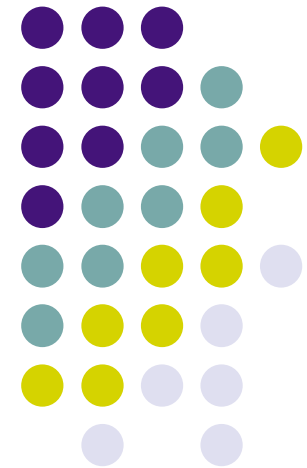


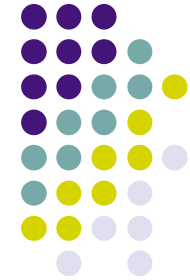
Family Crossing the HK- Mainland Border

Implications to Family Research

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17 June 2010

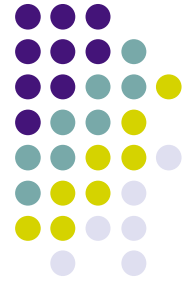


The Research



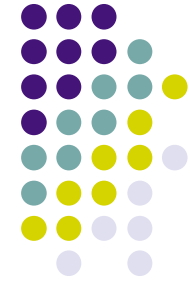
- The objectives are:
 - To understand the marital relationships, family planning, parenting and parent-child relationship, and financial situation of the “cross-border family”
- Conceptual framework: Adhering to 6-dimension model of family functioning proposed by Consortium of Family Organizations:
 - Family support and responsibilities
 - Family membership and stability
 - Family involvement and interdependence
 - Family partnership and empowerment
 - Family diversity
 - Support to Vulnerable Families

Cross-border Family Revisited



- What is cross-border family? Is there a unique group of cross-border family to pin down for such a study?
- Who among all family members are we to interview?
- Families sampled performed well in some dimensions while poor in others. How then on the whole shall we say about their family functioning? On what ground do we justify the use of a model to measure the performance of these families? Whose model is it?

Spatial Dimension of the Family



- “Cross-border” family has already suggested new dimensions to look at the family
- The spatial dimension of the family is usually hidden because it has always been radically local.
- Increased globalism, the economic structure requires expansion and intensification of spatial mobility which affects the forms and contents of the family
- In the era of globalization, cross border family allows one’s home to be both de-localized and multiple. One’s home can now be as extended as one can capably go, and his (and increasingly “her”) families/relationships can co-exist without causing much troubles that only arise in a confined space/locality.

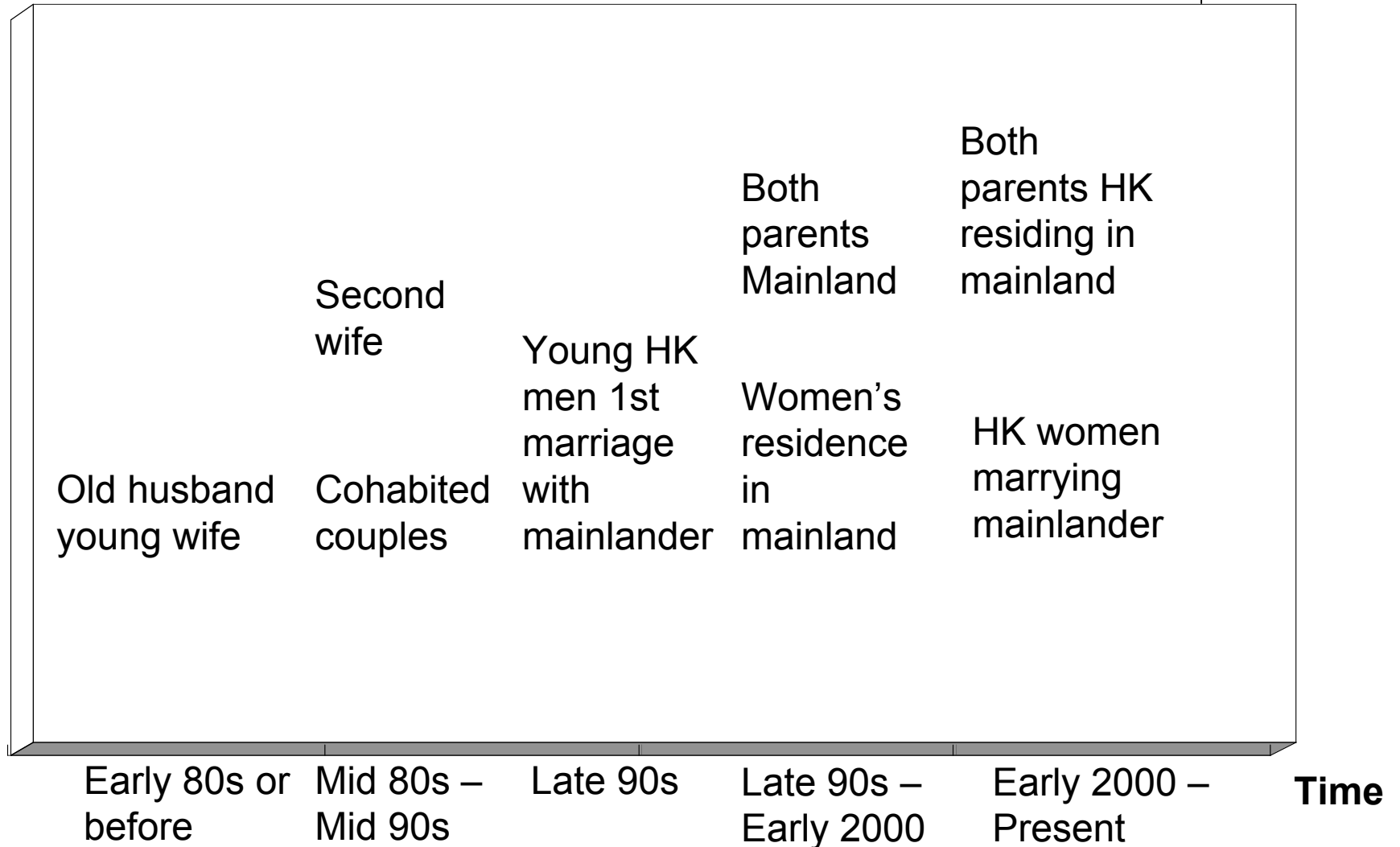
“Specifying differences allows us to...theorize universal concerns more fully”

Different Forms of Cross-border Families

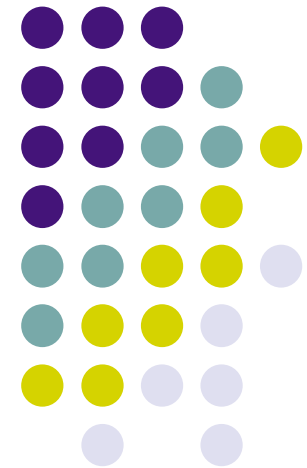


- Families formed by marriages between Hong Kong men and mainland women
 - haven't got "single-way permit"
 - Have got "single-way permit" but been residing in the mainland
- Second wife of Hong Kong men in the mainland, usually without single way permit
- Cohabited relationship of Hong Kong men with Mainland women
- Families formed by marriages between mainlanders whose children are born in HK
- Families formed by marriages between HK people who choose to reside in the Mainland while working or studying in HK.
- Families formed by marriages between HK women and mainland men

Emergence of New Forms of Cross-border Families over time



Profiling Different Forms of Cross-border Families





Old Husband Young Wife

- Old immigrants in 70s searching for opportunities in HK
- Poor standard of housing
- Low-status jobs in HK: construction workers, truck drivers, manual laborers
- Low education, Low income
- The less “marriageable” but has much to offer to the women in Mainland at that time



Second Wife and Partner

- Hong Kong men searching business opportunities in the mainland
- Small entrepreneurs and traders to “extract” resources: the cheap labor in the mainland
- More educated than the old male immigrants, economically well off
- The big spender, or the “King”

First Marriage of Couple with Less Age Gap



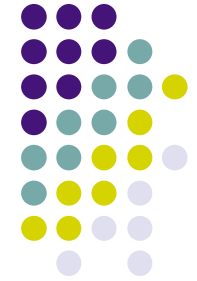
- Hong Kong professional men searching for career opportunities in the mainland
- Professionals offering services to the mainland
- Highly educated, younger
- Married or single
- Hong Kong women professional marrying mainlander



Both Mainland Parents

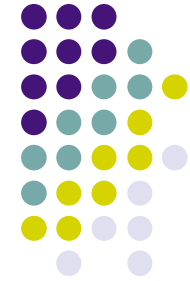
- Ineligible for citizenship of HK, may or may not be interested in having it
- Well off citizens of mainland China
- High aspiration for better education in Hong Kong for their children, therefore willing to trade off many things for children's education

Both HK Parents Residing in Mainland



- Low income, low-status work
- Frequent cross-borderers
- Enjoy low cost of living in the mainland
- Enjoy high quality of services in Hong Kong
- (Some of the families sharing the same profile are those families of HK husband and mainland wife)

Structural Demand of Global Political Economy



- Early in 80s, second wives phenomenon is in a way an unintended consequence of the choices of families which were embedded a bigger context of global political economy. In the 80s, China began to be the “world factory” providing cheap labor for productions of goods and services supplying the late capitalist incitement of consumption.
- In the 90s, much had been said that the career opportunity was there in the mainland of China, the “world product market”, for the professional who first resisted to go to the mainland but later saw the real benefit of it.

Extension of Social Field with Increased Mobility



- Mobility extends the social fields of the people (Bourdieu, 1984), who are no longer localized in families. This produces significant changes to the family in Hong Kong.
- A new type of “astronaut family”: staying 4 days in the mainland, heading back on Friday for holidays in Hong Kong, and leaving home again on Sunday for work.

Extended Field, Increased Mobility



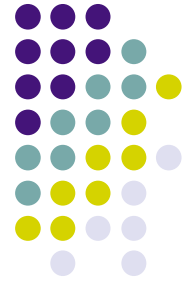
- Quasi-extension of Hong Kong to Shenzhen has enlarged the spatial reference of the family in Hong Kong. Moving to Shenzhen is increasingly being a viable option. The spatial proximity gives these families a perception that such move will be like moving from district to another within Hong Kong, when of course that can be fundamentally different for the dynamics of the family if you are living in the other of the “two systems”

Extended Field, Increased Mobility



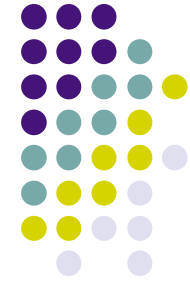
- Another significant change due to the extension of social fields is the emergence of a new type of cross-border first marriages and families. Both single men and women of Hong Kong take their career adventure in the mainland and get their partners there. Mobility changes the negative socio-psychological dispositions, if not hatred, towards the Mainlanders of the ordinary Hongkongers. But this positive change usually does not last long because the long-standing cultural differences between Mainlanders and Hongkongers may not be as negligible as these couples once thought before they got married.
- For those with families in Hong Kong already, the extension of social fields produce the second families

Extended Field, Increased Mobility



- The extended social field does give an opportunity for these men and women to venture into a new regime of desire which was not previously fulfilled in their families. Whether this regime of desire may be truly new is debatable but its explicit manifestation is certainly so. Thirty years ago, no one would think of family in this way. Relationship among family members were taken almost entirely as internal, and family as an institution was treated as territory-bound. The extension of the social fields of these men result in opening up of their families whose boundary now stretches across the border. What was unthinkable or even impossible is now widely practiced, if not entirely permissible and acceptable.

Spatial Mobility and Stratification



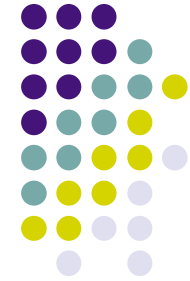
- The extension of social field and the stretch of the family are deeply stratified phenomenon in a transnational context because spatial mobility is so.
- But over the past 30 years, there has been significant changes to the stratification.
 - Thirty years ago, it was those men who were unable to find Hong Kong partners crossed the border to get their wives. In those days, the lower strata men usually got women who were comparatively in the Mainland in a higher strata.
 - As the mainland economy thrives, more and more cross-border marriages involves men of the middle class. Majority of cross-border population flow is Hong Kong men who go to the mainland looking for business and professional opportunities. The wives or second wives they get are from relatively lower strata in the mainland.
 - Those well-off in the mainland could even send their children to Hong Kong, but the poor HK people reside in Shenzhen.

Strategic Choices of Families in their Functioning



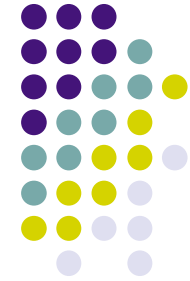
- The global political economy demands increased mobility that stretch the boundary of the families.
- Families are increasingly de-localized and multiplied
- Family functions become competing for different people situating differently in the global space of mobility

Conclusions and Implications



- Multiple forms of families is a reality. We can use our “normal” conception or conceptualization tool to understand different forms of families
- Qualitative change across these forms: Emergence of cross-border families challenge the often radically local notion of family. The family is now spatially mobile.
- Our “laboratory” is radically changed. We can’t understand HK families without understanding the relationship between Hong Kong and China, and between China and the world in relation to global capitalism. How public policies produce but deprive families, redefine, and recategorize them should be an important area of research as well as practice and advocacy

Conclusions and Implications



- In the increased globalized world, families become more mobile since their members are increasingly mobile, making it possible for them to re-define and re-organize their own lives in relationship to their families (in HK or in mainland China). How they make choices among different functions in different sets of constraints
- As mobility is a deeply stratified phenomenon in many different senses, forms of families are as much multiple as hierarchical. Thus, families of different strata are having unequal life chances.

Conclusions and Implications



- We have to understand cross-border marriages and the resulting families dynamics in the transnational context where the new arrivals or the to-be-migrated were collectively degraded and excluded from being HK citizens. And the stratifying code is inscribed into the family relationship between the husband and the wife, and the parents and the children.