

**Title:** Caught between Two Worlds: Mainland Chinese Return Migration, Hukou Considerations and the Citizenship Dilemma

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**Research Question:**

How do Mainland Chinese returnees (with Canadian citizenship) navigate China's dual citizenship restriction and its implications for their hukou (household registration) status, which confers residency, working, and other social rights in China?

**Importance:**

This research explores the politics of citizenship by considering the issues faced by former Chinese citizens (now with foreign citizenship status) returning to reside in China. It examines the dissonance they experience in terms of claims to cultural belonging and the actual loss of residency, working, and other social rights in China. In so doing, this paper also contributes to the extant literature on the Chinese hukou system by considering its relationship with the international entry and exit administration in China.

**Research Findings:**

The study's Mainland Chinese returnees moved back to China due to expectations of limited economic advancement in Canada, and in the case of former "astronaut" families, a desire for family reunification. Returnees who have already given up their Chinese citizenship (and thus hukou) status have to apply for limited duration visas to remain in China, not all of which confer working rights. Those who work are usually employed on "local" (rather than expatriate) terms and conditions, but their foreign citizenship status means limited social entitlements in terms of healthcare, pension plans, housing subsidies, and education subsidies for their children. A few participants covertly retained their hukou status but fear being found out by the Chinese immigration authorities and the implications for their future residency status in China.

**Implications:**

The findings in this paper raise questions about the issues faced by returnees with foreign citizenships. In the case of Mainland Chinese returnees with Canadian citizenship, their residency and working rights in China are precariously contingent on their visa status, and they have limited access to social security rights despite their economic contributions. Theoretically, they have full rights in Canada but are forced to leave because of employment difficulties and social marginalization. It is in this sense that they become citizens "caught between two worlds." The paper argues that more academic and policy attention needs to be given to this particular group of migrant returnees.