their child may be following an education in Hong Kong, a future in Mainland China is favourable. The parents have high expectations of Shenzhen in particular. Many of them believe that the city is on its way to surpass Hong Kong. Many of them stress that they live in what they call a young, open and dynamic city with a promising future. When talking about this subject, several of the parents also say they hope that Chinese people will soon become more ‘educated’, so that the differences with people from Hong Kong will diminish. Dianne says: *“it’s about Chinese people becoming international people.”* She thinks that her fellow countrymen have already improved notably over the years. Overall the parents in the sample have a positive view on the future of China and its people.

7. Motivations for cross-border birth



To have their child born in Hong Kong was an important decision for the parents. It determined many things in the course of their future lives. Their child receives rights and privileges in Hong Kong, but cannot claim the same things in China. For instance, it is very difficult to send a child to a school in Shenzhen when it has a Hong Kong passport and not a Chinese one. Public schools are practically impossible to get in. Private or international schools offer an alternative. However, the tuition fees for these schools are only affordable for the very rich. So in general the parents are compelled to live close to the border to be able to reach schools and hospitals in Hong Kong.

The following reasons were given by the different parents as motivation to have their child born in Hong Kong. Some parents only had one motivation, others had multiple. The reasons are ordered by frequency of being mentioned:

1. One-child policy. (12x)
2. Better education. (7x)
3. Easier to go to other countries. (4x)
4. Better hospitals. (3x)
5. Family lives in Hong Kong. (2x)
6. Better social welfare. (2x)
7. Enable child to live in Hong Kong later. (2x)
8. Language: English. (1x)
9. School subsidies. (1x)
10. More freedom for the child. (1x)
11. Not married. (1x)
12. Friends had done it already. (1x)

As we can see, there are many factors that can play a part in making the decision of having a child born in Hong Kong. But for the majority of the parents in the sample, the one-child policy in China is the reason that is mentioned mostly by far. Also, in most cases the one-child policy was also the reason that parents named first. After that they usually gave several other

motivations that played a part as well, mainly that Hong Kong has a better education system in their opinion.

The majority of the parents already had a first child when they decided to have another one in Hong Kong. Others were planning ahead and had their first child in Hong Kong straight away. Only four out of the 17 respondents did not explicitly bring up the one-child policy as a reason. The policy forces parents to pay administration costs when they are having more children than allowed. These costs have increased on a yearly basis and now lay around a once-off €37,000. Most people are not able to afford this. Irene adds another reason for not wanting to break the rules: she was working for a government-linked organisation at the time she had her second child and she was afraid to lose her job when violating the policy. Hong Kong offered an easy alternative for parents who wanted to enlarge their family without paying high fines or being at risk of getting fired. Dianne states that it is a Cantonese tradition to have more than one child. Many of the parents that were interviewed have Cantonese roots, since they grew up in Guangdong province and either they are originally from this region themselves, or their partner of family is.

The presence of a better education system was the second most important motivation for the parents. However, some of them have reconsidered their opinion about the schools in Hong Kong: they are disappointed in the system and think that Shenzhen has improved its schools, making the difference in quality much less important for them.

Besides the loophole in the one-child policy and the different education system, the advantages of having a Hong Kong passport for travelling abroad are mentioned four times, and the difference between the hospitals in Shenzhen and Hong Kong three times. When the parents spoke about travelling abroad, some of them did not just mean going on vacation or studying abroad: they hope that their children will move out of China as they believe that it would improve their lives significantly.

On the topic of the quality of hospitals, Meilin states that it was her biggest motivation to go to Hong Kong for giving birth. She was afraid that having her child in China would be very painful so she went across the border to have her first child and, after a positive experience, did the same for her second. Other parents also mention that they have no confidence in a smooth

birth procedure in a Chinese hospital, based on their own experiences or those of their friends. Laura states that it is a normal thing in China that doctors do not always know what they are doing.

Several parents state that having their child born in Hong Kong was never because of a migration strategy. Ning explains that long term planning is practically impossible since *“the policy changes all the time”*. Dianne and Irene do state that being born in Hong Kong will make it easier for their children to move there later. They explain that this does not mean they necessarily want their children to do so, but if they do decide to move they will not have to go through a difficult immigration process.

Janine was not married when she was pregnant of her son and without a marital status it is very difficult to register a child. Dianne mentioned *“freedom”* as a motivational factor. She states this in the light of the protests in Hong Kong, which she appreciates if only because it meant that people have the possibility to publicly express their discontent.

Meilin also mentions another important factor influencing her decision, namely the fact that her friends had done it before her already. This way she had an information source on what to expect and how to make the necessary arrangements, which made the decision much easier for her. The other parents do not explicitly mention the influence of their friends as a motivation, but some of them do mention that they discussed the matter with their friends and two mothers even describe it as a very common thing in their social circle. Ehuang says: *“Having a child in Hong Kong is most popular in my generation. Many of the parents did it, even my neighbours.”* So the social network was not just a source of information but also offered extra encouragement as going to Hong Kong used to be a common thing.

The parents were also asked whether they had discussed their decision with their partner and to what extent they had any disagreements about it, but none of them claims to have had any and state that they just discussed it and agreed.

Education

During the interviews the subject of education was extensively discussed with the parents. Even though education was for almost none of them the most important reason to have a child

in Hong Kong, the possibility of a different education system just across the border did play a major role in the decision of the parents. And since these parents all grew up in China and the majority has their first child going to school in Shenzhen, they are in a unique position of comparing two different education systems. Of course, it must be taken in account that their opinion is one of an outsider. They did not experience the education in Hong Kong themselves. But they talk to their children, they can compare the homework their children have to do and they communicate with the teachers. Also, two of the parents in the sample are professionally involved in education. Dianne is a teacher in Shenzhen. Huang Fu runs a company that owns multiple preschools in China, and is currently preparing to open a new preschool in Hong Kong. Both Dianne and Zong have a strong opinion on schools in Hong Kong and Shenzhen that is based on their own experiences in the education world.

The parents that cooperated with the street interviews were clear about which education system they prefer: ten of them chose Hong Kong and one could not choose. During the in-depth interviews, many of the parents did not have much to say in general about the public schools in Shenzhen. Cuifen tells that there is quite a big difference between the quality of schools in Shenzhen and that much depends on the neighbourhood in which the school is located. A point in favour of the schools in Shenzhen is that, obviously, they are located closer to home, relieving the children from travelling every day. The fact that the children would not have to adapt to a different culture is also named. The other parents are predominantly negative about the schools in Shenzhen. The most heard opinion is that the schools in Shenzhen do not care much about the development of the children's personality and just focus on grades. Several parents believe that the main focus lays on exams. Another negative aspect in their eyes are the large classes with around 40 to 50 students. These characteristics are more likely to result in a situation where the teacher only pays attention to the students that perform well while letting other students fall behind. When discussing whether a private school in Shenzhen was an option, Barbara states that she has several colleagues who send their kids to one. However, she claims that the only way for her children to enter the school is by paying about €1,500 under the table. As she refused to do this, Hong Kong schools remained for her as the only alternative.

Except for two, all the parents in the sample agree that their children can receive better education in Hong Kong than in Shenzhen. That does not implicate that the parents are

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unconditionally full of praise about the schools in Hong Kong. Some of them are even disappointed, as they had expected more of it. Two of the respondents chose a private school for their children. These schools use English as first language and do not teach Cantonese. All the public schools do use Cantonese as first language, and teach Chinese and English next to that.

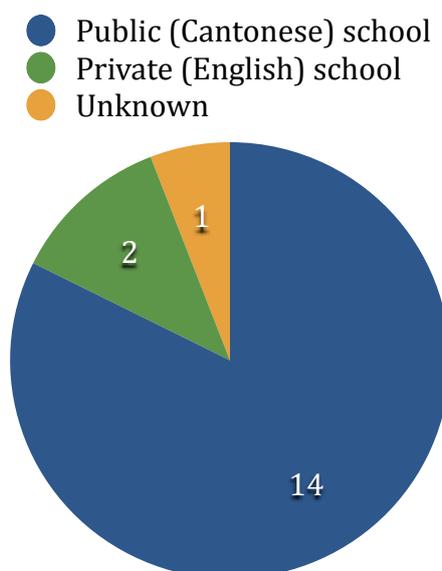


Figure 6: the respondents' children school types in Hong Kong.

The aspects that parents really like about the schools in Hong Kong are the attention that is paid to the character of the child and the use of a more personal approach. Several parents also mention teaching about morality. They notice that their child is more polite than its sibling(s) who follows an education in Shenzhen, and that it cares more about others. Huang Fu's oldest son was born and goes to school in Shenzhen. However, he regrets not having him in Hong Kong as well. He explains he was too young at that time to realise it.

Huang Fu compares his sons and states: *"My oldest son is a positive person, but his character is kind of restricted, for some reason. He has low interest and doesn't really enjoy a lot. It might be the way of teaching in the Mainland. The school of my oldest son is also a very good school in Shenzhen though. The difference is, with Hong Kong, kids enjoy their class. They all have a certain pressure, but in Hong Kong the kids enjoy the class much more than in the Mainland."*

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When Ai is asked to compare between schools in Hong Kong and Shenzhen she states politely that they both have their advantages. But when asked what she thinks of a Hong Kong style private school that is located in Shenzhen she says: *“That school is not very expensive. But it is not the same as schools in Hong Kong. The teachers are mainly from China, that’s why I think it is different: the teaching methods they use are different from the real Hong Kong schools.”* This is an example of how some of the non-English speaking respondents were inclined to not make any strong statements and preferred a more neutral answer. However, when asked some more questions, it turned out Ai clearly prefers the Hong Kong school system. It also indicates that some of the parents do have the option to send their child to a school in Shenzhen, but still choose a school in Hong Kong.

Dianne is quite disappointed in the education system of Hong Kong. She studied in Scotland as a university student and based on her experiences there she expected schools in Hong Kong to be much like schools in the United Kingdom. But she has changed her mind about that since her daughter actually went to a school in Hong Kong. Now she claims it is more of a mix between Chinese and English education. With the Chinese characteristics she refers to more competition and pressure, which are negative things in her opinion.

Janine has an undeniably negative opinion about the preschool her son goes to in Hong Kong. She thinks that it is too disciplined and the teachers give too much homework. She feels sorry for her son having to carry a heavy bag of books every day for all his different courses. She also believes that the subjects of the different courses, which include traditional Chinese, mathematics and English, are too difficult and that homework requires much help from parents.

“So much time to finish his homework... I don’t have the patience to finish all that homework with him. My mother is the one who is fully in charge of my son: my mother doesn’t know English. My mother doesn’t know how to design a poster! That’s Hong Kong! He is five years old and has to train all this stuff. I really don’t like how they overdevelop the brain of the children.”

Janine says that if she had send her son to a public school in Shenzhen there would also be a high pressure. However, she thinks it should be easier because her son would not have to travel very far nor would there be any cultural differences.

Overall a large majority of the parents prefer the Hong Kong teaching style, even though for some the difference in quality is bigger than for others. An aspect that all the parents agree on, is that they have a much better impression of the teachers in Hong Kong. These teachers give the children more personal attention; have a better background; communicate really well with the parents and overall are more professional.

An education prepares people for joining the labour market when they are grown up. Did parents consider how an education in Hong Kong might influence the chances of their children in a professional career? Is the context of Hong Kong beneficial? Several parents in the sample were asked about this, and they all agree that studying in Hong Kong will have a positive influence on the future of their children. They think that it will be easier to find a job in Hong Kong and they will have more opportunities. A major influence on these positive expectations comes from their impression that it is much easier to study abroad for people from Hong Kong, which is a very important factor in the eyes of all the parents.

Huang Fu thinks that the education will definitely have a positive influence on his son's future. Yet he does not believe that working in Hong Kong will gain his son more money, or that a social network there would be more valuable. Overall, he does not think a career in Hong Kong is very promising. On the contrary, he sees more opportunities in Mainland China. However, he also says that an education in Hong Kong can give his son a head start. Several other parents emphasize that having local friends in both cities can be of great help to their children later for career opportunities. It is not the network in Hong Kong that is more valuable per se, but the combination of a network in two cities that is valuable in their eyes.

According to the consultant of the Border-crosser Education Service Centre most of the administrative procedures in applying for a school in Hong Kong are similar to the application process in Shenzhen. An important difference is that the competition in Hong Kong is fiercer. Parents have two options. The first option is to have the Hong Kong government pick a school. The government places the local Hong Kong children in the schools first and then randomly

distributes the rest of the children across the vacant spots. The parents' second option is to apply for a school themselves. What makes this option difficult is that many students apply for a spot every year. The majority of the parents in the sample have chosen the first option and explain that this is an easy process: they only had to send in an application with a large selection of their preferred schools, after which one is chosen for them. Most respondents are satisfied with the location that is allocated to their child.

On the other hand, a couple of the respondents were critical about which school they wanted to send their child to and they faced more difficulties in the application process. Huang Fu visited over 30 preschools before he decided which one he found appropriate. After he chose the school of his liking it was still a tough competition, firstly because the local children have priority placement. On top of that, he had to compete with a large number of other border-crosser parents. His son had to do an interview and he managed to get him in the school in the end. The interviews are a result of the large competition between parents to pick the best school for their children. It enables the popular schools to only choose the most talented and promising children. Dianne wanted to choose a very good school, but changed her mind because she did not want to put her daughter under the pressure of the application process and just went for the random selection. Most of the parents in the sample do not focus too much on the application process nor seem to care much about which type of school their child goes to in the end. The fact alone that their child is going to a school in Hong Kong seems to satisfy them.

A result of the competitiveness in societies like China and Hong Kong is the pressure that the schools put on children. The pressure on their children is something that the parents referred to many times during the interviews. They experience it as existing in both Shenzhen and Hong Kong schools. Some see it as a positive thing, because they think their children need to be prepared to perform in their later lives. But others worry about their children and to the level of stress they are exposed to. Huang Fu, who has one son in school in Shenzhen and the other in Hong Kong, believes that in both systems children are burdened down with too much pressure. But he also thinks that there are different forms of pressure:

“Different ways of teaching can influence the pressure. In Hong Kong they do this better. They focus more on all aspects of the children’s development, for example with activities

to trigger their interest in learning. In China they just study, read books, finish homework and then do exams."

Huang Fu is mostly positive about how they handle the pressure in Hong Kong. But other parents, like Dianne, do not agree with him. The level of pressure is one of the reasons why she is disappointed in the Hong Kong schools because she believes it is even worse than in Shenzhen, which influences the children: *"I think it's really bad"*. In her eyes it is caused by the fact that Hong Kong is a relatively small place with too many people, making the environment more challenging and competitive. Janine reflects on the pressure she felt back when she was young to be a good student and earn a lot of money. She believes that pressure has only increased, alongside economic growth, which worries her about the effects that might have on her son. The parents also see many differences between education now and then. Many of them have a low opinion of their own education: it was not very strict. Several of them claim it made their childhood more fun, but that they also did not learn enough.

The differences between educational styles might not only influence what the children learn, but also which norms and values are taught to them. The parents in the sample generally regard people in Hong Kong as 'more civilized', but do they also expect that school in Hong Kong will have a specific influence on their children? The values and skills that the parents generally find important are different qualities like being 'honest', 'hardworking' and 'independent'. Laura wants her children to be confident about their background and to never be ashamed of being from Mainland China. Dianne believes that it is important for her daughter to know herself and learn by herself. She thinks that the school in Hong Kong will promote this better than schools in Shenzhen: *"Every week the children have to write down what they have learned. They encourage them to do research by themselves and I think that's good."* Most of the other parents mainly point out how going to school in Hong Kong will make their children a more polite person.

Reflection on decision

Cuifen finds it inconvenient that her son goes to school in Hong Kong, but she says she had no other choice since he was her third child. There are more parents who regret their decision to have a child in Hong Kong. Meilin wants to move back to Shenzhen with her children, because she believes the *"whole social atmosphere"* of Hong Kong has changed. But she sees no

possibilities to send her children to school in China, so for now she just stays in Hong Kong with them during weekdays. Janine would put her son in an international school if she would be able to pay the school fee. She regrets that she has to send her son across the border every day because she thinks the travelling time is too long, and she is also disappointed in the education system of Hong Kong:

“If I get a second chance I think I would not have put him in this complicated situation. He suffers. I think Shenzhen is coming up. We are an open, dynamic city and there is a lot of money. We already have the money to pay the best teachers in the world.”

In contrast to that, other parents say they wish they had thought about birth in Hong Kong already when they were having their first child.

Ambitions and expectations of the future

When the parents are asked about their ambitions for the future, answers vary. Some want their children to do well in their studies first and foremost. And generally they just hope life will become even better: with more money, a bigger house and good health. Especially housing is a concern, since the house prices in Shenzhen are increasing drastically. A couple of the parents also emphasize that they just hope their children will find a job they like and be able to pursue their own dreams. Huang Fu believes that in the future parents will not want to rely on their children anymore when they are old. This statement resonates in the stories of several others: they just want their children to do good while the parents themselves can travel and relax after retirement. Huang Fu states that the youngest generation is changing, becoming “*more Western*”. He means by this that they will be able to live their own life, thanks to the development. Not everyone agrees with this way of looking at things: Cuifen, for instance, wants her children to get a high education and well-paid job so she and her husband “*can relax*”. She is one of the respondents who grew up in difficult and hungry circumstances and she clearly wants her children to make the most of their more comparatively privileged position.

Janine has high expectations of her child as well. She already felt great pressure from the need to compete when she was young. And she has only seen competition increasing as a result of

globalisation. She thinks her son will have to work hard to compete and survive and she explains how she can help him to accomplish that:

“I just had to compete with my neighbours, or my classmates in school. I didn’t have to worry about foreigners; Hong Kongese; Macanese and Taiwanese. But now, everybody comes to my land. In China, to be somebody in the future, I need him to study very well. He has to develop four or five languages and have different hobbies. Because look: it’s 1,5 billion people. How else can you be the one?”

She also compares this situation to Europe, where in her opinion it is already enough to be talented if you want to “*make it*”. But, as she says, in China being talented is not enough; you also need to work very hard. The reason why Janine aims so high is because she believes this is the only way her son will be able to lead a happy life later without having to worry about money.

The liberal attitude of parents towards the role of their children in life after their own retirement is also clearly reflected when discussing where they expect the children will live later. The answers to this question divide the parents in the sample into different groups: those who expect their children to stay close or at least in China; those who hope or expect their children to migrate and those who are neutral, because they do not mind or had never considered it. Cuifen, Guang, Meilin and Ning all want their children to stay close, or at least in Hong Kong. Ehuang and Dianne both hope that their children will migrate. Ehuang also hopes to move out of the country someday. Dianne plans to stay in Shenzhen, but she would like her daughters to explore new things and places. Huang Fu also does not plan to move out of Shenzhen in the future. He likes Shenzhen and he also feels inclined to stay close to his parents. He calls it a Chinese tradition, which is interesting because at the same time he thinks the tradition is ending and he does not expect the same thing of his own children. He also paradoxically finds that, for his children, China is not really good enough and so they might choose to migrate. He does not consider this to be a problem at all.

Even more explicit about China as a country to live in for her children is Laura. She hopes her children will move to the United States when they grow up, because she is not very fond of China:

“I think they have to live in a better place. I think it’s still not perfect here. It’s not developed enough. The food safety is a problem. And I have been in Chinese hospitals: the doctors are bad. I’m angry with that, but it’s a normal thing in China.”

When asked what she likes better about the US, Laura states that the Chinese government is controlling the minds of people: she wants her children to live in a “*free country*”.

Difference with other parents

The advantages of being born in Hong Kong have been discussed. When the border-crosser parents made their decision, they clearly believed the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. So why did other parents decide differently? The parents in the sample have several answers to this question. Their most obvious explanation is that they believe many parents are just not able to afford giving birth in Hong Kong. The expenses for a hospital in Hong Kong are considerably higher than a hospital in Shenzhen. Others claim that if parents only desire one child, there is also no need to have it in Hong Kong. Or the parents are so rich they just pay the administration costs for having a second or third child in China; in which case they also do not have to bother. Another given explanation is that the parents have no friends or family in Hong Kong, nor know much about the city. This makes the decision much more of a leap in the dark.

Janine states that many of her friends who are currently considering giving birth in Hong Kong are more aware of the pros and cons compared to when she was contemplating her decision. And she thinks that, as a result of this, more often her friends decide to go to a private hospital in Shenzhen. She also adds that all the border-crosser parents of her son’s classmates are complaining. Some parents might not be happy with, or want the border-crossing life. Laura is of a firm opinion: “*If parents want to have a normal life, they just don’t do that.*” She adds that this also means she does not consider her own life as normal. The motivations that the parents expect to influence others bring up several questions. They say some people do not have the funds for it and others have so many funds they do not need to go to Hong Kong. So if they are neither rich nor poor, how do the parents see their own financial situation? And also, how can the ‘normal life’ that Laura speaks of be interpreted? How do the parents see themselves?

Many parents emphasize the fact that the public schools in Hong Kong are subsidized. Most of them do believe that the travelling process is expensive, but they claim that it is affordable because of the support from the school fees. This way they want to underline that you do not have to be rich for sending your child to school in Hong Kong. However, Janine is of the opinion that the schools are not cheap at all because there are many school activities and events she has to contribute to. The fact that almost all the other parents pretend that it is not expensive could best be ascribed to politeness of the respondents, combined with the willingness to spend a significant amount of money on the education of their children. Some of the parents were asked whether they consider themselves as rich people. Laura sees it as a prerequisite to be rich, considered the high costs. Jiling does not fully agree with that statement:

“I don’t think so. I am not a rich person. I can afford the costs, but it doesn’t mean I am rich. It’s not a rich people thing, but it is definitely expensive.” She specifies: *“It feels like the people who do send their children to Hong Kong belong to the middle class.”*

There is something to be said for her opinion, when comparing the descriptions of a stereotypical border-crosser parent. Some of the border-crosser parents do not want to over-exaggerate any of the differences with parents who do not have a child born in Hong Kong. They claim that there are no differences at all, or refer to small things like not having to get up so early. Irene on the other hand, does think her life is different from other parents. She is most aware of this when she is talking to her colleagues, of whom many have children of the same age as she does, and they discuss topics related to their children. She is convinced she generally has more problems to take care of. Naturally, she believes that her colleagues also worry about their children, however she distinguishes these worries from those of her own:

“I think they also worry, but the solution is quite different. It’s easier. They can solve their problems with money. But we are not in that situation. Even if we have more money, we still can’t resolve some things.”

She has to part with some things and accept them as they are. Like all the border-crosser parents, she depends on the policy in Hong Kong, to which she can have no vote or influence whatsoever, since she is not Hong Kongese. Several aspects of the daily lives of families with a border-crosser child are also more complex than that of their fellow citizens. Especially when

these families also have a child going to school in Shenzhen. They have many of problems to cope with. The holidays in Hong Kong and Shenzhen do not fall on the same data, making it impossible for the whole family to be on vacation together. There is also more paperwork to take care of, forms from two different systems in different languages. The same issue applies when the parents want to help with the homework of their children.

Even though some of the parents deny it, it seems that border-crosser parents have more difficulties and problems to deal with in their daily life. They also spend more money on education, the travelling process included, than an average parent. So clearly the parents have to overcome many things to have their child born in Hong Kong in the first place, and also to send it to school during the years after that. It does make some of the parents feel different. But does having a Hong Kongese child also makes them feel proud? Barbara tells a story about when she coincidentally met a mother who was just delivered of a daughter in Hong Kong: *"You could see from her face that she was really proud of it. She also told us how much it had cost her, and it was a lot of money."* Dianne confirms this story when she reflects on her own situation. She says she used to be very proud when she had just given birth, because she went to a hospital that was so much better than any of the hospitals in China where her friends used to go. Her parents were also proudly telling everyone that their granddaughter was born in Hong Kong. *"I think because in their opinion Hong Kong is a modern city. Much more modern and richer than other countries."* Laura holds the same opinion. However, she is not so proud anymore, now she particularly thinks it is just really difficult. She is also tired of explaining her situation and that of her children to other people all the time. Ehuang is still proud, she believes her son will have more opportunities to work in Hong Kong because it is more international and connected with other countries.

Ehuang explains: *"I want my son to go abroad when he grows up. And then he can come back to China to work. In a foreign country he can learn more Western information. It's better because the West is more advanced."*

Irene is not proud of her child being a Hong Kong citizen; she just thinks it makes her family a little bit different from others. Most of the other parents, like Guang; Huang Fu; Cuifen; Kai-Ying; Meilin and Jiling answer without hesitation that they are not proud of it at all. Some react very surprised to have this question even asked to them. During the street interviews, one

respondent admitted to be proud. Three others said to be "*a little bit proud*". Five respondents answered they are not proud. The parents that gave a positive answer to the question about pride were also the only parents who expected their child would earn more money later thanks to an education in Hong Kong. The other parents answered negatively on this question.

Dianne tells that she is unhappy with the way the Chinese government manages the country, for instance by censoring the Internet. She tells that this is also an important reason why she likes Hong Kong so much, because in her opinion this city offers the freedom that is not available in China. However, at the same time she is afraid that the system in Hong Kong is changing: "*becoming more Chinese*" as she states it. And she predicts that if in the future Hong Kong will become even more like Shenzhen, she will put her child on an international school. Laura is even stronger in her rejection of the way things are in China, which is why she hopes her children will migrate to the United States. Not all the parents explicitly repeat what Dianne and Phoebe said about China, but out of the attitude of distrust and preference of the educational system in Hong Kong, it could be understood from some others that they might very well hold the same opinion.

Dianne emphasizes that there are many subjects about which she thinks differently than other Chinese parents. She also considers herself as less traditional. She explains that while most parents want their children to stay close to them she, on the contrary, hopes that her children will go live their own life in a foreign country. "*I think there are few people like me in China*", she proclaims after expressing her beliefs on how to raise her children and adds that her way of thinking is "*more foreign*". More *proactive* parents refer to being not as traditional as others. Janine goes even further. She looks down on most other border-crosser parents, claiming: "*they are not like me*". Both Dianne and Janine see themselves as different from most other parents, including border-crosser parents, they account for this by their international attitude.

This chapter has elaborated on all the different motivations that were, directly or indirectly, mentioned by the parents as being of influence for their decision to give birth in Hong Kong. It was also discussed how the parents think about these motivational factors, as well as their decision. It is now possible to analyse their motivations together with the background of the parents and their perspective of the context, and compare these three factors to the theoretical framework.

7. MOTIVATIONS FOR CROSS-BORDER BIRTH



In the three previous chapters, the findings from the fieldwork have been discussed. This way the sub-questions could be answered. This chapter will analyse these findings by summarizing the answers to the sub-questions and place them in a perspective of the theory.

Social and economic background

The first sub-question that was answered is: *What is the social and economic background of border-crosser parents?*

Two-third of the parents in the sample are originally from Guangdong, implicating that they have Cantonese roots. With one exception, all of them also had friends or family in Hong Kong when they gave birth there. The parents emphasize that their childhood was completely different from that of their children. They all believe that the environment their children grow up in is more prosperous than the one they grew up with. The past of the parents plays a large part in the high expectations that they have of their children.

The border-crosser parents all have a sufficient income, which allowed them to give birth in Hong Kong in the first place and pay for the travelling process and school expenses of their child. They might best be considered as middle class, since richer people are more likely to make use of expensive private facilities in China instead of giving birth in Hong Kong.

Perception of the border and Hong Kong

The second sub-question that was addressed is: *How do the border-crosser parents experience the border and neighbouring city Hong Kong?*

The border-crosser parents were asked several questions about the border and about Hong Kong. The parents perceive it as relatively easy to cross the border. At the same time a sense of being treated unfair lingers, due to the different border policies in Shenzhen and Hong Kong. But the existence of the border does not seem to bother most of the parents. Moreover, many of them believe that the border enables Hong Kong to remain its status as the well-developed place it is now. For this reason they would not be in support of taking the border away anytime soon. If one would only consider the perspective of the border-crosser parents, the borderland could best be characterized as *integrated* (Martínez 1994).

Many parents mentioned how Hong Kong is 'better' in different aspects, but that at the same time China is developing and is on its way to catch up. Moving to Hong Kong is not easy, and none of the parents prefer living in Hong Kong to living in Shenzhen. Some of the parents even perceive the New Territories in Hong Kong as a 'lower' area than Shenzhen. Breitung (2004) notes that Hong Kong and Shenzhen are in the middle a transition process of getting closer to each other. He also observes that several contextual factors could hinder that integration, one of them being an unwilling mentality of people in Hong Kong. Over the last decade, this mentality has not diminished. On the contrary, the border-crosser parents all agree that the relationship between people of the two cities has worsened. They blame this both on the 'unthankful' attitude of citizens of Hong Kong and on the many 'uncivilized' Chinese visitors, of which they claim they are not a part of themselves. Many parents can empathize both with people from Shenzhen and people from Hong Kong. They understand where frictions come from, often better than others. This is what distinguishes them from other visitors to Hong Kong, and it makes that some of them feel as if they are in between two cultures, which Ju refers to as a 'sandwich'. This is clearly a characteristic of how border people can develop *multifaceted human proficiencies*. Being in reach of a border can offer all kinds of possibilities to people (Martínez 1994: 25). That certainly goes for the border-crosser parents, who are aware of the special status quo of Hong Kong. Therefore, instead of seeing the border as a hindering factor they are positive about its existence. Even though travelling across it can be long and tiring, the benefits outweigh the downsides.

In their studies, Kwan Hung (2006) and Yuen (2011) both urge the governments of Shenzhen and Hong Kong to alternate policies in favour of Hong Kongese children that live in Shenzhen. They respectively ask to do something about travelling times longer than two hours and to put better policies in place for schools in Hong Kong that handle border-crosser children. So far the only thing that seems to have changed is a quicker border crossing process thanks to the e-channels. The phenomenon of border-crosser students will eventually end since pregnant women from Mainland China cannot enter Hong Kong anymore, but for now the number of students is expected to grow in the upcoming years and the situation is not likely to change.

Huang and Yeoh (2005) describe the Chinese *study mothers* who live in Singapore. They make a large sacrifice for their children by setting aside their own personal life and career. The border-crosser parents do not have to make a sacrifice with as much impact on their life: they

do not have to move away from their city and can maintain their career. However, they still live a life with more challenges than most other parents, and so do their children. The travelling process is either expensive for the parents, when they use a nanny bus, or it costs them much time, when they take matters in their own hands and drop their children off themselves. The latter is still expensive because it leaves parents less time to go to work. Most parents however emphasize that the school subsidies in Hong Kong alleviate the pain of the costly travelling process. All the parents agree that the travelling process is tiring. But only the parents who decided to buy an apartment in Hong Kong for their children are outspokenly negative about its impact. All the other parents think of the travelling is a necessary evil, but surmountable. There is only one respondent who has a child that crosses the border daily and is also negative about its impact.

Before they made their decision, the border-crosser parents already had a connection with Hong Kong that was probably closer than other residents of Shenzhen. Many of them already had a social network in Hong Kong, or they had friends or family in Shenzhen who decided to give birth in Hong Kong before they did. As a result of their decision, the border-crosser parents have become people with *multifaceted human proficiencies*, enabling them to empathize with people in Shenzhen as well as in Hong Kong.

Pragmatic and cultural motivations

The third, and last, sub-question that was answered is: *What motivated the border-crosser parents to have their child born in Hong Kong?*

First I will discuss the *pragmatic motivations* to give birth in Hong Kong. Evading the one-child policy is mentioned most by the parents in the sample as an important motive. There are multiple reasons for them to want more than one child. Firstly, for many people, children are their alternative to social facilities. So more children would guarantee more security (Fong 2006, Bodycott 2009). Secondly, large families are a Cantonese tradition and many of the parents have Cantonese roots. Ling Sze Leung (2012) mentions the confidence in the Hong Kong education system that many parents have. This is indeed of major influence, as it is the second most mentioned motivation for cross-border birth by the parents. Apart from these reasons, the parents mentioned ten other influential factors.

8. ANALYSIS

Even though education was for most border-crosser parents not the most influential factor, they do have a predominantly negative image of education in China. This image is based on their own experiences and in some cases on the experiences of their own (firstborn) children who go to school in Shenzhen. Dello-Iacovo (2009:248) discusses the inability of education reformers in China to put less focus on hierarchy and exams. The border-crosser parents agree with this conclusion, as most of them also feel that education in China only focuses on studying and lacks character development.

The schools in Hong Kong are seen as part of a better education system. However, some of the parents are disappointed. These parents tend to compare it with education systems from other countries around the world, based on their own experiences from being there. Karsten's study (2014) shows that parents in Hong Kong worry about the pressure on their children, especially in the Cantonese public schools. At the same time they paradoxically find the English teaching style too playful. Most of the border-crosser parents send their children to public schools.

The pressure on the children seems enormous, both in Hong Kong and Shenzhen schools. Some of the parents agree with this thought, but others do not. Even if they worry about the pressure, they still believe it is dealt with in a better way in Hong Kong than in China.

Yuen (2011) observes the existence of a policy gap that leaves it up to individual schools and teachers how they deal with border-crosser students, which could affect the quality. However, the border-crosser parents are unanimously positive about the teachers in Hong Kong. Overall the parents agree that studying in Hong Kong will have a positive influence on the future of their children.

Tamis LeMonda e.a. (2008) describe how the rapid changes in China may cause new ways of thinking and acting (p.204). This is also true for the border-crosser parents. Especially the effects of globalization and immigration made most of them realize that their children will have to deal with more pressure and competition than they had to themselves. The parents prepare their children for the future in different ways. Most of them, like many Chinese parents, attach importance to extracurricular lessons. Bodycott and Lai (2012) describe how Chinese families focus on a cross-border education for their children as a literal investment in

the future of the family, which is supposed to be fruitful as a result of the exclusiveness of foreign education. It was already found that all the parents expect their child to have a more successful future because of having an education in Hong Kong. But this does not implicate that all the border-crosser parents also count on the *filial piety* of their children. Some of the parents, especially those who grew up in difficult circumstances, do expect that their children will take care of them after they are retired. Others have a more liberal attitude towards this and emphasize that they are confident that they can survive without their children in the future. Instead they hope their children will pursue their own lives.

The above shows that the parents had many different *pragmatic motivations*. But did they also have any *cultural motivations*? Bourdieu (1984) explains how different practices and personal preferences can be an expression of a sense of belonging to a certain social class. His different forms of *capital* that are used to define *class* can be applied to the case of border-crosser parents. Several parents explain that one has to have a certain income, enough for meeting the hospital fees in Hong Kong. But it also becomes clear that those who are rich enough to pay the administrative penalties usually decide to not have their child born in Hong Kong. So the parents need to possess the right amount of *economic capital*, not too little, not too much, to finance their decision. Furthermore, several parents hint that they and their children are rightfully visiting Hong Kong, unlike many 'uncivilized' Chinese people. This indicates the possession of a certain *cultural capital* that others do not have at their disposal. Most of the parents often already had *social capital* in the form of connections with people in Hong Kong before they made their decision. With *symbolic capital* could in this case be referred to the feelings of pride amongst people who manage to give birth in Hong Kong, as indicated by some of the parents. Most border-crosser parents however claim to not be proud of their child's nationality. The clearest *cultural motivation* that parents have is shown with the dissatisfaction that several parents utter when discussing the developments in China. They see Hong Kong as a way out and anticipate on a future outside of China for their children.

Proactive type and reactive type

When comparing the different characteristics, perspectives and motivations of the parents in the sample, it is possible to distinguish them into two types. The first type consists of the *reactive* border-crosser parents. These parents were motivated to give birth in Hong Kong as a response to the one-child policy. They are mostly happy with the option of sending their child

across the border and make do with their situation. Their motivations are *pragmatic*. The second type consists of the *proactive* border-crosser parents. These are all parents who went to Hong Kong straight away to give birth to their first child and they were primarily motivated by other reasons than evading the one-child policy. Their motivations were both *pragmatic* as well as *cultural*. These parents are characterized by a more 'international' mind-set, which is defined in different ways. Firstly they all have experience with studying abroad or have travelled to other countries. Secondly these parents are focused on their child to study outside of China as well, which they consider to be notably easier for Hong Kong citizens. They would prefer their child to study abroad because they believe that many 'Western' things are better. The *proactive* parents that fit under this typification were more critical than the *reactive* parents during the interviews when it concerned matters like education, the situation in Hong Kong and the way things are arranged in China.

None of the English-speaking parents had their first child in China. They went to Hong Kong straight away. This is a difference with most of the Chinese-speaking respondents who had their first child in Shenzhen but wanted another and saw a chance to evade the one-child policy by going to Hong Kong. Hence, to a large part, language can be used to make a division between the *reactive* and the *proactive* parents.

Ball e.a. (2006) argue that parents' educational choices for their children can function as a classificatory practice that strengthens or challenges social boundaries. The *reactive* border-crosser parents do not aim for this, they emphasize on not being very different from other parents. The main difference with others consists of having to face more problems in their opinion. The *proactive* border-crosser parents on the other hand do state that they have a different life and mind-set than most others. They also distinguish themselves by a more progressive view about the future of their children: there is a strong desire for their children to migrate in their later life so they can pursue their dreams, instead of the expectation that the children will stay close to fulfil their *filial piety*. In this case, educational choices as a classificatory practice are indeed found.

Now that the sub-questions have been discussed and a better understanding of border-crosser parents by means of a classification has been provided, it is time to answer the main question of this research.

9. Conclusions



This study has given an understanding of the background, motivations and perspectives of border-crosser parents. It has also offered an overview of the different aspects that are involved in this phenomenon. The main result is the classification of these border-crosser parents in two types: *reactive* and *proactive*. Taking in account all the different aspects that help to understand the decision of the border-crosser parents, as well as their perspectives, the main question of this research can be answered:

How do the parents of border-crosser students in Shenzhen distinguish themselves from other parents in the city?

At the moment when the border-crosser parents decided to distinguish themselves by giving birth in Hong Kong they were well aware of the presence of this city and its possibilities. Most of them already had connections that transcended the border. Also not insignificant was an income that sufficed to finance their decision. All these characteristics contributed to their decision making process.

The border-crosser parents of the *reactive* type were primarily motivated by the urge to evade the one-child policy; decisive factors for the *proactive* parents were their view on the education system in Hong Kong, the better quality of the hospitals and better possibilities to travel to other countries.

The existence of the border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong does not seem to concern most of the parents, even though it is an influential factor in their daily lives. Instead of seeing it as a hindrance most parents emphasize the positive effect, which is maintaining the special status of Hong Kong. Some of the border-crosser parents see themselves as more educated than many other uneducated Chinese people. They blame them for making people in Hong Kong unhappy with all the visitors. The border-crosser parents do not blame themselves for these disturbances, or overflowing Hong Kong and its schools.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Frictions have grown between people of Hong Kong and Shenzhen throughout the last decade. The border-crosser parents complain about this and mostly feel unfairly treated. However, they also understand what caused the situation and are able to empathize with people on both sides.

The border-crosser parents perceive the travelling process of their children as tiring but the majority considers it as a necessary evil that is surmountable. The travelling process is expensive, even though most parents emphasize that these expenses are mitigated by the school subsidies provided by the Hong Kong government. However, it is beyond dispute that the border-crosser parents spend more money on the education of their children than other parents in Shenzhen.

When looking at the future, it becomes clear that the *reactive* border-crosser parents believe in the concept of *filial piety* and expect their children to take care of them in their later life. In this case, the expensive border-crossing process is literally an investment in the future of the family. The *proactive* border-crosser parents on the other hand distinguish themselves by a more progressive attitude, stating that they would like their children to live independently and do not count on their children to take care of them after retirement. These parents consider Hong Kong to be a stepping-stone for their child. They are also characterized by a certain sense of distrust in the Chinese government and many of them doubt whether their own future and the future of their children will be in China or in a different country.

All the border-crosser parents whose children are going to school in Hong Kong distinguish themselves from other parents in different ways. They generally believe that they have a more difficult life than 'regular' parents, due to the expensive travelling process for their children and continuously changing policies in two different bureaucracies to take care of. Apart from that, distinction with other parents differs, dependent on whether the parents can be characterized as *reactive* or *proactive*. The border-crosser parents do not see themselves as a special group or specifically identify themselves this way. What distinguishes them from other parents derives from their attitude in general. This is what makes them special, even though they do not pride themselves with it.

Discussion

There were several limitations to this study that need to be addressed. First and foremost, the results and conclusions are based on a small sample group and there are likely around 50.000 border-crosser parents in Shenzhen. However, the sample group of this study displayed a wide range of opinions and insights. This way useful insights have been collected, enabling to make a number of characterizations about this large group. One of these insights is the categorization of border-crosser parents into *reactive* and *proactive*. This categorization does not imply that there can be no exceptions to the rule. For example, Janine took her decision to give birth in Hong Kong as a reaction on the fact that she was not married. Yet, she sharply distinguishes herself from other parents and is very aware of her son's possibilities in the future, unlike other *reactive* parents. Another example is Huang Fu, who does not speak English and also did not have his first son in Hong Kong. However, he also has a *proactive* attitude: he is in the process of learning English and visited thirty different preschools in Hong Kong to find the best one for his son. In conclusion: the categorization is mainly a helpful tool to explain the behaviour and attitude of border-crosser parents.

Two of the respondents in the sample -Barbara and Janine- are married to partners who are not Chinese, but from European countries instead. The aim was to only focus on Chinese parents. However, Barbara and Janine were still included in the sample because they have provided relevant information. Their partners have not been interviewed.

This study elaborated on the perspective of the border-crosser parents. For further research, it would be recommendable to also focus on the view of other relevant actors in Shenzhen and Hong Kong, for instance the policy makers in both cities. My own background and nationality has had a certain influence on this study. As said by one of the respondents, the parents would have complained more if I had been a government official. Therefore, it would also be interesting if someone with a different background would perform a similar research and look for similarities and differences.

9. CONCLUSIONS

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Appendix 1

Interview guide 采访提纲

Introduction

This research is being conducted to get to know the views of parents with children that go to school in Hong Kong on the border and education systems. I am conducting this research for my master's thesis at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

Everything you tell me will only be used for this research project. Do you have any questions before we begin?
这项研究旨在了解家长们对于送孩子去香港边境上学以及教育体系的观点。我是为了在荷兰阿姆斯特丹大学的硕士论文而进行这项研究。

你告诉我的一切内容，都只会用于这项研究课题。在我们开始前你有什么疑问吗？

Background questions:

1. Parents' age 父母的年龄：
2. Number of children 孩子的数量：
3. Age of child/children 孩子（一个或多个）的年龄：
4. Hometown 家乡：
5. Education of the parents 父母的教育背景：
6. Occupation 职业：
7. Street name of home 家庭地址：
8. Name of school in Hong Kong 在港学校名称：

Child & daily life:

9. How many hours does your child travel every day?
你们的孩子每天上下学要用多长时间？
10. How is the travelling process organised? Do you use a nanny bus company?
孩子的上下学过程是怎样安排的？你们是否雇佣保姆车公司？
11. Why do you use a nanny bus? Or why not?
你们为什么或为什么不雇佣保姆车？
12. How much leisure time does your child have?
你们的孩子有多少闲暇时间？
13. How does the travelling process of your child impact your daily life?
你们孩子的上下学过程怎样影响了你们的日常生活？
14. What kind of school does your child go to in Hong Kong? (English/Cantonese)
你们的孩子在香港上什么样的学校（英语还是粤语）？
15. Why did you choose this school?
你们为什么选择这所学校？
16. How did you apply for the school? Was it difficult?
你们怎样申请学校？是否困难？
17. Do you think your child likes his/her school? Why?
你们认为孩子喜欢他或她的学校吗？为什么？
18. Is it difficult for your child that they generally speak Cantonese in Hong Kong?
孩子在香港通常要说粤语，这对于你们来说困难吗？
19. If parent speaks Cantonese: how did you learn it?
如果家长说粤语：你们怎样学习的粤语？
20. Do you think your child is happy?
你们认为孩子快乐吗？

Hong Kong + decision:

21. What were important reasons to have your child born in Hong Kong?
让孩子出生在香港有什么重要的原因？

22. Did the parents discuss having their child born in Hong Kong with each other? What did you discuss?
在香港产子的父母们互相商量吗？你们讨论些什么？
23. Did you discuss having your child born in Hong Kong with anyone else?
你们有没有和其他人讨论过在香港产子的事？
24. What is your opinion on the Hong Kong education system?
你们对香港教育体系是怎么看的？
25. How often do you go to Hong Kong?
你们经常去香港吗？多久一次？
If yes: what do you do in Hong Kong?
如果经常去：你们在香港都做些什么？
26. Do you have friends or family in Hong Kong?
你们在香港有朋友或亲戚吗？
If yes: how often do you see them?
如果有：你多久见他们一次？
27. Would you like to move to Hong Kong? Why/why not?
你们想搬到香港吗？为什么？
28. I was informed that since 2012 people in Hong Kong are not so happy anymore with cross-border students. How does that affect you?
我得知2012年以后香港人对于跨境学童不再友善。这怎样影响了你们？
29. What do you think of the student demonstrations in Hong Kong last autumn?
你们怎么去看去年秋天香港的学生占中事件？
30. Do you think your child has better chances for a future career by going to school in Hong Kong compared to going to school in Shenzhen?
你认为比起在深圳，孩子在香港上学将来发展事业的机会更好吗？
31. Do you think the future social network of your child will be different from children that go to school in Shenzhen?
你认为你的孩子未来的社交范围将不同于那些在深圳上学的孩子们吗？
32. Do you think your child will make more money than children that go to school in Shenzhen?
你认为你的孩子会比在深圳上学的孩子赚更多的钱？

Shenzhen:

33. What is your opinion on the Shenzhen education system?
你们怎么看深圳的教育体系？
34. When did you move to Shenzhen and why?
你们何时，为何搬来深圳？
Or: have you ever considered living somewhere else then Shenzhen?
或者：你们有没有想过搬去深圳之外的地方？
35. Do you have friends or family in Shenzhen?
你们在深圳有朋友或亲戚吗？
If yes: how often do you see them?
如果有：你多久见他们一次？
36. Do you like living in Shenzhen?
你们喜欢在深圳居住吗？
37. Do you want to stay in Shenzhen for the rest of your life? (Why/why not?)
你们想在深圳一直生活下去吗？为什么？
38. How is Hong Kong different from Shenzhen?
香港和深圳有哪些不同？

Border-crosser parents:

39. Why do you think other parents do not have their children born in Hong Kong?
在你看来，其他父母为什么不把孩子生在香港？
40. Why do you think people would prefer a Hong Kong passport over a Chinese passport?
在你看来，为什么人们更想要香港护照而不是深圳护照？
41. Is your life different from families with children that go to school here? (Why/why not)
你们的生活和那些送孩子在本地上学的家庭有什么不同？
42. Are you proud of the fact that your child/children was born in Hong Kong?
对于孩子在香港出生这件事你们觉得骄傲吗？

43. Do you speak with other border-crosser parents?
你们和其他跨境的父母们有交流吗？
44. Do you have contact with parents whose children go to school in Shenzhen?
你们和送孩子在深圳上学的父母有联系吗？

The border:

45. What do you think of the border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong?
你对于深圳和香港间的边界怎么看？
46. Is it difficult to arrange the right travel documents for your child?
为孩子安排正确的通行文件是否困难？
47. What do you think of the travelling process your child goes through?
你们认为自己孩子上下学通行的过程怎么样？
48. Is it expensive that your child travels across the border every day?
每天去香港的交通费用高么？
49. What do you prefer and why? Hong Kong schools in Shenzhen or fast transportation to Hong Kong?
你们认为在深圳上香港学校与便捷地前往香港上学那个更好？为什么？
50. What if there was no border and Hong Kong was part of China? (What would be different?)
如果香港和大陆不再有边界，香港成为大陆的一部分，你们认为怎么样？（什么事情会发生改变？）
51. What do you think other parents would do if there was no border?
你们认为如果没有了边境，别的家长会怎么做？

Parenting

52. What are important values and lessons that you would like to teach your children, or that you would like your children to learn in life?
你想要教给孩子，或你希望孩子在生活中学到的重要的价值观和教训有哪些？
53. What are important skills that you would like your children to develop?
你希望孩子掌握的重要技能有哪些？
54. How does the school that your child goes to in Hong Kong contribute to this?
对这些内容，你孩子在香港所上的学校有何贡献？
55. Do you think your child would learn the same skills in a school in Shenzhen?
你认为孩子在深圳的学校也可以学到相同的技能吗？
56. How would you describe the influence from people he/she meets in Hong Kong might have on your children's values, ideas and skills?
你认为孩子在香港遇到的人对孩子的价值观、想法和技能会有怎样的影响？
57. Do your friends and family have similar ideas about raising their children? How would you describe the similarities and differences?
你的朋友和家人对于养育孩子也持相同的观点吗？你怎样描述其中的异同？
58. Do you ever discuss the upbringing or education of your children?
你们曾经讨论过对孩子的抚养和教育吗？
59. Is your child's life, lifestyle and upbringing different from that of your own childhood?
你孩子的成长、生活方式和抚养和你自己童年时的一样吗？
60. How would you describe the similarities and differences?
你怎样描述其中的异同？
61. Is the way you raise your children different from the way your parents raised you? How and why?
你养育自己孩子的方式和你父母养育你的方式是否一样？有怎样的不同？为什么？

Closing questions:

62. What do you expect your life will be like after you are retired?
你觉得你的退休生活是怎样的？
63. What will be the role of your children in your life after you are retired?
你觉得你的孩子会扮演怎样一个角色在你退休之后？
64. What are your ambitions for the future?
你们的未来理想是什么？

Interview guide for street interviews

I would like to present you a couple of statements; each time you have two options:

我想问你几个问题，每一个你有两个选择；

1. Which city has better education: Hong Kong or Shenzhen?
哪个城市的教育更好，香港还是深圳？
2. Where would you prefer to live: Hong Kong or Shenzhen?
你更想居住在哪里，香港还是深圳？
3. Do you speak Cantonese?
你会不会说粤语？
4. Did your child already speak Cantonese before he/she went to school in Hong Kong?
你的孩子去香港上学之前会说粤语吗？
5. Does it discomfort you if you can only cross the border once a week?
如果一个星期你只能跨境一次，你会感觉不便吗？
6. Do you think that it is good there is a border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong?
你觉得深圳和香港之间有边界好吗？
7. Is your life different from parents who send their children to school in Shenzhen?
你的生活和那些送孩子深圳上学的家长有不同？
8. Where would you like your child to live later: in Hong Kong or in Shenzhen?
你希望孩子以后居住在哪里？香港或深圳？
9. Do you think your child will gain more prestige in his later life as a citizen of Hong Kong?
你觉得孩子以后做哪里的市民会更有地位或声誉，香港还是深圳？
10. Are you proud of the fact that your child is born in Hong Kong?
孩子出生在香港这件事是让你感觉骄傲么？
11. Do you think your child will earn more money later because of going to school in Hong Kong?
你觉得孩子去香港上学以后会有更多收入吗？
12. How many children do you have?
你有几个孩子？

Appendix 3

In-depth interviews							
#	Name & age	Area of origin	Education	Occupation	Children	District of residence in Shenzhen	District of school in Hong Kong
1	Ai: 40*	Shenzhen, Guangdong	High school	None	Son: 14 Daughter: 11**	Futian	North district (New Territories)
	Father: 45	Shenzhen, Guangdong	University	Manager, construction department			
2	Mother: 44*	Hunan province	University	Self-employed traders	Daughter: 19 Son: 7**	Bao'an	Tuen Mun (New Territories)
	Father: 52	Hunan province	Middle school				
3	Mother: 38*	Luoding, Guangdong	High school	None	(...) 18 (...) 9 (...) 7**	Bao'an	Tuen Mun (New Territories)
	Father: 45	Luoding, Guangdong	University	Manager			
4	Barbara: 34*	Hangzhou, Zhejiang	Vocational training	Assistant teacher	Daughter: 5** Son: 3**	Nanshan (Shekou)	Tuen Mun (New Territories)
	Father: 51	Denmark	University	Manager in construction company			
5	Cuifen: 47*	Chaozhou, Guangdong	High school	Owners of restaurant	Daughter: 18 Son: 16 Son: 8**	Luohu	North district (New Territories)
	Father: 47	Chaozhou, Guangdong	High school				
6	Dianne: 31*	Shenzhen, Guangdong	University	Teacher and entrepreneur	Daughter: 7** Daughter: 2***	Nanshan (Shekou)	Tuen Mun (New Territories)
	Father: (...)	Guangdong province	(...)	(...)			
7	Ehuang: 33*	Shenzhen, Guangdong	University	Office lady	Son: 7**	Futian	Yuen Long (New Territories)
	Father: 37	Shenzhen, Guangdong	University	Works for government			
8	Mother: 42	Shenzhen, Guangdong	University	None	Son: 16 Daughter: 10**	Luohu	Sha Tin (New Territories)
	Fuhua: 43*	Shenzhen, Guangdong	University	Owner of food distribution company			

* = respondent
 ** = born in Hong Kong
 *** = born in United States

#	Name & age	Area of origin	Education	Occupation	Children	District of residence in Shenzhen	District of school in Hong Kong
9	Guang: 37*	Meizhou, Guangdong	University	Owners of printing shop	Son: 13 Daughter: 8**	Luohu	(…)
	Father: 40	Meizhou, Guangdong	High school				
10	Mother: 37	Shenzhen, Guangdong	University	Owners of several businesses	Son: 13 Son: 6**	Futian	North district (New Territories)
	Huang Fu: 39*	Shenzhen, Guangdong	University				
11	Irene: 35*	Hubei province	University	Manager at real estate company	Daughter: 6** Son: 2**	Nanshan	Yuen Long (New Territories)
	Father: 38	Sichuen province	University	Real estate developer & investor			
12	Janine: 32*	Shenzhen, Guangdong	University	Sales manager	Son: 5**	Nanshan (Shekou)	Tuen Mun (New Territories)
	Father: 45	Spain	University	Owner of trading company			
13	Kai-Ying: 37*	Jilin province	University	(…)	Daughter: 9**	Nanshan (Shekou)	Tuen Mun (New Territories)
	Father: 40	Jilin province	University				
14	Laura: 34*	Hangzhou, Zhejiang	University	Artist and self-employed teacher	Daughter: 5** Daughter: 3** Daughter: 0	Longgang	(…)
	Father: 43	Hangzhou, Zhejiang	Vocational training	Owner of factory			
15	Meilin: 41*	Hubei province	(…)	None	Son: 8** Son: 6**	Longgang	Kwun Tong (Kowloon)
	Father: 46	Jiangsu province	Vocational training	Businessman			
16	Ning: 38*	Qingyuan, Guangdong	University	Saleswoman	Son: 8 Daughter: 6**	Nanshan (Shekou)	Tuen Mun (New Territories)
	Father: 39	Qingyuan, Guangdong	University	Project manager			
17	Mother: 42*	Huizhou, Guangdong	Middle school	None	Daughter: 10 Daughter: 7 Son: 6**	Nanshan (Shekou)	Tai Po (New Territories)
	Father: 42	Huizhou, Guangdong	High School	In-between jobs			

* = respondent
** = born in Hong Kong
*** = born in United States

Street interviews											
	#1 (mother)	#2 (mother)	#3 (mother)	#4 (mother)	#5 (mother)	#6 (mother)	#7 (mother)	#8 (mother)	#9 (mother)	#10 (mother)	#11 (father)
Which city has better education: Hong Kong or Shenzhen?	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Cannot choose	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Hong Kong
Where would you prefer to live? Hong Kong or Shenzhen?	Shenzhen	Shenzhen	Hong Kong	Shenzhen	Shenzhen	Shenzhen	Shenzhen	Shenzhen	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Hong Kong
Do you speak Cantonese?	Little bit	No	Little bit	No	Yes	Yes	Little bit	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Did your child already speak Cantonese before he/she went to school in Hong Kong?	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Does it discomfort you if you can only cross the border once a week?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Little bit	No	Yes	Yes
Do you think that it is good there is a border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong?	Maybe better	No	Yes	No idea	Yes	No idea	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is your life different from parents who send their children to school in Shenzhen?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Little bit	Little bit	Little bit	No	Yes	Yes
Where would you like your child to live later: in Hong Kong or in Shenzhen?	No idea	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	No idea	Hong Kong	No idea	Shenzhen	Neither: overseas	Shenzhen	Shenzhen	Neither: overseas
Do you think your child will gain more prestige in his later life as a citizen of Hong Kong?	No idea	No	Yes	No idea	Yes	No	No	Little bit	No	No	No
Are you proud of the fact that your child is born in Hong Kong?	No idea	No	No	Yes	Little bit	No	No	No	No	Little bit	Little bit
Do you think your child will earn more money later because of going to school in Hong Kong?	No idea	No	No idea	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
How many children do you have?	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	2