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‘Home and Away’: Female Transnational Professionals and Their Construction of Home  
Maggy Lee

Department of Sociology  
University of Hong Kong

Transnational professionals can be regarded as the elites of a growing global migrant population. These transnational elites are the archetypal transmigrant, the embodiment of flows of knowledge, skills and a new cosmopolitan identity in cross-border spaces. They are able to take advantage of the flexibility in global labour markets, the ability to live and work in different places, and with these, increased leisure time in affluent societies and flexible working lives. Their transnational mobility has prompted new ways of thinking beyond traditional models of assimilation in theorising and empirical investigation in the field of migration. This paper is based on the preliminary findings from the 'Home and Away: Female Transnational Professionals in Hong Kong' research project funded by the Hong Kong Central Policy Unit.

The research study involves semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a total of forty highly educated, highly skilled female transnational professionals in Hong Kong under two broad groupings - (a) women who initiated their migration to Hong Kong as ‘lead migrants’; (b) female ‘accompanying spouses’ who migrated to Hong Kong as part of a dual-career household. The respondents under each grouping cover a broad spectrum in terms of age, migration trajectory, length of stay in Hong Kong, marital status, number of children, employment status, sectors in which they or their partners work, and stage of career progression. The study covered women with Western and non-Western nationalities that broadly reflect the diverse profile of expatriates evident in the Hong Kong Census. We used snowball sampling as well as a number of social institutions, non-governmental organisations, residential forums, internet-based blogs and expatriate websites as our recruitment sources. All the interviews were conducted, face-to-face, recorded and fully transcribed. Only legal migrants were included in the study so as to avoid any possible complications relating to immigration control. All interviewees were asked the same set of core questions, but detailed probing also reflects the particular circumstances of the individual trajectory and migratory experiences.

The paper considers what flexible geographical mobility mean for different types of female expatriates and the way they construct the notion of ‘home’ in mobile locations. Their stories offer important insights into new fluid living patterns and suggest that ‘home’ can best be understood not as a fixed location but as a set of social relationships that bind people and places in late modern societies.