

# Return Migration and Identity

A Global Phenomenon, A Hong Kong Case

**Nan M. Sussman**



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The author would like to thank Xu Bing for writing the book title on the cover in his Square Word Calligraphy.

“Square Word Calligraphy” is a system of writing developed between 1994–96 by artist Xu Bing (1955–). It presents English words in a Chinese format, challenging the preconceptions of readers of both languages.

The *Bauhinia blakeana* flower on the front cover, first discovered in Hong Kong, symbolizes the territory. It is also featured in the Regional Flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China.

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## **About the author**

Dr. Nan M. Sussman was born and raised in the United States but became enamored with international travel as a teenager. For Nan, culture and its psychological impact became a lifetime personal and professional interest. She holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology, sociology, and communications from the University of Pittsburgh (1973), and a master's and a doctoral degree in social and cross-cultural psychology from the University of Kansas (1975 and 1977, respectively). She was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship as a Professional Associate with the Culture Learning Institute of the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawai'i. She received further education in intercultural training at the Intercultural Communication Institute at Stanford University. She has been honored by the International Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR) for her accomplishments.

Early in her career, Nan focused on applied cross-cultural psychology. She became a Senior Program Coordinator at the Washington International Center, where she developed and conducted weekly intercultural workshops for mid-level managers from developing countries. She wrote and produced a training videotape and accompanying manual. Subsequently, she was a Cultural Specialist at the Orientation Resource Center at Georgetown University and Director of International Training for the International Council of Education for Teaching, Washington, DC.

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In 1985, she was awarded the first of two Fulbright research grants. Working from Japan's Keio University, she studied the returnee experience of Japanese and American executives. During the next 20 years, she continued to investigate the psychological issue of returning home for teachers, business personnel, and students. In recognition of the beginnings of a global trend in return migration, she was awarded a second Fulbright, in 2004, to Hong Kong. Using facilities at both the University of Hong Kong and the City University of Hong Kong, Nan examined the phenomenon of Hong Kongers' returning home following "hand-over" motivated migration. This book is a result of that research project.

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# 1 A short history of two hundred years of Hong Kong migration and identity

## Origins of Hong Kong identity

In order to understand the experiences of return Hong Kong immigrants in 1999, one needs to examine the complexity of their Chinese identity, which began to form in 1841. The British had claimed the island of Hong Kong at the terminus of their first Opium War with the Chinese. Yet while the battles ceased more than 150 years ago, the identity turmoil continues today. To comprehend the early development of the identity of the Hong Kong Chinese, though, one must first look at Hong Kong's location, bounded by the sea and adjacent to a vast continent. In his groundbreaking book *Guns, Germs and Steel*,<sup>1</sup> Jared Diamond, a professor of physiology, develops the notion that culture (and identity) was first and foremost



**Figure 1.1** Henry Steiner, book cover of *The Face of Hong Kong* (1970). Courtesy of the designer.

a consequence of geographic location, climate, and natural resources. He suggests that topography, the ratio of sun and rain, accessibility to rivers and the sea, and the ways in which a population sustains itself all shape ideas of culture and self. Hong Kong political scientist Michael DeGolyer agrees, asserting that “Hong Kong exists solely because of a gift of geography: its deep water harbor. There would be no city without that central geographic feature.”<sup>2</sup> That feature, the sea and its harbor, has shaped the way Hong Kongers traditionally and currently craft a living as fishermen, boat workers, international global port employees; the way Hong Kong interacts with a continuous flow of seaborne invaders, travelers, traders, and immigrants; the way Hong Kong protects itself from typhoons and creates its neighborhoods; and the way in which Hong Kongers create an identity.

More essential than Hong Kong’s reliance on and struggle with the sea and what it brought, was its status as an island of rocky, barren mountains with limited land on which to grow food and to house inhabitants. Hong Kongers have one of the highest population densities on earth, and they typically live in tiny, cramped dwellings. The survival of Hong Kong’s residents is due to their persistence, hard work, shrewdness, and cooperation.

The land and its location shaped Hong Kong culture and identity in another way: the island’s proximity to the great landmass of China has created a complicated and evolving relationship between the two regions. Initially severed by war, and officially kept separate by first the British and then the Chinese governments, China and Hong Kong have maintained a continuous, albeit unofficial, flow between their territories. The movements of goods and information were at times reciprocal; the movement of people has historically been one-way but is increasingly bidirectional. This ever-changing relationship has also forged the culture and identity of Hong Kongers.

Once located within the sea and by land, Hong Kong identity is influenced by another set of variables, connected to time and events, with four distinct historical periods shaping each of the identity layers that envelop the Hong Kong residents. These historical/identity events can be divided into the era prior to the Opium Wars; the postwar British sovereignty period; the prehandover period (1984–97), which included large-scale emigration; and the posthandover, remigration period.

Before 1841, four separate Chinese indigenous communities of farmers and fishermen existed in Hong Kong, governed loosely by a

fifth, landowning group, the Cantonese,<sup>3</sup> who were former residents of the southern Chinese province of Guangdong. The indigenous and immigrating settlers brought with them to Hong Kong more than the Cantonese dialect. They brought the core Chinese values, rooted in Confucian teachings and transmitted by parents and teachers, that have recently been highlighted by social science research.

One category of these values focused on relationships within the family. Individuals defined themselves according to their obligations to their families<sup>4</sup> and limited their associations with groups outside of the family.<sup>5</sup> Social structures and hierarchies were fixed according to factors such as age, gender, and ranking within the family, but individual behavior could be flexible,<sup>6</sup> depending on the environment in which the interaction takes place (researchers refer to Chinese culture as “high context,” meaning that behavior varies based on the situational context).<sup>7</sup>

A second grouping of values, focused on nonfamilial interpersonal relationships, demonstrated a preference for harmonious social relations and the avoidance of conflict.<sup>8</sup> This was accomplished by valuing tradition and by restraining emotional responses,<sup>9</sup> as well as through conformity to group practices and obedience to authority figures. A third category of values focused on a pragmatic approach to learning coupled with social discipline. These traits were inspired and reinforced by the moral teachings of social, educational, and political leaders.<sup>10</sup> Many of these Chinese values can be summarized as a collectivist approach to life, defined as emphasizing loyalty to and the well-being of family and friends.<sup>11</sup> Thus the needs of the social group take precedence over individual needs and desires.

Immigrants from Guangdong also carried with them to Hong Kong traditional Chinese ways of thinking, or what is known as cognitive style. This style features a particular pattern for the interpretation of other people’s behavior. The inclination is to attribute the motivation behind people’s actions to group norms and beliefs rather than to individual preferences or personality types.<sup>12</sup> Chinese cognitive style also tends to perceive objects and events as continuous and whole rather than as discrete and separate. Finally, in contrast to Western thinking, which stresses an “either-or” preference to decision making and conflict, Chinese thinking is characterized as dialectical or accepting of contradictions as a step toward harmonious goals.<sup>13</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, Hong Kong was serving as an entrepôt or transit point of emigration from Mainland China through the Pearl River Delta and onward to the global market, bringing to the territory

thousands of individuals seeking economic gain. The worldwide demand for laborers drew men from the far reaches of China. The majority were Cantonese speakers, but the influx included Fujianese-, Chaozhou-, Shanghainese-, and Hakka-speaking groups.<sup>14</sup> Their intended destination may have been Singapore, Canada, or the United States, but many found the opportunities in Hong Kong alluring and their immigration journey ended there. Although the core identity of these migrants was Chinese, their primary identification remained with their regional and dialect-based groups, especially among the non-Cantonese-speaking population. A speaker of the Chaozhou dialect, for example, would refer to himself as a Chaozhou person.

British sovereignty over Hong Kong Island in 1841, at the end of the first Opium War, began the next historical identity era. As Kowloon, by treaty (1860), and later the New Territories (1898), by long-term lease, also came under British rule, Hong Kong's foreign population grew. However, then as now, the population of Hong Kong remained 98% Chinese in origin and language. Its role as an entrepôt intensified as the island's infrastructure in support of immigrant needs developed: steamship companies were created and expanded; employment brokers matched emigrants with labor needs throughout the world; government bureaucrats ensured that territorial immigration policies were upheld; hospitals and aid societies tended to the social service needs of the lost, sick, and lonely; and businessmen, the honest and the unscrupulous, moved payments and formed nascent banking systems. It has been calculated, using the detailed records maintained by British harbor masters, that between 1868 and 1939 more than 6 million Chinese emigrated through and from Hong Kong.<sup>15</sup> Local residents, primarily from the small villages in the New Territories, joined in the emigration as well. Records summarized by the historian Elizabeth Sinn indicate that villagers from Yuen Long, Tsuen Wan, Sha Tau Kok, and Sha Tin immigrated in the late nineteenth century to the United States and Australia but also to Panama, Peru, Borneo, Jamaica, and Singapore.<sup>16</sup>

Amid the mass departures from Hong Kong, both voluntary and forced repatriations to Hong Kong began. One of the first reports of a returnee was for a Chinese woman who had been taken by an American family to Hawaii in 1837 and who returned to Hong Kong in 1843. She also represents the beginnings of the cyclical migration and the globalization of Hong Kongers, as traveling with still another American family, she left the island again in 1848, settling in California.<sup>17</sup> Forced repatriation

to Hong Kong ebbed and flowed in response to world conditions. Sinn reports that owing to the Great Depression more than 28,000 persons were repatriated to Hong Kong in 1931.<sup>18</sup> These early experiences of emigration and repatriation formed the next strata of the Hong Kong psyche. As Sinn states, “Emigration both as practice and idea had become commonplace to the people in Hong Kong ... emigration was accepted as a way of life. In sum, not only did the practice of emigration become an essential part of Hong Kong’s material life, but the idea of emigration, one might say, had also become a basic element of Hong Kong’s common mentality.”<sup>19</sup>

The permanent population of the island grew slowly during the first 100 years of British sovereignty (1841–1941), shrinking to a low of 650,000 during the Japanese occupation (1941–45) and rebounding to 1.8 million by 1949. The territory experienced dramatic growth beginning in 1949, on the heels of the Chinese Communist Revolution, and then again following several cataclysmic events in China, including the Great Famine (1959–61) and the Cultural Revolution (1965–76), reinforcing the fates of these two locales. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese, many from southern China, poured into Hong Kong and became the workforce that transformed Hong Kong from an entrepôt of Chinese and foreign goods to an independent manufacturing, production, and financial center.

In the 30 years following World War II, Hong Kong’s Chinese population doubled. Small-scale emigration from Hong Kong, estimated to be 2,000 to 3,000 people annually, many of whom were again drawn from the villages of the New Territories, continued through the postwar period. Despite their intentions to return to their home villages, many of these emigrants did not do so, and in time, entire villages were emptied of their residents.

The movements of other Hong Kongers were circular throughout this period, although temporary. During such major holidays as the Lunar New Year, hundreds of thousands of Hong Kongers returned to their villages and towns in China. By the 1990s, more than one million were making the annual trek back to their ancestral villages.<sup>20</sup> This circular movement was primarily Hong Kong-based until the late 1980s when China-based tourism and short-term visits reached larger proportions.

## **Modern identity**

From 1841 to 1984, the colonial administration of the territories brought to Hong Kong thousands of British citizens, who ran the territory’s

government, schools, businesses, entertainment, sports, and so on. Other European expatriates also lived and worked in the colony. Collectively, they brought with them values, social and behavioral structures, communication styles, and cognitive preferences common to British and northern European culture. These Western values can be categorized in several ways. Some values were related to conceptions of the self in which the person was viewed as independent from his or her family and friends in decision making and in the pursuit of individual life goals.<sup>21</sup> A person's actions were propelled by the need to increase self-esteem and toward individual success and achievement. Furthermore, rather than being shaped by situational contexts, each person's behavior depended on the distinctive attributes that the individual possessed.<sup>22</sup> Other values focused on social relationships and the Western preference for an egalitarian style. However, if the relationships were unequal, the person's inclination would be to assume the superior position.<sup>23</sup> Cognitive values tended toward logical, rational thinking and the classification of people, objects, and events.<sup>24</sup> These Western concepts became layered over the Hong Kongers' core Chinese identity. Chinese and British values were not always incompatible; both cultures had long histories of successful and creative entrepreneurship with elaborate trade relationships beyond their borders.

Although the British were a numerical minority in Hong Kong, as its colonial rulers they established institutions and public laws, and rites and rituals that reflected their Western cultural preferences. The Chinese population, during the nearly 150 years between 1841 and 1984, when the Sino-British treaty was signed stipulating that Hong Kong would revert to the political control of the People's Republic of China, was exposed to a dual system of Chinese and Western cultural elements.<sup>25</sup> Chinese values and behaviors were primarily operational in the home among family and friends while Western values and behaviors were displayed in the public realm. Many residents saw themselves as "sampling the best from both cultural traditions, the Chinese providing the spiritual grounding, the Western, the technical prowess."<sup>26</sup> Identity was often described in oppositional terms as "we" (Chinese) versus "they" (British), but behaviorally a hybridization was emerging. Partly in response to industrialization and to higher levels of education, Hong Kongers incorporated Western values of personal competence and autonomy, signaling a shift toward more individualism and less collectivism.<sup>27</sup> H. F. Siu has suggested that the Chinese of Hong

Kong avoided rigidly defined identities; they were comfortable with their multicultural qualities and had learned how to “be flexible in themselves.”<sup>28</sup> Similarly, S. M. Cheng and S. H. Ng have observed that the movements of people in and out of Hong Kong created “a highly mobile and culturally cosmopolitan society.”<sup>29</sup>

Western values and behaviors became more salient for and infused into the lives of the middle- and upper-class families who chose to have their children educated in the West. In the latter half of the twentieth century, thousands of Hong Kong Chinese children attended high schools and universities in the United Kingdom, in Australia, and, to a lesser extent, in Canada and the United States. In a 2003 survey of 863 Hong Kongers, 23% indicated that they had lived outside Hong Kong for one year or more,<sup>30</sup> and many others aspired to international experience. These sojourner transitions deepened and broadened the Western cultural layer surrounding the individual.

Exposure to Western culture was also pervasive for Hong Kong residents who did not leave Hong Kong but found themselves part of the local workforce employed by international companies on the island and thus spent their working days communicating in the Western corporate style with Western managers and, to a lesser extent, with Western coworkers. A comparative study of managers in Hong Kong, China, and the United States found that the penchant for blended identities extended to managerial styles and values.<sup>31</sup> The responses of Hong Kong managers reflected more Western values than did the responses of Chinese managers. However, those same managers also embraced more Asian values than did the American managers.

### **Hong Kong identity: 1984 and migration decisions**

By 1984, the specter of Britain’s 1997 handover of political control of Hong Kong to China was becoming a reality. While Hong Kong and the world discussed the political and economic consequences of this move, a more personal cultural identity crisis was brewing. Not prepared to abandon their sophisticated, urbane behaviors and cultural identities for the drab and autocratic Chineseness of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Hong Konger began to develop a new identity, or *Xianggang ren* identity,<sup>32</sup> this time in opposition to the Chinese rather than to the British.<sup>33</sup> Utilizing her optimal distinctiveness theory, the social psychologist Marilyn Brewer

suggests that Hong Kong Chinese needed to fulfill the twin motivations of being connected to the Chinese (through ethnicity and origin) yet of remaining distinctive from them.<sup>34</sup> That is, Hong Kongers' Chinese cultural identity served to differentiate them from their Western identity without their having to embrace the political aspects of the Chinese identity. Other social scientists have found evidence of the narrowness of the core Chinese identity.<sup>35</sup> Hong Kong research participants showed favoritism to people who shared their Hong Kong identity but not to all Chinese (e.g., mainland Chinese). Thus the modern Hong Konger identity appeared to be made up of three nested identities: a core Chinese identity surrounded by Western economic and civic values encased in a regional geographic identity. Another research study found that Hong Kong Chinese identified more with, were more similar to, *both* the British and PRC Chinese than the British identified with either PRC or Hong Kong Chinese.<sup>36</sup> Others perceived this same duality. Siu reports that designers of the Hong Kong Room in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing debated whether English and Ming furniture should be juxtaposed.<sup>37</sup>

As the 1997 handover approached, the motivation for keeping Hong Kong Chinese identity and PRC Chinese identity distinct became more salient and polarized yet the identity itself was unstable and fluctuating. A 1985 survey indicated that more than 60% of respondents identified themselves as "Hong Kongers" compared to approximately 36% who described themselves as "Chinese."<sup>38</sup> In a later survey (1988), investigators found a widening of this gap, 64% compared to 29%.<sup>39</sup>

S. L. Wong suggests that Hong Kong identities are rooted in family experience within China and Hong Kong and that individual preferences for cultural identity reflect that family history.<sup>40</sup> In a 1991 survey, he found that 45.9% of the population defined themselves as Chinese, while 48.4% chose the Hong Kong label. Wong defined the emerging Hong Kongese identity as characterized by the person's being mobile, pluralistic, flexible, situational, and pragmatic.

The political handover provided a unique opportunity for social scientists to track changing ideas and attitudes held by Hong Kongers. In 1989, a multi-university consortium established the Hong Kong Transition Project (HKTP) to chart a wide range of social and political attitudes in the years prior to and following the handover.<sup>41</sup> Using sophisticated sampling and polling methodology, the project conducted surveys and collected interview data, in Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, and English, two to four



times per year. The number of respondents in each survey ranged from 550 to 1,200. Of particular note in the massive amounts of data collated and analyzed by the project staff, are the substantial swings in cultural identity from 1995 to 1997. Respondents were asked “How might you describe yourself?” and were given a choice of six responses: Chinese, Hong Kong Chinese, Hong Kong people (*Xianggang ren*), Hong Kong British, Overseas Chinese, and Other. Less than 5% of the respondents chose any one of the latter three descriptions. The percentage choosing the option of “Chinese” was initially 20%, jumped to 30% in 1996 and 1997 (surrounding the handover date), and has since settled at approximately 23%.

Most interesting is the identity shift among those Hong Kongers who combined Chineseness into their identity. In 1993, an equal number of respondents (36%) identified themselves as either Hong Kong people or Hong Kong Chinese (similar to the Wong study mentioned earlier). By 1994, respondents diverged — with 40% identifying as Hong Kong Chinese and 28% as Hong Kong people. These percentages flipped dramatically in late 1996, with 45% identifying as Hong Kong people and 20% as Hong Kong Chinese. Just prior to the handover, there was a modest convergence, with 30% identifying as Hong Kong Chinese and 35% as Hong Kong people. On the evening of July 1, 1997, a resident of Yuen Long remarked, “Ten years ago I called myself British because no one supported us [Chinese]. If you said you were a Hong Kong person your image was downgraded. But China is great now and more open internationally. Last year, I started calling myself Chinese.” Following the handover in July 1997, identity categorizations stabilized, with 45% of the respondents describing themselves as Hong Kong people and 25% as Hong Kong Chinese, the largest discrepancy yet recorded.

Ying-yi Hong and her colleagues, who measured social identity and attitudes toward Mainland China four times between 1996 and 1998, found that social identity on average did not change. This was in contradiction to the Wong and HKTP results. However, Hong did find that, as a whole, Hong Kong university students showed a more positive attitude toward Mainland China after the handover than before the handover. Moreover, the researchers found that social identity (measured in October 1996) was associated with a pro-China attitude (in March 1997) such that a Chinese identity predicted a positive attitude toward Hong Kong’s merging with China. These results were limited to the prehandover time period. After the handover, negative attitudes toward Mainlanders were associated with stronger Hong Konger identity at a later time period.<sup>42</sup>

In an ambitious longitudinal study,<sup>43</sup> the sociologists Janet Salaff (University of Toronto) and Wong Siu-lun (the University of Hong Kong) interviewed 30 Hong Kong families repeatedly during the six-year transition period from 1991 to 1997. The families, initially drawn from a random sample, were then selected to represent both a social class and the decision to emigrate or not. The study's fundamental aim was to understand Hong Kongers' attitudes toward the handover. However, the investigators quickly discovered that political attitudes, that is, the extent to which individuals felt connected either to the Mainland or to Hong Kong, were closely linked to cultural identity. Through intensive interviews and ethnographies, four identity types were uncovered: China "loyalists," Hong Kong "locals," "waverers," and China's "class enemies."

While all interviewees were ethnically Chinese, each varied in his or her extended family's relationship to China (e.g., loyalists had more extended family currently living in China). Loyalists accepted the idea of Hong Kong's reverting to China, attributed much of Hong Kong's economic success to Chinese values, and had no plans to emigrate. Several, in fact, purchased homes in China. They did, however, hold negative stereotypes about Mainlanders and enjoyed their life and freedom in Hong Kong. Middle-aged men born in China were often "loyalists." Locals were primarily born and raised in Hong Kong and felt no connection to China. They did have a positive outlook on Hong Kong's economy, although a few families applied to emigrate as "insurance" against possible economic chaos. Importantly, this group had few family members who had emigrated; Hong Kong was the center of their lives and identity.

In opposition, those individuals in the latter two categories, waverers and China's class enemies, frequently had relatives who either lived abroad or planned to emigrate, and all made application to emigrate themselves. Among the waverers, though, while preferring the British to the Chinese, only one family actually migrated during the study's six years. The class enemies group feared the handover and the anticipated crackdown on civil liberties, corruption, and lawlessness. Families in this group were frequently victims of Mainland political upheavals (e.g., the Cultural Revolution) although few had kinship ties any longer to China. Being members of Hong Kong's upper-middle or upper class and having embraced British values to a greater extent than the other three identity groups, they believed that they had the most to lose both economically and culturally during the handover. Most of the class enemies group methodically planned for their emigration and carried it out sometime over the course of the study.

### **Hong Kongers on the move: Outbound migration**

The handover of sovereignty for Hong Kong from Great Britain to the People's Republic of China was a unique historical phenomenon. The anticipated change from a frenetic capitalistic environment ruled by a democratic, Western country to a communist country with limitations on individual rights of speech and private property created fear and anxiety about what the future might bring under Chinese control. Gary Hamilton encapsulated these feelings when he stated that the entrepreneurs and professional classes needed to "assess whether the risks of being grounded in China ... outweigh[ed] the opportunities that might ensue from becoming China's broker to the world."<sup>44</sup>

As the Saloff and Wong study indicated, the decision-making process was family-focused and was influenced by identity labels. Cultural identity was more than a descriptive category; it had behavioral consequences. Among those interviewees identifying themselves as Chinese, 60% were committed to staying in Hong Kong, whereas among those claiming a Hong Kong identity, only 45% said that they would definitely stay after the handover.

Thousands of Hong Kong residents decided that the risks of staying put were too great; migration soared from 22,400 in 1980 to a high of 66,000 in 1992,<sup>45</sup> although demographer Ronald Skeldon suggests that this government figure underestimates the emigration by 10–15%. He estimates that total outflow of Hong Kongers from 1987–92 was more than 300,000.<sup>46</sup> More inclusive figures from 1984 to 1997 indicate that close to 600,000 emigrated from Hong Kong (Hong Kong government). The latest data collected from the Australian, Canadian and US governments plus estimates of emigration to other countries puts the grand total at approximately 800,000 (see Table 1.1).

Late twentieth-century emigration differed from earlier emigration in more than its quantitative dimension. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigrants were primarily rural, lacked formal education, and represented the poor or working class. These were the Hong Kongers who built the railroads in the West and established the world's Chinatowns. In contrast, immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s were primarily urban, highly educated, middle or upper class. For example, in 1993, 5.2% of all Hong Kongers held university degrees, yet 15% of those Hong Kongers who emigrated were university graduates. Similarly, 12% of the total population was employed in high-level occupations, yet 35.5% of the immigrants were

**Table 1.1** Immigrants to major destinations whose last previous residence was Hong Kong, 1984–97

	Australia	Canada	United States
1984	3,691	7,696	12,290
1985	5,136	7,380	10,975
1986	4,912	5,893	9,930
1987	5,140	16,170	8,785
1988	7,942	23,281	11,817
1989	9,998	19,994	12,236
1990	11,538	28,825	12,853
1991	16,747	22,340	15,564
1992	15,656	38,841	16,741
1993	8,111	36,571	14,418
1994	4,075	44,146	11,953
1995	5,139	31,737	10,699
1996	6,187	30,007	11,319
1997	5,340	21,597	7,974
Total	109,612	334,478	167,554
Grand Total: 611, 644			
Estimated Total Emigration to All Countries: 795,137 <sup>a</sup>			

**Sources:**

*Australia:* Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Australian Immigration, Canberra, Consolidated Statistics, No. 13, 1982 and No. 19, 1997; Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, Canberra, Statistical Note 36: Asian Immigration, 1988; Bureau of Immigration Research, Immigration Update, several issues.

*Canada:* Employment and Immigration Canada, Ottawa, *Annual Immigration Statistics*; Annual Demographic Statistics, No. 19, 1998.

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**Note:**

<sup>a</sup>Skeldon (1994) estimated that emigration from Hong Kong to all countries (including the United Kingdom, Singapore, New Zealand, China, and Taiwan) may have been 35% higher than emigration to Australia, Canada, and the United States together. We have used a more conservative estimate of 30% to calculate total emigration during these years.

professionals. Handover emigrants also differed from the emigrants of earlier periods by frequently including three generations of a family rather than a husband migrating alone.<sup>47</sup>

Immigrant families obtained visas to traditional “settler” countries including the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia, along with neighboring countries such as Singapore and more exotic

locales like Fiji, Panama, and Lesotho. Decisions to depart from Hong Kong coincided with changes in immigration policies in a number of countries that served to funnel the immigrants either toward or away from those destinations. One example of a country experiencing the effects of the liberalization of immigration policy was New Zealand, which enacted new laws in 1986. Soon thereafter, New Zealand became the fifth most popular country of destination, receiving 13,530 Hong Kong immigrants between 1987 and 1992.<sup>48</sup>

Combined, Canada, Australia, and the United States accounted for more than 80% of the total number of immigrants during the initial period of immigration (1987–93). Canada received more than 185,000 Hong Kongers during that time period, quadrupling the immigration from the prior seven years.<sup>49</sup> Australia received 75,000, increasing its number of Hong Kong immigrants threefold. The United States received 92,000, only a minor increase over the prior period, at a rate of 10,000 permanent visas granted per year under the Family Reunification Act.<sup>50</sup> Despite the commonalities among these settler countries, the Hong Kong emigrant experiences varied widely.

### **Hong Kongers on the move: Settling in**

In general, emigrants found themselves in countries that differed dramatically from Hong Kong in many ways. One significant physical difference between Hong Kong and the Western countries of emigration is the density levels. Hong Kong is among the most densely populated territories on earth, averaging 6,380 people/square kilometer. The United States averages 31/square kilometer. And the countries that experienced the most immigration from Hong Kong are among the most sparsely populated: both Canada and Australia average 3/square kilometer.<sup>51</sup> Other features were distinctive by country as the Hong Kong newcomers began their adaptation.

#### *Canadian settlement*

As the recipient of the largest number of Hong Kong immigrants, Canada found itself in the midst of the largest single-country influx in its history. Hong Kong moved from a tenth place ranking in 1971 as an immigration source country to first place in 1987,<sup>52</sup> and immigration category shifted from family reunification to economic. The sheer number was multiplied

in its effect in that the majority of Hong Kong immigrants moved either to the west coast province of British Columbia or to Ontario, in the middle of the country. While the Canadians needed to adjust to their new neighbors, Hong Kongers needed to adjust to a cold climate, mountainous regions, a new language, and a new culture. Chinese culturally derived social networks were the first line of assistance. Voluntary Chinese associations, initially formed to provide aid to the rural, unskilled mid-nineteenth-century gold rush immigrants, continued their efforts to assist the well-educated urban professionals during the difficult preliminary adjustment period in Vancouver, Toronto, and other cities that experienced large-scale immigration.<sup>53</sup> These associations were modeled on those found in villages throughout China.

The shift from the unaccompanied male immigrants in the nineteenth century to multi-generation families in the 1980s led to varied adjustment patterns during the acculturation process. Children straddled two cultural milieu: adapting to the cultural values of their school environments and newly made local friends while maintaining the ethnic values of their parents at home. Inevitable conflicts arose. Husbands and wives had to make differential adaptations as well. Men needed to adjust to a workplace that required more openness in expressing opinions, a flatter organization (fewer managers) with minimized status differences between managers and subordinates, and a slower and less driven work style. Women were thrust into domestic situations without the assistance of domestic help or extended family, resulting in their having increased responsibility for child rearing and for shopping and running a household, mostly in English.

A recent study compared similarities and differences in acculturation among parents and children of immigrant Chinese families in Canada.<sup>54</sup> Three domains of acculturation were investigated. Behavioral practices compared, among other overt actions, Chinese and Canadian language use and media preferences. Ethnic identity assessed the strength of the immigrants' feelings of belonging to their Chinese ethnicity. Cultural values measured the extent to which the families embraced Chinese or Canadian qualities (e.g., family cohesion vs. individualism). Overall, and not unexpectedly, children were more open to adopting the behaviors (speaking English and using English media) and values (more independent) of the Canadians than were their parents. Surprisingly, though, parents were only marginally more committed to Chinese culture than their children were. The families exhibited the most similarities to each other in the ethnic identity and Asian value dimensions, suggesting that, at home, parents

were particularly concerned about transmitting aspects of Chinese culture. Yet while the children received and integrated Chinese values into their identities, their behavior frequently reflected Canadian ideals, an example of the duality and integrative flexibility of Chinese self-concept.

Demographic distinctiveness did not break down only along age lines, as the adults themselves did not hold uniform values or beliefs. One unexpected finding was the difference between immigrant mothers and fathers on most of the cultural dimensions. The mothers were more oriented toward Chinese culture and identity, while the fathers favored Canadian ones. These results had consequences for familial relationships, particularly in light of the differential residency in Canada of mothers versus fathers. As we will see, the mothers were more likely to be the sole caretaker of the family in Canada, whereas the fathers returned to Hong Kong.

Immigration has multiple constituents, both individual and institutional, social and cultural. Acculturation to Canada by Hong Kong immigrants must be seen against the backdrop of the prevalent Canadian philosophy of multiculturalism. The tenets of this concept permitted and subtly encouraged the private maintenance of ethnic values while simultaneously insisting on minimal public adherence to Canadian behaviors and values. An example of the outcome of this model is found in a study of immigrants from the Netherlands to Canada compared with those who immigrated to Australia and the United States.<sup>55</sup> Dutch immigrants to Canada were far more likely to identify themselves as Canadian and with an integrative acculturation strategy (i.e., maintaining both home and host culture values and attitudes) and be less marginalized than Dutch immigrants to the other two countries. In a similar study, Punjabi Sikhs were better acculturated to Canada than to Australia or the United Kingdom.<sup>56</sup>

K. B. Chan, a prominent Hong Kong sociologist, argues, however, that within the Hong Kong Canadian community, women and younger immigrants in particular preferred an alternative to multiculturalism. According to Chan, “The hyphen remains a hyphen forever. The multicultural policy has effectively prevented the hyphen (Chinese-Canadian) from being removed and replaced by an arrow (Chinese → Canadian).”<sup>57</sup> Chan advocates for a philosophy that would allow Hong Kong immigrants to better integrate and fuse Chinese and Canadian values, to experience “inclusion and exclusion, togetherness and separation, certainty and adventure, living out ... life at the borders”<sup>58</sup> through a hybridization of behavior, identity, and values.

Canada and Canadians also have been transformed by the Hong Kong migration in both small, intimate, and large, structural, ways. New urban development projects such as Pacific Place connect Hong Kong and Vancouver and shift Canadian linkages from northern Europe to the Pacific Rim.<sup>59</sup> The Canadian preference for modest homes surrounded by lawns, trees, and shrubbery reflected the national value placed on open space and natural beauty. Hong Kong immigrants, longing for internal space denied them when they lived in the colony, purchased existing homes in Vancouver or Toronto, razed them, and replaced them with enormous houses fitting to the edges of the footprint of the building lots. Their Canadian neighbors chafed at the changes, whereas the Hong Kongers luxuriated in their new multi-bedroom, multi-bathroom mansions. Who needed a lawn?

### *Australian settlement*

Australia received the largest per capita number of Hong Kongers, who gained entry under the nation's Independent Skills Program (based on educational and occupation skills); by 1990, Hong Kongers had become Australia's largest source of non-English-speaking immigrants, jumping from a 21st ranking in 1980.<sup>60</sup> In 1991–92, for immigrants categorized by place of last residence, Hong Kong was the number one source, with 15,656 new settlers. The total number of Hong Kong-born residents also dramatically increased, from 1,554 in 1954 to 80,000 in 1993.<sup>61</sup> In a comparative study of Asian immigrants to Brisbane, Australia, which included 23 Hong Kongers, parameters of this subgroup were described and they deviated noticeably from those of immigrants from the PRC, Taiwan, Japan, and Vietnam. Most Hong Kong respondents were married to other Hong Kongers, only half had children, and most owned their own homes or apartments in neighborhoods described as at the middle or upper socioeconomic level. Nearly half of the Hong Kong respondents had visited Australia prior to immigrating there and indicated that physical attributes of the environment (climate, cleanliness, open spaces) were important factors in their selecting Australia as their immigration destination. Mostly university-educated, they were employed as professionals.<sup>62</sup>

Although geographically proximal to Hong Kong, Australia offered differences in climate, topography, history, employment opportunities, and culture. A critical aspect of immigrant adjustment was economic, posing the question of whether these highly educated immigrants from Hong



Kong would find appropriate jobs within the Australian labor force. Anita Mak, a Hong Kong-born psychologist, educated partly in Hong Kong and partly in Australia, conducted an in-depth study of 111 Hong Kong Chinese who settled in Australia.<sup>63</sup> These mid-career professionals, both men and women, included newcomers (less than 3½ years in Australia) and settlers (3½–10 years).

Somewhat unexpectedly, two-thirds of the respondents were able to find positions in the same occupation as in Hong Kong although subsequently many found career advancement blocked. Two-thirds of the respondents also indicated that while generally satisfied with their jobs, they were uncertain or dissatisfied about career development. Nearly a quarter of the interviewees needed further study in a new academic area in order to secure a job, and obstacles to their finding relevant employment were particularly evident in the areas of engineering, teaching, and management.

Cross-cultural differences between the two countries were revealed most clearly in the employment arena. Study participants perceived that limitations both in finding pertinent employment and in career promotion were fueled by racial discrimination, the undervaluing of Hong Kong education and work experience, language barriers, and lack of local knowledge. Australian cultural values influenced workplace interactions and customs, leading to the need for adjustments on the part of the immigrants. In his groundbreaking work on cultural values and their influence in the workplace, Geert Hofstede, a Dutch organizational psychologist, found significant differences between Hong Kong and Australia.<sup>64</sup> On the continuum of collectivism (0) to individualism (100), Hong Kong scored a 25 (ranked 53) (more collectivist) while Australia scored a 90 (and was ranked 2) (more individualist). These differences were manifest in the relationship that the workers felt with the work institution and the amount of time and energy that would be spent on behalf of the institution. Hong Kongers were accustomed to working long hours, six to seven days a week, and to socializing with coworkers in the evening (eating, drinking, playing mah-jong). These behaviors were cultural signifiers and represented strong connections to the work group. Their hard work would support and maintain the organization, which in turn would reward the employee. For Hong Kongers, the balance of work life to family life inevitably fell on the side of work. For Australian workers, the balance fell on the side of family and personal leisure. In individualist Australia, the work day and the work week were short and individual effort

was modest. Immigrants were often troubled by what they perceived as a weak work ethic and lack of concern about the organization. Conversely, Australians negatively attributed the workplace dedication and persistence of the Hong Kong immigrants to cloying deference to the boss or to an unfortunate lack of concern for family.

Respondents in the Mak study indicated that other problematic cultural differences included uncomfortably democratic work relationships between supervisor and subordinate, and preferences for the open expression of opinions. External factors, such as the struggling state of the Australian economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, also resulted in dissatisfaction with financial compensation. One-third of the respondents were considering a return to Hong Kong. Not all cultural differences were met with distress, however. Increased workplace autonomy and responsibility resulted in increased satisfaction among the Hong Kong immigrants.

Overall, Hong Kong immigrants were happier with their personal and family life than they were with their jobs in Australia. The search for career satisfaction as well as the challenges of raising school-aged children appeared to be significant factors in immigrants' decision making regarding whether they remained in or departed from Australia.

### *United States settlement*

Hong Kongers who emigrated to the United States did so under America's family reunification policy. Therefore, these immigrants had private mutual assistance groups ready to ease their acculturative stress. Despite the existence of supporting family and friends, the majority of social scientific research on the Hong Kong immigrant group has focused on the effects of acculturation on a wide variety of psychological outcomes. Few consistent findings enable us to generalize about the acculturation process for the Hong Kongers in the United States. Some studies demonstrated that acculturation levels (i.e., the extent to which an individual acculturated to US society) did not affect depression,<sup>65</sup> whereas others indicated that those immigrants with lower acculturation to the United States had higher expectations about the expertise of psychological counselors.<sup>66</sup> A more nuanced result indicated that the amount of stress related to acculturation was influenced by whether an immigrant held an internal versus external Chinese identity.<sup>67</sup>

An anthropological study, which used a case study method rather than an experimental one,<sup>68</sup> discussed Hong Kong immigrants' planned and intentional strategy not only to adjust to life in California but also to fit within the upper social classes and monied elites. Through interviews and observations, this author revealed that the immigrants used multiple tactics including selection of the "right" private schools, investment in self-improvement lessons (tennis, golf, music, chess), purchase or building of homes in geographically desirable locations (from both a local and a *feng shui* perspective), and philanthropic donations to and leadership volunteerism with favored charities and cultural institutions. This study was also critical of many current conceptualizations of globalization. The researcher's paradigm included immigrant choice or personal agency in emigration rationale and acculturation decision making.

### *New Zealand settlement*

The New Zealand clinical psychologist Elsie Ho, herself an immigrant from Hong Kong, has examined New Zealand's Chinese community, particularly in Auckland, where the largest numbers of former Hong Kong residents reside.<sup>69</sup> Her profile of recent Hong Kong immigrants to New Zealand reflect those who have resettled elsewhere: well-educated, well-off, and moving as nuclear or extended families. New Zealand provided them with a stable, democratic, and English-speaking environment coupled with a comfortable climate, distinctively "clean and green" surroundings, and excellent educational opportunities.

Ho found that the new immigrants settled in easily economically, securing managerial, professional, and administrative positions. Eighty percent of their employment was in wholesale or retail trade, restaurants and hotels, business and financial services, and manufacturing. Socially, the atmosphere was more clouded. The large numbers of immigrants settling into a rather small geographic area over a short time period resulted in some public display of prejudice. Overt and subtle discrimination led to active attempts on the part of local and Chinese leaders to seek ways to increase tolerance and enhance understanding between the two communities. It also prompted the Hong Kongers to pursue dual goals of becoming more fully integrated into the host society while maintaining their Hong Kong identity through the establishment and growth of community self-help organizations.

### **Hong Kongers on the move: Coming home**

On July 1, 1997, on a hot and rainy evening in Hong Kong, the British Union Jack was lowered and replaced by the five-starred flag of the People's Republic of China and by the smaller bauhinia flag of the new Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong. The HMY *Britannia*, carrying Prince Charles and Christopher Patten, the 28th and last Governor of Hong Kong, sailed away from Victoria Harbour as the People's Liberation Army, arriving from Shenzhen, assumed their positions guarding the former Prince of Wales Barracks in Admiralty. Revelers in Statue Square mixed with democracy protestors who shouted outside of the Legco (Legislative Council) Building. Amid the celebrations and the anxiety, the people of Hong Kong held their collective breath.

Despite the removal of symbols of the Crown, no calamitous changes occurred in Hong Kong in the next few months, and the island's population cautiously exhaled. So did the Hong Kong immigrants, who, while adapting to life in Vancouver, Los Angeles, Sydney, and London, kept their eyes trained on events in the former colony. For many, their immediate fears about the impact of Chinese sovereignty were not realized but neither were their optimistic expectations of life as immigrants. In their new countries, professionals found themselves either under- or unemployed, subtle discriminatory practices were uncovered, and English-language skills were found to be insufficient.

As a result, the immigration tide began to turn. What began as a trickle of husbands returning to Hong Kong to work turned into a steady flow of returnees. The structure of late twentieth-century Hong Kong immigration began with features both similar to and distinctive from immigrant patterns from other countries. As was noted earlier in the chapter, migrants most often departed as multi-generation families, and their middle-class status and advanced education distinguished them from past immigrant groups. Their return to Hong Kong was distinctive as well. Some men who had emigrated found themselves dissatisfied with their immigrant jobs, with the outlook for career advancement, and, most disturbing, with their low financial compensation. What then was the salient option? They decided to return to Hong Kong, where the economy was expanding, the labor pool depleted, and the salaries high. With an eye toward the future and Hong Kongers' characteristic flexibility, immigrant men had maintained their Hong Kong workplace networks throughout their overseas adjustment, communicating often with their former coworkers and supervisors and

their university friends. Hong Kong businesses were in dire need of skilled and experienced workers because of the recent exodus and were luring immigrants back to Hong Kong with enticing compensation packages.

But who should return? Just the husband? The entire family? Only the parents, leaving the grandparents to care for the children in the settler country? Both the parents and children, leaving the grandparents as placeholders in the newly purchased home? All possibilities were tried. The patterns varied in format and over time.

Initially, the pattern was for the entire family to remain in the new homeland with the exception of the husbands, who accepted employment in Hong Kong. Often this option was undertaken as an expedient measure, with the expectation that the men would return frequently to their new homeland to visit the family and, conversely, that the family would travel to Hong Kong during school holidays and the summer. Thus was born the Hong Kong “astronaut” (*tai kong ren*). A play on words, this term also can be translated as “man without a wife.” These men, flying back and forth between Kai Tak Airport and Vancouver or Sydney, led binational lives while their “satellite” families struggled to adjust to a new culture and a new identity. The long-term strategy was straightforward although rarely realized — after a year or so the solo husbands would earn enough in Hong Kong to return to their families and the country to which they had immigrated.

Although these astronaut tactics were born of economic underemployment,<sup>70</sup> they had psychological motivations as well. In the settler country, husbands did not only feel the pinch of declining income. They also experienced the ego-deflating effect of having less prestigious jobs than they had had in Hong Kong, which often necessitated that their wives now seek employment. The possibility of lowered self-esteem surely was behind the comments of one male returnee: *“When you are not able to find a job, or earn enough money or work at your former position, especially for a male, they’ll feel that they are useless. Some people who are used to being a boss, [but] after they went to Canada they had to distribute newspapers or to work as a driver for a living. As their social class lowered dramatically, they also suffered serious psychological depression. I think, other than money, this is another important reason why many have returned to Hong Kong.”*<sup>71</sup>

These personal inclinations and desires to return home were fanned by the Hong Kong government’s active attempts to lure the migrants back home. Recruitment teams from the private sector and the government traveled throughout North America, Australia, and New Zealand seeking to entice the immigrants back with the promise of hefty salaries and bonuses, and appealing to their loyalty to the territory.<sup>72</sup>

A secondary remigration strategy began to develop. The pragmatic characteristics of the Hong Kong identity began to coalesce around the issue of child rearing. Parents wanted to raise bilingual and bicultural children. Perhaps a developmental interlude back in Hong Kong would ensure that their children would have their Cantonese skills reinforced and would begin to learn Mandarin, all the while maintaining their newly polished English-language fluency. Wives and children began to depart from their countries of immigration, often leaving behind a parent, or keeping ownership of a house, now rented to newer immigrants. Thus behavioral decisions to return to the territory were based on both macro and micro forces. On the macro side were fluctuating economies, political decisions by the Chinese government, and human rights concerns. On the micro side were depressed husbands, unhappy children, ill and aging parents, and lifestyle preferences.

The plan was now a reversed journey: move to Hong Kong but return to the new passport countries during school holidays to reunite with extended family and for linguistic maintenance, in anticipation several years hence of their children's matriculating at the University of British Columbia or the University of New South Wales. The solo astronaut was gradually replaced by the familial boomerang,<sup>73</sup> careening back and forth from Hong Kong.

### **Counting the remigrants**

How many Hong Kongers have returned in their former homeland? Accurately tracking the movement of people is a notoriously difficult task. Government statisticians and academic demographers frequently disagree about population figures. Estimates of migrants returning to their home countries are just that, estimations based on shipboard manifests, census information, occasional surveys, and anecdotal evidence. The historian Mark Wyman investigated early twentieth-century return migration from the United States back to the immigrants' native European homelands.<sup>74</sup> He used many sources to estimate the numbers and suggests that more than 4 million immigrants returned home. Researchers attending a 1981 European conference on International Return Migration estimated that 20–30% of the Europeans returned home. But these numbers varied dramatically by ethnicity and by reason for migration, primarily economic compared with political. For example, 50–60% of southern Italians, whose immigration to the United States was motivated by financial reasons, returned to Italy, whereas only 5% of Eastern European Jews, migrating to

avoid anti-Semitic programs and mass displacements, returned to Russia and neighboring countries. Cinel also investigated return migration from the United States focusing on Italians.<sup>75</sup> His estimates were based on extensive banking records and on archival documents from local municipalities. Despite the numerical statements, most historians admit to uncertainties in their estimates and to inconsistencies in early censuses and surveys.

Similarly, it is impossible to accurately assess how many Hong Kongers have returned to live and work in the territory. Surveys on intentions to remigrate are not necessarily an accurate reflection; there is no assurance that the migrating behavior will match the intention.<sup>76</sup> There were those returnees intending to return briefly to Hong Kong who stayed. Then there were those who intended to remain in Hong Kong but who returned to their country of migration. And many found themselves leading a peripatetic existence creating the Hong Kong migrant boomerang.

The outflow of emigrants from and inflow of returnees to Hong Kong are particularly difficult to track because individuals departing for Commonwealth countries prior to 1997 were not required to relinquish their Hong Kong residency cards when they left and therefore were not required to apply for a visa or for re-entry permission when they returned. Despite its speculative nature, I will not shirk from the task of suggesting some return migrant assessments. Early surveys by the Hong Kong government claimed that in 1992 alone, 8,000 people returned,<sup>77</sup> or an estimated 16% of the total emigrant group.<sup>78</sup> Academic study has suggested that 30% of those who settled in Australia in 1990/91 returned to Hong Kong by 1993.<sup>79</sup> Ronald Skeldon revised these estimates, suggesting that “it is not improbable that one-fifth of the more than 300,000 who are said to have left Hong Kong between 1987 and 1992 might have returned, or some 60,000 people.”<sup>80</sup>

Later surveys by the Hong Kong government estimated that 120,000 emigrants had returned.<sup>81</sup> This figure, however, is generally acknowledged by social scientists to substantially undercount the actual number. The profile and a similar census in 2001 indicated that most returnees were young adults (aged 20 to 29, 37.5%) or middle-aged (aged 30 to 39, 21.5%); very few were children or retirees.

DeGolyer’s annual Hong Kong Transition Survey inquired as to the respondent’s identity. Approximately 7% describe themselves as either remigrants or Hong Kong expatriates. Extrapolating to the current population of nearly 7 million, this would translate to 490,000 returnees — nearly a half million remigrants.

Another enumerative methodology is to measure the number of foreign nationals living in Hong Kong. This method may give an indication of the numbers of return migrants as many entered Hong Kong under their new foreign passports. Ley and Kobayashi summarized media reports that estimated that between 500,000 and 700,000 Hong Kongers had returned by the mid-1990s.<sup>82</sup> The Hong Kong Immigration Department indicated that the number of Australians living in Hong Kong was approximately 8,500 for much of the 1980s. That number jumped to 18,700 by 1994, and to 50,000 by 2005. One can reasonably assume that the majority of these Australian passport holders are Hong Kongers returning home. Similarly, the number of Canadians living in Hong Kong hovered between 8,000 and 10,000 in the 1980s; in 1994, the number was 24,700. By 2005, the Canadian Consulate of Hong Kong indicated that 250,000 Canadian passport holders were residing in Hong Kong and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong provided the high estimate that 500,000 Canadian citizens were living in Hong Kong.

Less dramatic are the increases in the numbers of US and UK passport holders residing in Hong Kong. The number of British citizens living in Hong Kong during the 1980s and early 1990s stayed flat, at 16,000, which was not a surprisingly large number given that Hong Kong remained a colonial territory. However, the number began to rise and reached 23,700 by 1994 and by 2005 was 250,000. There was a different trajectory for US citizens residing in Hong Kong, with a slow and steady increase in the number from 14,000 in 1986 to nearly 30,000 in 1994; in 2009 there were 54,000.

One might be tempted to assume that the increases in Western representation in Hong Kong were due to an influx of business expatriates. But there are indications that the number of corporate expatriate employees in Hong Kong has declined in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Several reasons account for this change, including the cost of living for expatriate workers, corporate relocation of Asian headquarters to Shanghai or Beijing, and changes in the US tax codes that are less beneficial for expatriates.

Therefore, increases in the numbers of Australian, Canadian, UK, and US passport holders in Hong Kong can reasonably be attributed to Hong Kong Chinese migrants returning under the passport of their newly acquired citizenship. In summary, conservative estimates would put the number of remigrants from all countries of settlement at 500,000, that is, 83% of those who migrated and nearly 7% of the total population of Hong Kong.



### **Returning home: Psychological consequences for identity**

Psychologically, what is the nature of the cultural identity of the returnee to Hong Kong, whether the husband or the entire family? On to the multilayered Hong Kong identity, Chinese, British, Hong Kong identity vis-à-vis British, Hong Kong identity vis-à-vis China, and Canadian/Australian, is now added yet another — the identity of return migrant. Who are these individuals and what is the configuration of their identity? Do they feel at home again in Hong Kong, or has their identity transformation led to a new global transnational identity? This book, and the Hong Kong Remigration Project that it summarizes, was designed to answer such questions so that we might better understand the identity changes that return migrants face. Antecedents to remigration, such as characteristics of the adaptation process to the settlement country, and consequences of remigration, in terms of behavior, thought, and emotion, will be investigated. To assist in the analysis of these questions, a theoretical framework was utilized. The Cultural Identity Model (CIM) of Cultural Transitions was initially developed to conceptualize the repatriation of sojourners, those travelers who are temporarily living in a foreign country.<sup>83</sup> However, the CIM has proven to be a functional framework with which to understand the repatriated immigrant identity as well. A detailed discussion of the features and variables in the CIM will be explored in Chapter 3.

The case has been made in this chapter that residents of Hong Kong have developed complex identities. Triggered by situational cues, Hong Kongers have learned how to negotiate these identities within the Hong Kong regional and global context. Wong Siu-lun provides a rich example of the ability to switch cultural identities among Hong Kong textile manufacturers who were born in Shanghai:

According to the situation, a Shanghainese can activate regional ties of various scope ... In international forums such as textile negotiations, the cotton spinners usually present themselves as industrialists from Hong Kong ... Vis-à-vis their foreign buyers or the senior British officials of the colony, they are Chinese. Meeting in regional associations, they are people from Ningpo or Shanghai city who enjoy their local cuisine and theatrical entertainment. When they participate in the activities of their trade associations, they are modern, westernized businessmen.<sup>84</sup>

The large-scale movement of people from and back to Hong Kong allows us not only to understand the psychological consequences of Hong Kong return migration but also to illuminate an emerging worldwide

phenomenon. Migrants are returning in large numbers to Asian countries including China, Korea, Vietnam, and India. Particular European countries, such as Ireland, the Czech Republic, and Turkey, are also experiencing a rise in return migrants, as is Israel. Results of the limited number of social scientific investigations focusing on the experiences of these remigrants will be summarized throughout the book, starting in Chapter 3, and contrasted with the findings of the Hong Kong Remigration Project.

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