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**CASE STUDIES ON THE ASSIMILATION OF
CONTEMPORARY MAINLAND MIGRANT FAMILIES IN HONG KONG:
A SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE**

by
CHAN Shing Tak Pedro

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy

Lingnan University

September 1999

ABSTRACT

Case Studies on the Assimilation of Contemporary Mainland Migrant Families in Hong Kong: A Segmented Assimilation Theory Perspective

by

CHAN Shing Tak Pedro

Master of Philosophy

Population growth can be simply broken down into two components: natural increase and net migration. The previous two decades – from the 1980s to the 1990s – discerned a gradual reduction in natural increase but simultaneously, a rapid rise in net migration. Rising immigration has raised concern over the characteristics new arrivals bring and the social context that receives them. This study focuses on the impact of recent mainland arrivals, their settlement and their incorporation into the fabric of Hong Kong society. Various possible patterns and outcomes of social adjustment are likely to emerge among mainlanders and their families. Their success in adjusting is dependent on which segment of Hong Kong society they attempt to assimilate into. Taking into account the segmented assimilation theory and using a case-study method, this study examines possible determinants – linguistic proficiency, education, socio-economic status and spatial distribution. To blur the differences between mainland migrant and local resident, the former needs to learn a new language. Mainlanders frequently seek to improve their income status and job opportunity to reflect their ability to assimilate. As such, education is often given a central place in their aspirations, especially among their children. Socio-economic status too, shapes the immediate social conditions for their assimilation. Economic restructuring in Hong Kong, however, has led to a withdrawal of several rungs of the mobility ladder that are crucial for mainland migrants. Indeed, geographical distribution of mainlander households in districts puts them in close contact with concentrations of local residents. While this might have little bearing on mainland migrants themselves, it has considerable impact on their children. Consequently, by studying the interaction of these determinants, the study concludes that we should consider why different patterns of social adjustment emerge among mainlanders, how these distinct patterns necessarily lead to various outcomes within society, and how mainland migrant families would ultimately fit into the society. In the new social milieu, issues that are principally caused by contemporary population growth cannot be ignored if unintended consequences are to be avoided.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this thesis «Case Studies on the Assimilation of Contemporary Mainland Migrant Families in Hong Kong: A Segmented Assimilation Theory Perspective» is the product of my own research and has not been published in any other publications.

SIGNED

CHAN Shing Tak Pedro
29 September 1999

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

CASE STUDIES ON THE ASSIMILATION OF CONTEMPORARY MAINLAND MIGRANT FAMILIES IN HONG KONG: A SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Master of Philosophy

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CHAN Shing Tak Pedro
September 1999

Chapter 1

Preamble

1.1 Introduction

Population growth can be simply broken down into two components: natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration (in-migration minus out-migration). The previous two decades – from the 1980s to the 1990s – witnessed enormous changes in the components of Hong Kong's population growth. A slowdown in the natural population increase has proven an improvement in living standards, personal hygiene and public medical and health services, as well as the hard work of the Family Planning Association. However, a prolonged rapid rise in the proportion of net migration meant that new arrivals were to have a dominant effect on the current trend of Hong Kong's population growth. Table 1 summarises that, on the one hand, the proportion resulting from natural increase declined from 57.3 per cent in 1991 to 11.1 per cent in 1998. On the other hand, the proportion resulting from net migration increased from 42.7 per cent to 88.9 per cent.

Table 1-1 Components of Population Growth, 1951-1998.

Period	Natural Increase		Net Migration		Population Growth	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mid-year						
1951 – 1961	730,600	63.4	422,200	36.6	1,152,800	100
1961 – 1971	761,800	86.8	115,400	13.2	877,200	100
1971 – 1981	586,000	52.5	531,000	47.5	1,117,800	100
1981 – 1991	488,000	92.1	41,700	7.9	530,000	100
End of year						
1990 – 1991	40,400	57.3	30,100	42.7	70,500	100
1991 – 1992	40,600	51.0	39,000	49.0	79,600	100
1992 – 1993	41,300	35.1	76,500	64.9	117,800	100
1993 – 1994	42,900	33.2	86,300	66.8	129,200	100
1994 – 1995	38,200	24.1	120,600	75.9	158,800	100
1995 – 1996	32,800	21.7	118,500	78.3	151,300	100
1996 – 1997	28,100	14.4	167,700	85.6	195,800	100
1997 – 1998	20,900	11.1	167,600	88.9	188,500	100

Sources: Figures for the ten year periods were taken from the 1981 and 1991 Census Reports and the figures for the single-year periods were taken from the Hong Kong Yearbook.

Until the early 1990s, net migration accounted for 7.9 per cent of population growth (see Table 1). At that time, the principal concerns surrounding population studies were the emigration of local residents and the problem of a brain drain. Undoubtedly, emigration numbers have fallen in recent years. The reduction can be explained by regional differences in economic development and by government immigration-policy responses to those differences (Skeldon, 1994). Why did population growth continue at such a rapid rate in the 1990s? The significant factor appears to be increased immigration. Who are the recent new arrivals? Scholars and government officials pointed out that mainland migrants have made up an important segment of recent new arrivals. According to the 1997 Hong Kong Yearbook, 38.5 per cent of net migrants in 1996 were from the mainland. Furthermore, in May 1997 the Census and Statistics Department estimated that the population of Hong Kong would expand to 8 million by the year 2016. About 60 per cent of the growth, which is estimated at over 1 million, will be due to mainlanders entering Hong Kong under the current one-way permit quota system. The effects of the system were underestimated at the time the system was introduced. According to Article 24(3) of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region Basic Law, spouses and children of permanent Hong Kong residents have the right of abode in Hong Kong after 1997. A judgement based on the Article 24(3) was made by the Court of Final Appeal in January 1999. The Security Bureau then announced that after the judgement, the number of persons who qualified for right of abode in Hong Kong was 1.675 million. 692,000 of that number were children of Hong Kong residents who would come first over a three-year period. After having lived in Hong Kong for seven years, their descendants (about 983,000 persons) would then be able to take up residency. In order to manipulate the population growth, the

Hong Kong Government decided to pass the final interpretation of the issue back to the Standing Committee of the Nation People's Congress in May 1999. Eventually, on 26 June 1999, the Standing Committee pointed out that Article 24 of Basic Law is only applied to those were born at the time one of their parents had had Hong Kong permanent resident identity.

Most qualified legal entrants from the mainland are dependants, especially wives and children, of Hong Kong residents. Regarding the composition of mainland migrants in 1996, 40.5 per cent were wives and 52 per cent were children of local residents. Table 2 shows the further breakdown of legal mainland migrants from 1991 to 1995 by their age group and sex. It can be seen that females aged 25 – 44 and children aged 0 – 15 constituted the major categories of Chinese new arrivals. Besides, they have been continually increasing in numbers over the years owing to the change in policy that allowing more children and spouse to take residency in Hong Kong.

Table 1-2 Legal Chinese Immigrants by Age Group by Sex, 1991-1995.

Age	Sex	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	Group Total
0 – 15	M	4,152	4,437	4,780	6,238	8,251	27,858
	F	3,449	3,416	3,616	4,918	7,547	22,946
15 – 24	M	2,381	2,339	2,949	2,936	3,530	14,135
	F	2,185	2,412	2,498	2,806	2,972	12,873
25 – 34	M	1,640	1,877	2,551	2,362	1,808	10,238
	F	4,840	5,536	6,222	8,427	8,329	33,354
35 – 44	M	1,102	1,143	1,755	1,505	1,185	6,960
	F	3,378	3,563	4,471	5,001	4,857	21,270
45 – 54	M	468	534	593	542	427	2,564
	F	1,459	1,275	1,623	1,829	1,834	8,020
55+	M	448	482	541	536	465	2,472
	F	1,259	1,080	1,291	1,118	1,129	5,877
Total		26,782	28,366	32,909	38,218	40,936	

Sources: New Immigrant Policy: Green Paper, 1996, p.8 (In Chinese).

Skeldon (1995) implied that most of them were housewives and school children who would not directly be entering Hong Kong's labour force. The burden, therefore, on social resources, such as housing, education, social welfare and health services were likely to be heavy. In conjunction with Hong Kong's population growth over the past decade their added presence could have a significant impact.

Many mainlanders settling in Hong Kong find themselves in a very different environment, in terms of social, political and economic conditions. Mainland migrants may be subjected to conflicting social and cultural demands, while facing the challenge of assimilating into an unfamiliar and frequently hostile world. They may encounter a sense of insecurity after their arrival as they attempt to adapt to an unusual social environment with shrinkage in their social life. Many will encounter discrimination. Thus, the process of "growing up in Hong Kong" has not always been easy. Experiences can range from smooth acceptance to traumatic confrontation, depending on the characteristics those mainland migrants and their children bring with them and the social context that receives them. Their ignorance about their new social world could eventually lead to social instability due to heavy demands on society and the public cost of assimilating new arrivals. Thus, this study concludes that Hong Kong should be concerned about how mainland immigrants assimilate into Hong Kong society in order to prevent unintended consequences.

Of course, in various ways and to various degrees, mainland migrants will adapt to Hong Kong society, but at the same time they will have an impact on the lives of local residents. In studies on immigrant adjustment, the assimilation perspective

has put great stress on understanding the subject. Central to this perspective are assumptions that there is a natural process by which immigrant groups come to share a common culture and gain equal access to opportunities. This process consists of gradually abandoning old cultural and behavioural patterns in order to adopt new ones. The perspective argues that this process moves inevitably and irreversibly towards assimilation. Although certain scholars disagree on the ways and degrees of assimilation, they agree that an assimilation process is at work and taking place (Alba and Nee, 1997; Kazal, 1995).

Today, experts, politicians and the public are primarily concerned with issues about how mainland migrants and their children are being incorporated into the fabric of Hong Kong society. What sorts of Hong Kong people will they be and what sort of Hong Kong society is being created? Based on the assimilation perspective, Portes and Zhou (1993) argued in favour of the segmented assimilation theory that attempts to examine the possible determinants effecting assimilation. By regarding the effects of the determinants, the theory delineates why different patterns of adjustment emerge among immigrants and how these patterns necessarily lead to destinies of convergence or divergence within society.

Considering these theories, this study examines the determinants influencing the assimilation of mainland migrants. As suggested by Portes and Zhou (1993), the possible determinants are many-fold, including two sets of variables: individual-level factors and structural factors. The most important individual-level factors influencing immigrant assimilation include education and other factors associated with exposure to the host society, such as linguistic proficiency, place of birth, age

upon arrival and length of residence in the new homeland. Structural factors mainly include socio-economic status and spatial distribution. This research, by controlling the variations of mainlanders' place of birth, age upon arrival and length of residence in Hong Kong, explores the remaining individual-level and structural factors contributing to successful assimilation. In other words, how education, linguistic proficiency, socio-economic status and spatial distribution advance an alternative framework for delving into the complex process of mainlander adjustment in post-industrial Hong Kong. This study will also attempt to examine the interaction between these two sets of determinants and examine the social implications of such interaction. On the whole, today and in the up-coming century, social issues related to mainland migrants are of key concern for Hong Kong society.

1.2 History of Immigration in Hong Kong

The influx of mainland Chinese immigrants into Hong Kong can be traced back to the 1930s. Despite being a colony of Britain, Hong Kong maintained its traditional policy to permit Chinese, especially from Guangdong, to cross the border for settlement or for employment. Because Hong Kong is an important entry port into China and a society mainly composed of Chinese, it was essential for the British authorities to preserve freedom of movement at the Hong Kong-China border (Siu, 1996).

The influx of Chinese immigrants in the 1930s was different from that in the 1980s and 90s. Immigrants were predominately male. Siu (1996) argued:

The sex ratio, expressed in the number of males per 100 females, reported by the 1921 and 1931 censuses were 158 and 135 respectively. Large

numbers of men, mostly from Guangdong and without their families, came to work in Hong Kong, returning to their hometowns when they had made enough money. (p.338)

During the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1938, a huge number of refugees entered Hong Kong. To control this influx, the Hong Kong government imposed entry restrictions from China. However, this did not stop Chinese refugees from entering Hong Kong. The population increased to 1.6 million people, double the figure reported in the 1931 census.

After the Second World War, the population of Hong Kong continued to increase. With the outbreak of civil war in China in 1949, another large influx of refugees from China arrived in Hong Kong. In the following year, the Hong Kong population expanded rapidly. This led to the imposition of a quota system at the border for the first time.

In the 1950s, Hong Kong began to industrialise and new arrivals from China played an important role in the economic transformation of the territory by providing labour, capital and skills. Soon after all restriction policies on border crossings were relaxed, famine struck many provinces in China in the 1960s. This triggered another huge influx of refugees into Hong Kong.

In the 1970s, another huge influx of Chinese migrants arrived in Hong Kong. In line with the open policy, the Chinese authorities relaxed the household registration system (Hukou). This together with Hong Kong's "touch base" policy (Hong Kong Yearbook, 1975), resulted in rising numbers of Chinese immigrants, in particular males, entering Hong Kong.

Table 1-3 Number of Illegal Chinese Immigrants Arrested on Arrival and Repatriated and Evaded Capture and Remained, 1977 – 1980.

Year	Arrested on Arrival and Repatriated	Evaded Capture and Remained (Estimated)	Total
1977	1,800	6,600	8,400
1978	8,200	28,100	36,300
1979	89,900	107,700	197,600
1980 (Jan. – Oct.)	80,500	69,500	150,000

Sources: Hong Kong Yearbook, 1981, p.145.

The waves of Chinese immigrants, see Table 3, challenged Hong Kong's social stability and order. On 23 October 1980, it was publicly announced that, in future, all illegal immigrants from China who "touched base" and were subsequently detected would be treated in the same way as those caught on arrival: they would all be sent back to China. In addition, the Hong Kong government negotiated with the Chinese government to reduce the number of immigrants entering Hong Kong with one-way permits because those people who held one-way permits were coming to Hong Kong as settlers. The quota system was then imposed more strictly for the third time. In 1983, it was eventually decided that the daily quota of one-way permit be set at 75.

After the abolition of the "touch base" policy, immigration into Hong Kong from China became tightly controlled. Since October 1980 the numbers allowed into the British-controlled territory have been limited. One important social consequence was that the influx effected the sex ratio. Table 4 summarises the sex ratio of the local and total population of Hong Kong at Marriageable Age in mid-1981. It shows the imbalance in the sex ratio in the early 1980s after the enormous influx of immigrants from mainland China in the late 1970s. As immigrants settled in Hong Kong it became apparent that they were significantly different from the local

Table 1-4 Age and Sex Distribution of Local and Total Population of Hong Kong at Marriageable Age, Mid-1981.

Age Group	Local Population		Imbalance	Sex Ratio	Total Population (with Migration)		Imbalance	Sex Ratio
	Male	Female			Male	Female		
15-24	543,017	521,171	21,864	104.2	605,643	554,873	50,770	109.1
25-34	412,959	381,454	31,505	108.3	491,118	418,899	72,219	117.2
35-44	242,525	194,369	48,156	124.8	282,200	217,927	64,273	129.5
45-54	255,890	235,211	20,679	108.8	284,811	244,533	40,278	116.5
15-54	1,454,391	1,332,205	122,186	109.2	1,663,772	1,436,232	227,540	115.8

Notes: Sex Ratio is the number of males per 100 females.

Source: Hong Kong 1981 Census Main Report Volume 1, Table 7.11.

population in terms of their ideology, income levels, education and living standards.

The problem was particularly acute for men of more disadvantaged social positions. Chinese immigrants usually belonged to this category. The 1981 Census reported that in general Chinese immigrants had a poorer standard of housing, a higher labour force participation rate, a higher concentration in lower status jobs, such as production workers, transport operators, and labourers and they earned less than the local population. (Siu, 1996, p.343)

Not counting Chinese immigrants, the sex ratio of the local population was 109.2 males per 100 females, including Chinese immigrants, the sex ratio increased to 115.8. Many single male Chinese immigrants encountered difficulties finding wives in Hong Kong. This conclusion is reinforced by the numbers of immigrant males returning to the mainland to marry females from their hometowns. Findings indicated that over 100,000 Hong Kong residents returned to China to get married. Among them, 93 per cent were males. Once these Chinese immigrants had settled themselves in Hong Kong, they began to apply for their spouses and children to reside in Hong Kong under the family reunion status (Siu, 1996). The family status of Chinese residents who came to settle in Hong Kong during 1987 and 1996 is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5 shows that, in the period between 1987 and 1996, 164,668 children and

Table 1-5 Chinese Immigrants by Relations to Local Residents, 1987 – 1996.

Year	Child		Wife		Husband		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1987	13,292	48.7	9,559	35.0	998	3.7	3,451	12.6	27,300	100
1988	13,400	47.9	10,009	35.7	952	3.4	3,639	13.0	28,000	100
1989	13,216	48.4	9,565	35.0	937	3.4	3,582	13.1	27,300	100
1990	13,259	47.4	10,302	36.8	1,042	3.7	3,397	12.1	28,000	100
1991	12,513	46.7	10,113	37.7	1,020	3.8	3,154	11.8	26,800	100
1992	12,457	43.9	11,128	39.2	1,082	3.8	3,733	13.1	28,400	100
1993	14,504	44.1	13,250	40.3	1,370	4.2	3,776	11.5	32,900	100
1994	17,220	45.1	16,774	43.9	1,423	3.7	2,783	7.3	38,200	100
1995	23,033	50.1	18,274	39.7	1,572	3.4	3,107	6.8	45,986	100
1996	31,774	51.9	24,780	40.5	1,649	2.7	2,976	4.9	61,179	100
1987 – 1996	164,668	47.9	133,754	38.9	12,045	3.5	33,598	9.8	344,065	100

Sources: Hong Kong Yearbook, various years.

133,754 wives of local residents came to reside in Hong Kong. Further, it has been estimated that over 320,000 children of Hong Kong residents are still living in the mainland – more than 50 per cent of whom are below the age of 15.

Hong Kong had been accepting 75 immigrants from China daily since 1983, making a total of about 27,000 each year. To speed up the waiting time for local residents and their dependants to come to Hong Kong, an agreement was reached between the Hong Kong Government and the Chinese Government to increase the size of the one-way permit quota from 75 to 105 immigrants a day in November 1993. This resulted in an estimated total of about 38,000 immigrants entering Hong Kong a year. This number was further raised to 150 each day from 1 July 1995. 30 of the additional 45 places were allocated to children, with the remaining 15 designated to spouses who had been separated from their Hong Kong resident partners for more than 10 years. This arrangement favours young children and spouses. The percentages for these groups of immigrants are 93 per cent in 1994 and 1995 and grew to 95 per cent in 1996.

According to Article 24(3) of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region Basic Law, spouses and children of permanent Hong Kong residents have the right of abode in Hong Kong after 1997. The Hong Kong government had been maintaining a phased entry for these immigrants in recent years to lessen the pressure on Hong Kong in the upcoming decades. According to the Census and Statistics Department, the number of legal immigrants from the mainland has been increasing substantially, of which children and wives constitute the largest portion. It is estimated that by 2016, over 1,000,000 Chinese new arrivals, mostly wives and children of local residents, will take up residence in Hong Kong. By further interpreting Article 24(3) of the Basic Law, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress pointed out that the Article is only applied to those were born at the time one of their parents had had Hong Kong permanent identity. The huge number of Chinese new arrivals – 1.675 million – that firstly estimated and announced by the Security Bureau is over. However, regarding the interpretation of the Basic Law by the Standing Committee, the Census and Statistics Department reported that about 100,000 mainlanders still qualified for right of abode in Hong Kong.

Migration has had a significant impact on the history of Hong Kong. Chinese immigrants in the 1950s played an important role in Hong Kong's industrialisation. Relatively speaking, new arrivals in the 1970s played a less important role in the economic development of Hong Kong. They encountered obstacles in assimilating into Hong Kong society. This was reflected in their difficulties finding spouses in Hong Kong, which became a serious matter in the 1990s.

Nowadays, recalling the data in Table 1-5, mainland migrants are mainly the wives and children of people already legally resident in Hong Kong. As they take up residence in their new homeland, this new category of immigrants will increase the demand on social resources, such as housing, education and social welfare. They also face economic opportunities different from those in the past. About 50 years ago, Hong Kong's diversified industrial labour requirements offered new Chinese immigrants the opportunity to move up the economic ladder, by gradually finding better-paid jobs while remaining part of the working class. Although they tended to qualify for mostly lower paid jobs, such as production workers and labourers, there was a demand for low skilled labour as Hong Kong industrialisation increased. Such opportunities have grown scarce in recent years as the result of rapid regional de-industrialisation and global restructuring (Portes and Zhou, 1994). Today, Hong Kong's economic structure is service-oriented. Most jobs available today require skills and education levels many new mainland immigrants comparatively lack. Migrants commonly accept low-paid menial jobs while college-educated local residents generally occupy the high-tech and professional jobs. Moreover, many mainland migrants encounter problems assimilating into Hong Kong. Their success in adapting is often determined by which segment of Hong Kong society they attempt to assimilate and integrate into.

1.3 Research Questions for the Present Research

The process of assimilation among immigrants is ideally conceived as one of linear progress – becoming similar to the dominant group in the place of destination is supposed to be a good thing. However, evidence on the adjustment of immigrants and their children points to a deterioration of outcomes over time and

generation, as well as to nonlinear processes of change. For contemporary mainland migrants, growing up in Hong Kong can be a matter of smooth acceptance or of traumatic confrontation. Various possible patterns of adjustment are likely to emerge among mainlanders and their children. Scholars refer to the different destinies emerging from these various patterns of adjustment as “segmented assimilation”. This study examines an important question: *What makes some mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility and what allows them to bypass or escape this undesirable route?* Answers to this question will be drawn from examining the major determinants effecting assimilation.

The primary determinants can include factors intrinsic to mainland migrants (individual-level factors), such as education, linguistic proficiency, place of birth, age upon arrival and length of residence in Hong Kong, and factors external to the mainlanders (structural factors), such as socio-economic status and spatial distribution. To better understand what makes the new category of immigrants – adult female and young mainlanders assimilate with various patterns, the research principally focuses on four factors – education, linguistic proficiency, socio-economic status and spatial distribution – by holding the others constant. Keeping an eye on mainland migrants’ place of birth, age upon arrival and length of residence in Hong Kong can shed light on the four factors effecting migrant assimilation. The interactive effects of these two sets of factors effecting the life chances of mainland migrants are also examined.

1.4 Significance of the Present Research

Interest in mainland migrants has been growing recently. However, there is

still a big gap between realistic life chances of the mainlanders and current knowledge about their conditions. Despite the fact that a number of researchers have studied the adjustment processes of mainlanders in Hong Kong, most of them are descriptive and not theory-driven. The data of these existing studies is based mostly on regional survey research. Researchers describe mainly the current state of immigrant children, their demographic and socio-economic characteristics, school attendance, labour market opportunities and the establishment of independent households (see, for example, Chan, Ip, & Yuen, 1997; The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1995; Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1985). Thus, it is significant and worthwhile to conduct the present research for two reasons. First, by applying the segmented assimilation theory this study attempts to contribute to the body of local sociological academic literature by re-linking several important concepts, such as assimilation, generation, and social support. It further advances an alternative framework for exploring the complex process of immigrant adjustment in contemporary Hong Kong society. Second, from a practical point of view, the present research reacts to fill the gap mentioned above. The current conditions of mainland migrants can be known from previous descriptive researches. But, more significantly, this study attempts to make sense out of the ongoing assimilation process of mainland migrants that cannot be predicted in advance – conducting in-depth interviews as well as making insightful observations, and then developing tentative conclusions that suggest particular typologies based on the research question. Thus, the key significance of this study by using case studies is the comprehensiveness of perspective it gives to the researcher and the readers. By going directly to the mainlanders' social adjustment phenomenon under study and examining it as completely as possible, this study can develop a deeper and fuller

understanding of it. In other words, by seriously studying mainland migrants' social conditions with the employment of case studies and segmented assimilation theory, the researcher hopes to shed light on the impacts of migrants on the population of Hong Kong and outline some of the social issues that could effect society in the coming century. It attempts to change the way Hong Kong people think about the new category of mainland migrants, particularly wives and children, and thus help understand why they often face difficulties when assimilating into Hong Kong society. Finally, this research takes social implications and appropriate solutions into account for assisting the mainlanders in overcoming their assimilative issues. It is also significant that such implications and solutions act as an irritant for policymakers. They enrich policymakers' awareness and concern with adjustment of mainland migrants in Hong Kong. By recognizes the positive and negative of the new arrivals' assimilation issues, policymakers can formulate and implement efficient means in order to prevent unintended consequences owing to demanding burden the society endures and rising cost the public bears. Neither assimilating groups nor assimilated groups are fixed, static things in any case, but the interactions involved are permanently unfinished ongoing process with various degrees of outcomes and patterns. The future of Hong Kong society may well be affected by the ways policymakers take. Given this background, indeed, one of the meanings of this study is to provide references for them in deciding their ways with limited, or even the least social costs.

1.5 Outlines of Chapters

Chapter 1 is the introduction. Chapter 2 is a critical review of the assimilation perspective on the social adjustment of immigrants. This chapter also serves to

provide a horizon for the theoretical framework for this research as covered in Chapter 3. The framework, by employing the segmented assimilation theory as a core building block, compares the two possible sets of determinants – individual-level factors and structural factors – in exploring the complex process of mainlander adjustment in Hong Kong. Chapter 4 presents the research method. The method of case studies is applied in this study. 20 mainland migrant families are selected as the cases. Then, the following two empirical and analytical chapters (Chapter 5 and 6) are organised in such a way as to present answers to the research question, that is, how the two sets of factors make mainland migrants assimilate and integrate into different segments of society. Chapter 7 discusses the interactive effects of the two sets upon the assimilation process. The conclusion – Chapter 8, provides the explanation on how structural determinants dominantly shape the patterns and outcomes of mainland migrants' segmented assimilation. Besides, the discussion on how the research design significantly serves the study by way of providing adequate and quality data is given. Policy implications and appropriate solutions are presented in order to ease mainlanders' adjustment. Further research topics, as well as limitations of the present research will also be illustrated in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews previous research on the study of the relationship between immigrants (or, ethnic groups) and the native population in the host society. In other words, when immigrants take up residence in a new homeland and meet with the population of that society, what is the outcome of that contact? The chapter consists of two sections. Section 2.1 reviews recent local studies over mainland migrants. Special focus is put on the profile and the current conditions of mainland migrant families. Section 2.2 reviews certain theories based on the assimilation perspective.

2.1 Review on Recent Local Literature Concerning Mainland Migrants

Local studies over mainland migrants can be traced back to early 1980s. Despite the fact that a number of researchers have studied either the adjustment processes and adjustment problems of mainlanders, or the impression of local citizens towards mainland migrants in Hong Kong, most of them are descriptive and not theory-driven. The findings of these existing studies are based mostly on survey research. Recent studies that have conducted by local organisations largely put their eyes on understanding mainland migrants' profiles and adjustment. "The findings across studies were quite consistent, though differed in scale and focus" (International Social Service Hong Kong Branch, 1997, p.11). The followings are the reviews of major local studies in recent years.

2.1.1 Literature with Focus on Adult Mainland Migrants

In the 1980s, studies on mainland migrants were scarce. A comprehensive study by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (1985) was conducted in 1985.

It successfully interviewed 830 adult mainlanders, including 67.4 per cent male and 32.6 per cent female, with a median age of 29. The study aimed to examine the social, economic and psychological dimension of adjustment problems of mainland migrants in Hong Kong. In the social dimension of adjustment, 33.6 per cent of the respondents had difficulty in making friends and 46.4 per cent failed to make new friends within the first year of arrival. Half of them made new friends with Chinese immigrants only. Those who had stayed for more than three and a half years improved slightly in neighbour relationship. In the economic dimension, 38.5 per cent of the respondents were factory workers while 21.7 per cent were skilled workers. Only about 12 per cent had experienced difficulty in locating jobs. The mean total monthly income was about HK\$2800, with an average of 47.4 per cent of the income was spent on basic necessities. In the psychological dimension, over 76 per cent of all respondents reported suffering from one of the following symptoms: headache, sleeplessness, nervousness and depression. On the whole, about 65 per cent of the respondents expressed non-adapted during the first year of arrival, though up to 88.5 per cent had already adapted or began to adapt at the time of interview.

In the 1990s, the number of studies over mainland migrants gradually increased. More local organisations began to carry out research in order to explore and understand the real situations as well as adjustment issues of Chinese new arrivals in Hong Kong. A study that conducted by 明愛社區中心 (Caritas) (1993) in the Central and Western district interviewed 78 mainland migrants over the age of 18. More than half of the respondents reported difficulties in locating employment. Their major difficulties were language barrier and lack of skill and knowledge. This study also interviewed 98 parents with mainland migrant children. About 40

per cent expressed difficulty in locating school placement, mainly owing to inadequate academic standard, over-age, and lack of understanding on admission criteria.

Based on 100 Chinese new arrival families, Chow and Ho (1995) conducted a study and showed a dramatic change in the profile of mainland migrants, as 63 per cent of the respondents were female and 37 per cent were male. Half of them aged between 30 and 49. The study indicated that mainlander families usually belonged to the lower socio-economic strata of the society. Their primary motive of coming to Hong Kong is to unite with their kin and relatives. Besides, the study revealed that mainland migrants expected Hong Kong to provide them with opportunities, indeed they knew that they had to work hard to make a living. The study also explored that migrants' adjustment difficulties were resulted from the use of Cantonese dialect, employment, housing and schooling of children.

In 1996, another study was conducted by 明愛社區中心 (Caritas) (1996) in the Tsuen Wan district. Similar to the one took place in the Central and Western district, this study aimed to explore the situations and difficulties in general life patterns of mainland migrants after taking residency in Hong Kong. The study interviewed 113 Chinese new arrivals aged between 18 and 59. Its results indicated that the expectation of the respondents before migration was largely different from their actual situation in Hong Kong. Even though they could have family reunion, they had to live in a crowd with poor living environment. Almost half of the respondents had experienced different level of difficulties in the usage of both Cantonese dialect and traditional Chinese characters. Nearly 50 per cent of them

declared a necessity of making friends with local residents, but only about 30 per cent found it easy to do so. The study also showed that mainland migrants' living conditions in Hong Kong were much poorer than that in China. Housing was the major issue concerned by the Chinese new arrivals. However, mainland migrants, especially those belonged to the low socio-economic category, had encountered difficulties in improving their living conditions. Regarding employment, the study explored that finding jobs in Hong Kong seemed to be not a problem for most of the respondents. In fact, nearly 32 per cent of them showed that keeping employed was more difficult for them. Among the housewife respondents, 70.5 per cent wanted to be employed, but most of them failed to do so because they had to look after their young children, or they could not find a job.

A study by 香港基督教女青年會 (The Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association) (1998) successfully interviewed 160 mainland migrant wives in Sham Shui Po district. The study summarised the adjustment problems of these married female new arrivals in the aspects of family life, social life, self-development and personal expectation. Poor living environment, inadequate household income, unsatisfied academic performance of children were the major factors accounting for their non-adapted pressures. About 30 per cent of the respondents had endured discontent with their social life in Hong Kong. They stressed that most of their best friends were mainland migrants. Most of them further emphasized their keenness for seeking jobs. They, at last, were failed to do so as, consistent to the findings from the study of 明愛社區中心 (Caritas) (1996), they had to take care for their offspring or jobs were unavailable.

In “A Study on the Chinese New Immigrants in Hong Kong”, working group of The International Social Service Hong Kong Branch (1997) interviewed 999 respondents over the age of 15, as 82.3 per cent female and 17.7 per cent male. Regarding housing, over 70 per cent of the respondents’ accommodation were rental and the median size of accommodation was around 279 square feet. Nearly 60 per cent of the respondents felt that their accommodation was not big enough for utilization. In the area of employment, over 40 per cent of the respondents expressed some to great difficulties in employment. Respondents also showed that the major problems of their children were unmatched standards with local students, linguistic problems in schools, and ignorance about education system in Hong Kong. From the study, the family relationships, either marital or parent-child, generally showed improvements after the respondents arrived Hong Kong. However, its findings indicated that 41.5 per cent of the parent migrants exhibited worry in child discipline after settlement.

2.1.2 Literature with Focus on Mainland Migrant Children and Adolescents

Resulting from the gradual changes in the immigration policy, the number of mainland migrant children has been rising in recent years. Studies carried out by local organisations in the last decade made great effort on understanding the social adjustment of these children, especially in the areas of linguistic usage, academic performance, and peer relation development. 香港教育專業人員協會 (The Hong Kong Professional Teachers’ Union) (1994) conducted a study in 1994 and successfully interviewed 239 young new arrivals in 20 secondary schools. The findings of the study indicated the major problems confronted by school-age migrants were mainly in communication through Cantonese and in studying of

English.

Another study by 香港小童群益會 (The Boys and Girls Clubs Association) (1995) interviewed 11 migrant adolescents under the age of 16 in Cheung Sha Wan district. The study summarised the difficulties of these young mainlanders in the scopes of study, social life, family life and personal emotion. Indeed, they generally exhibited the doubts in language and syllabus. As most respondents enrolled in lower grades, they were usually older than their classmates were and a problem of integration emerged.

A study by 香港青年協會 (The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups) (1995) interviewed 51 young mainland migrants from the age of 10 to 18. The study explored the adjustment issues of the respondents. From the study, their issues, in most cases, could be summarised into: (1) the difficulty in the usage of traditional Chinese characters and Cantonese dialect in daily life; (2) the delay in school admission and the enrolment in lower grades; (3) the difficulty in peer relation development; (4) the lack of family support owing to long working hours of parents; and (5) the ignorance about relevant resources available to them in the new society.

In “Adaptation and Needs of Young New-Arrivals from Mainland China in the Sham Shui Po District”, Chan, Ip and Yuen (1997) interviewed 1033 young migrants, as a half male and the other half female, from 10 secondary schools and 33 primary schools. Among the respondents, only about 17 per cent were admitted to their comparable grade level in Mainland China. The remaining respondents were asked to repeat one to three grade levels earlier. The study revealed that the chief reasons

were that (1) the existing English gap between the Mainland and Hong Kong school curriculum; (2) the inadequacy of secondary school places; and (3) the parental preference in hoping to get better secondary education through the Secondary School Place Allocation Scheme by repeating primary school study. More important, the findings of the study indicated that,

Younger pupils adapt easier than the older pupils; female adapt better than male; and primary school pupils adapt better than secondary school pupils. It also shows that those who have difficult experience with the languages tend to find it more difficult to adapt; and this also applies to those who come from rural areas. (p.56)

陳, 盧, 溫 and 鍾 (Chan, Lo, Wan and Chung) (1999) found that although most of the mainland migrant children are admitted lower grade levels in Hong Kong compared to that in Mainland, their language usage, especially Chinese, is equivalent or even higher than that of local students. In effecting young new arrivals' initiative, industry and identity, family, personal, and social factors play important roles.

陳 (Chan) (1998) explained if the physiological needs of the mainland migrants have to be met, then their psychological and social adjustment will deserve equal attention and care. He deliberated that among social factors, social integration becomes a crucial issue to both the mainlanders and the local residents. The migrant children specifically experience the challenge of social integration at the time they join the peers in local schooling system. Mutual adjustment between the young mainlanders and the local children exert mutual influence on their integration. 陳 (Chan) (1998) further stated that,

The newly immigrated children are more positive towards the local children, and they adapt better to the newly encountered local children than vice versa. Extent of adaptation is found to be positively related to attitudes. (p.108)

Nowadays, most qualified legal entrants from the Mainland China are dependants, especially wives and children, of Hong Kong residents. The above review of the local literature provides certain general understanding on the changing profiles of such dependants and their corresponding adjustment issues. Taking the recent studies into consideration, mainland migrants, especially those belonged to the low socio-economic category, have been encountering difficulties in seeking social opportunities in the Hong Kong social structure. Tsang (1993) revealed that the criteria for the allocation of social opportunities and status in Hong Kong are based not only on individuals' achievement, but also on socially ascribed attributes, such as family background. Hong Kong has no longer been drawn as an achievement-oriented society. Tsang (1993) stated,

These ascribed attributes assert their effects mainly through their influence on educational achievement, which in turn imposes significant effect on occupational-status attainment. In other words, achievement and ascription have joined forces in a particular way in determining the attainment opportunities of young men and women in Hong Kong. (p.1)

Educational system acts as a mediator under this ascription-achievement partnership.

Wong and Lui (1992) further discussed that the Hong Kong society shows openness and equality of opportunity, but at that same time, class structure and class formation effects the patterns and rates of the social advancement and the social mobility regime in the Hong Kong social structure. One's educational resources and one's parental backgrounds are important for determining such patterns and rates.

Hence, when talking about mainland migrants' adjustment or assimilation issues, family background as well as education is not advisable to exclude from the discussion. The next section presents literature review on theories concerning migration and immigrants.

2.2 Review on Theories Concerning Immigrants

Immigration, and the racial and ethnic relations associated with it, have become important sociological issues across the world since the nineteenth century. It is evident that racial and ethnic relations are discordant in nature. In fact, most of the theorists have regarded conflict as an essential, if not permanent, feature of ethnic relations. As Young (1932) said,

Group antagonisms seem to be inevitable when two peoples in contact with each other may be distinguished by differentiating characteristics, either inborn or cultural, and are actual or potential competitors. (p.586)

Even though peaceful ethnic relations are possible in certain societies, conflict and disharmony are usually the more important factors resulting from racial and ethnic inequality. Berry and Tischler (1978) revealed that,

If we recognise the fact that conflict involves also those subtle, restrained forms of interaction wherein one seeks to reduce the status of one's opponents and not to eliminate them entirely from the conflict, then perhaps it is true that conflict invariably occurs when unlike peoples meet. (p.123)

The way to reduce conflict is to facilitate rapid integration of immigrants into the receiving society.

Resettling in a place that is different from the country of origin can be a matter of smooth acceptance or of traumatic confrontation for immigrants. In other words, they are frequently caught between pressures to accept the receiving society and pressures to preserve their own social backgrounds. Through the process of immigration immigrants usually leave a more or less stable social system and arrive in another (Eisenstadt, 1952).

According to Eisenstadt (1952), people usually emigrate from the old social system because of feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. They expect the situation to be resolved in their new homeland, however, they often encounter more insecurity immediately after immigration. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the new and unfamiliar social environment always produces additional insecurity for immigrants. Secondly, immigration inevitably involves a certain degree of shrinking of the immigrants' social life and social participation. Hence, the social adjustment of immigrants may be seen as a process of reorganising their social participation field through an adjustment of several social roles and involvement in social institutions of the dominant host society.

Majority-minority relations commonly emerge in multi-ethnic societies, especially in societies assimilating immigrants. In the field of sociology, several theories have accounted for patterns of inter-group relations (Barth & Noel, 1972) in multi-ethnic societies or cycles of relations (Gordon, 1964) that such societies would pass through. For many years, American sociologists traditionally favoured the assimilation perspective. As literature on immigrant adjustment shows, the perspective dominated much of the sociological thinking on the subject for the larger

part of this century (Zhou, 1997). The perspective was subjected to critique for decades. Certain scholars disagreed on the type and degree of assimilation bringing immigrant ethnic groups together, or closer to the host society (Kazal, 1995). But, they agreed that assimilation was taking place and at work, even under contemporary immigration (Alba and Nee, 1997).

Whatever the insufficiencies of the earlier formulations and applications of assimilation, Alba and Nee (1997) held that,

Assimilation has been justifiably repudiated. But as a social process that occurs spontaneously and often unintentionally in the course of interaction between majority and minority groups, assimilation remains a key concept for the study of inter-group relations. (p.827)

Central to the perspective is the assumption that there is a natural process by which diverse groups come to share a common culture and gain equal access to the opportunity structure of society (Zhou, 1997). So, assimilation, as defined by Yinger (1994), is “a process of boundary reduction that can occur when members of two or more societies, ethnic groups, or smaller social groups meet” (p.39). Similarly, Carmon (1996) defined assimilation as “a process by which immigrants adopt the cultural norms and lifestyles of the host society in a way that ultimately leads to the disappearance of the immigrants as a separate group” (p.23). Abramson (1980) defined assimilation as “the processes that lead to greater homogeneity in society” (p.150). All of these definitions emphasise a process, rather than a fixed condition. Hence, assimilation is better seen as a path that ethnic groups may take. The destination of this process, as stated by Barth and Noel (1972), is “the biological, cultural, social and psychological fusion of distinct groups to create a new ethnically

undifferentiated society” (p.336).

Based on the assimilation perspective, different versions of theories can be identified in different times and countries. In what follows, some of the major sociological literature on assimilation is reviewed.

2.2.1 *Robert E. Park's Race Relations Cycle*

Park was one of the firsts to suggest that ethnic groups would pass through a cycle in a sequence of stages and end with full assimilation. Immigrants undergo such a cycle with four propositions:

1. Migration brings people, who are culturally distinct, together in unequal relations.
2. In relations of competition, individuals become conscious of their different status.
3. People of superior status are unwilling to compete on equal terms with those of inferior status. The former designates the latter as belonging to naturally distinct categories and, therefore, accommodates a different place in the division of labour.
4. People of a privileged status express their prejudice and discrimination in order to protect their interests and strengthen the structure of categories. (Banton, 1983)

With the above propositions, Park delineated four stages in his race relations cycle: contacts, conflicts (or competition), accommodation and assimilation. Once separated, immigrants and the native population come into closer contact first through migration and enter into conflict, or competition. Park and Burgess (1921) illustrated,

As social contact initiates interaction, assimilation is its final perfect product. The nature of the social contact is decisive in the process. Assimilation naturally takes place most rapidly where contacts are primary, that is, where they are the most intimate and intense, as in the area of touch relationship, in the family circle and in intimate congenial groups. Secondary contacts facilitate accommodation, but do not greatly promote assimilation. (pp.736-767)

Certain forms of accommodation among immigrants and the native population emerge. Finally, accommodation leads to assimilation. Park (1930) argued that,

An immigrant is ordinarily considered assimilated as soon as he has acquired the language and the social ritual of the native community and can participate, without encountering prejudice, in the common life, economic and political. The common sense view of the matter is that an immigrant is assimilated as soon as he has shown that he can “get on in the country”. This implies among other things that in all the ordinary affairs of life he is able to find a place in the community on the basis of his individual merits without invidious or qualifying reference to his racial origin or to his cultural inheritance. (p.281)

Accordingly, Park characterised such a four-stage cycle as “a process of inter-penetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (Park and Burgess, 1921, p.735). Park saw competition among ethnic groups as a fundamental process. Competition is the initial, unstable consequence of contact as groups struggle to gain advantage over one another. However, unlimited competition would not be welcome to immigrants and the native population and therefore, “race relations were often characterised by a relatively stable equilibrium” (Banton, 1983, p.79). The dominant and superior group is unwilling to compete on equal terms with those of inferior status. The former shapes the latter to a different place in the economic sphere. The minority and inferior group may struggle to gain a suitable position for

themselves. Prejudice and discrimination result from attempts to restrict competition so that the superior group can control positions in the division of labour (Banton, 1983). Thus, competition leads to a more stable stage of accommodation, where a social structure of unequal relations among groups and a settled understanding of group position have formulated (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965). It results in a slow process of change in the minority group. But, according to Park, no matter how stable, accommodation will eventually be undermined by the personal relationships that cross group boundaries. Immigrants gradually abandon their culture of origin in order to assimilate and conform themselves to the host society.

2.2.2 *Milton Gordon's Framework*

The race relations cycle stood as a beginning and later many sociologists made it more complex and sophisticated. They generally agreed that assimilation is the final result in the immigrant group's gradual process of change. Indeed, Gordon contributed a systematic dissection of the concept. Gordon (1964) provided a typology of assimilation to capture the complexity of the process, ranging from cultural, structural, marital, identificational, attitude-receptional, behavioural-receptional, to civic assimilation. He discerned that these seven major variables, or sub-processes, are involved in the process of assimilation. Gordon (1964) further said that,

Each of these steps or sub-processes may be thought of as constituting a particular stage or aspect of the assimilation process. Thus we may, in shorthand fashion, consider them as types of assimilation and characterise them accordingly. (p.70)

Hence, he listed the seven sub-processes in the following manner.

Table 2-1 The Assimilation Variables Outlined by Milton M. Gordon.

Sub-process or Condition	Type or Stage of Assimilation	Special Term
Change of cultural patterns to those of host society	Cultural or behavioural assimilation	Acculturation
Large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs and institutions of host society, on primary group level	Structural assimilation	None
Large-scale intermarriage	Marital assimilation	Amalgamation
Development of sense of peoplehood based exclusively on host society	Identificational Assimilation	None
Absence of prejudice	Attitude-receptional assimilation	None
Absence of discrimination	Behavioural-receptional assimilation	None
Absence of value and power conflict	Civic assimilation	None

Source: Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964, p.71.

The above seven sub-processes that Gordon outlined start from cultural assimilation (the least degree in assimilation) to civic assimilation (the most complete in assimilation). However, according to Gordon, cultural and structural assimilation are the most important stages in the assimilation process of immigrants.

In Gordon's view, immigrants begin their adjustment to their new homeland through cultural assimilation, or acculturation. Cultural assimilation, was defined by Gordon as the changes in a minority ethnic group's cultural patterns, such as language, religious beliefs and practices, political values and a sense of a common historical identity, to those of host society. It is a necessary first step and is considered the top priority on the agenda of immigrant adjustment. However, Gordon argued that acculturation does not guarantee that immigrants will be promoted to the next sub-process, or that acculturation may take place and continue

indefinitely even when no other type of assimilation occurs. Gordon (1964) further illustrated this as follows:

Cultural assimilation, or acculturation, of the minority group may take place even when none of the other types of assimilation occurs simultaneously or later, and this condition of 'acculturation only' may continue indefinitely. (p.77)

The catalyst for more complete assimilation instead is structural assimilation. Gordon saw structural assimilation as large-scale primary relationships with the native population. It refers to the immigrants' full entrance into the social network of groups and institutions, or societal structure of the host society. Gordon explained that this sub-process is the most important as it is the "keystone of the arch of assimilation". He (1964) stated,

Once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow. It need hardly be pointed out that while acculturation... does not necessarily lead to structural assimilation, structural assimilation inevitably produces acculturation. Structural assimilation, then, rather than acculturation, is seen to be the keystone of the arch of assimilation. The price of such assimilation, however, is the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values. (p.81)

So, in Gordon's scheme, as immigrants interact and develop primary relationships with the native population, other steps of assimilation unavoidably occur. The immigrants increasingly inter-marry with members of the host society and give up their ethnic identity. They then no longer encounter prejudice and discrimination and eventually agree with the dominant group on issues involving values and power conflicts. Although Gordon did not suggest any time-tables or

conditions affecting the rate of assimilation process, he denoted that the first stage, cultural assimilation, does not necessarily lead to full assimilation. It may take place independently and continue for many generations. Immigrants may change most or even all of their cultural patterns to those of the host society but still remain unassimilated into primary relations with host members. Blacks in American society are an example. Thus, immigrant groups may become acculturated in relatively segregated sub-societies. Although vague about how groups advance from one stage to another and what causes change, Gordon anticipated that most ethnic groups will eventually lose their distinctive characteristics and stop to exist as ethnic groups as they pass through the stages of assimilation (Zhou, 1997).

2.2.3 *Tomatsu Shibutani and Kian Kwan's Ecological Analysis*

Despite Gordon's reference to theories of assimilation, it lacks a specification of the causal mechanisms that giving rise to assimilation (Alba and Nee, 1997). His contribution was to define a multi-dimensional framework. Its descriptive concepts are highly useful and make it possible to measure the extent of assimilation of ethnic groups according to various empirical dimensions.

To formulate a more complete theory, Shibutani and Kwan employed Mead's symbolic inter-actionism as the core building block of their theory. Following Mead, they argued that "how a person is treated in society depends not on what he is, but on the manner in which he is defined. Humans place people into categories, each associated with expected behaviour and treatment. Differences giving rise to social distances are created and sustained symbolically through the practice of classifying and ranking" (Alba and Nee, 1997, p.835). The social distances that

arise by that means are the fundament to segregate minorities and hinder assimilation.

By social distance, Shibutani and Kwan (1965) meant,

The subjective state of nearness felt to certain individuals, not physical distance between groups. (p.263)

In their explanation, change in subjective states – reduction of social distances – leads and stimulates structural assimilation. When social distance is low, there is a feeling of common identity, closeness and shared experiences. However, when social distance is high, people perceive and treat the other as belonging to a different category. Social distance can be institutionalised. Stereotypes, customs, social norms and formal institutional arrangements maintain a stratification system that applies ethnic markers to determine access to opportunity structures (Alba and Nee, 1997). Thus, Shibutani and Kwan (1965) further delineated,

Although an immigrant can improve his or her position in the opportunity structure, ethnic identity, in those areas in which it makes a difference, places a ceiling upon the extent to which he can rise. (p.33)

Shibutani and Kwan intended their theory as an extension of Park's race relations cycle. Competition pushes minorities, such as immigrant groups, into the least desirable residential locations and economic positions. A stable ethnic stratification order is rooted. Under such order, the dominant group believes that its advantages derive from natural differences, while minorities come to believe in their inferiority and accept their lower position. Shibutani and Kwan, however, agreed with Park that assimilation occurs at the final stage of the race relations cycle even when the society maintaining dominance remains intact.

2.2.4 *Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou's Segmented Assimilation Idea*

Theoretical controversies upon the assimilative perspective are generally concerned with how immigrants adapt to the host society and with the forces that promote or obstruct their progress. Park's race relations cycle, Gordon's framework, and Shibutani and Kwan's ecological analysis point in the direction in which a theory of assimilation must move. They sketched the outlines. Park was one of the first to suggest how immigrants adapt to a new society through a natural process, or cycle. Gordon described how individual immigrants and their succeeding generations gradually move away from the old country ways. Shibutani and Kwan attempted to posit the causal mechanisms and explore the forces that promote or impede immigrants' assimilation. While each of these outlines makes a significant contribution to the understanding of immigrant adjustment, the issue of divergent destinies has been understudied (Zhou, 1997). Portes and Zhou's segmented assimilation theory thus advanced an alternative framework for examining the complex processes of immigrant adjustment, especially what determines into which segment of society a particular immigrant group may assimilate.

For contemporary immigrants, they assimilate into the system of stratification in the host society and different outcomes can be noticed during the process. Portes and Zhou (1993) observed that three possible patterns of adjustment are most likely to occur among contemporary immigrants and their children. They stated that,

One of them replicates the time-honoured portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the middle-class; a second leads straight into the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass; a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity. (p.82)

Portes and Zhou referred to the various outcomes from these different patterns of adjustment as “segmented assimilation”. Thus, the segmented assimilation theory concerns why different patterns of adjustment emerge among contemporary immigrants and how these patterns lead to the destinies of convergence and divergence (Zhou, 1997).

According to Portes and Zhou (1993), there are several major factors in determining the various patterns of assimilation. Possible determinants include a range of individual-level factors and structural factors. The most important individual-level factors influencing immigrant adjustment include education and other factors associated with exposure to the host society, such as linguistic proficiency, place of birth, age upon arrival and length of residence in the new homeland. Structural factors include mainly socio-economic status and spatial distribution. These two sets of factors affect the life chances of contemporary immigrants. They are not only accumulative, but also interactive. The segmented assimilation theory that derives from the classical framework regards and focuses on the importance of these two sets of determinants and on the interaction between them.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Following the previous chapter, this chapter tries to work out the theoretical framework of the present research. The framework is formulated in order to assist in answering the principal research question: *What makes some mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility and what allows them to bypass or escape this undesirable route?*

3.1 Theoretical Framework of the Present Research

In order to answer the research question, the segmented assimilation theory developed by Portes and Zhou (1993) is employed as a core building block of the theoretical framework. Based on the assimilation perspective, the theory offers assistance in formulating the framework by understanding the process by which mainland migrants become incorporated into the system of stratification in the host society, Hong Kong, and the different patterns of results from this process.

Drawing on the literature review in Chapter 2, the theory places the process of assimilation, in terms of both acculturation and economic adjustment, in the context of a society consisting of segregated and unequal segments. It argues why different patterns of adjustment emerge among contemporary immigrants and how these patterns necessarily lead to the destinies of divergence or convergence. Indeed, the theory considers that at least three possible multi-dimensional patterns are most likely to emerge among immigrants and their children. Portes and Zhou (1993) further stated that the patterns composed of: “the time-honoured upward mobility pattern dictating the acculturation and economic integration into the normative structures of the middle-class; the downward-mobility pattern, in the opposition

direction, dictates the acculturation and parallel integration into the underclass; and economic integration into the middle-class, with lagging acculturation and deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and solidarity" (p.82). The process by which immigrants become incorporated into the different outcomes from these distinct patterns of adjustment are referred as "segmented assimilation" (Portes and Zhou, 1993). In other words, the theory argues that immigrants are eventually assimilated into various segregated and unequal segments in the host society.

The segmented assimilation theory recognised the fact that immigrants are today being absorbed by different segments of the society. Thus, the theory attempts to explain what determines into which segment of society a particular immigrant group may assimilate. Considering the question of the present research, the segmented assimilation theory offers an insight into how to formulate the theoretical framework for examining the complicated process of social adjustment of mainland migrants into Hong Kong.

As a core building block, the theory further states that there are possible factors determining into which segment of society an immigrant may assimilate, or with the research question. Zhou (1997) suggested that possible determinants are many-fold but mainly classified into two sets, involving a range of factors intrinsic and external to an immigrant.

Intrinsic factors, or individual-level factors, include chiefly education and other factors associated with exposure to the host society, such as linguistic proficiency, place of birth, age upon arrival and length of residence in the new homeland.

External factors, or structural factors, include primarily socio-economic status and spatial distribution.

Considering these theoretical ideas, the researcher can then sketch the outline of the framework. When assimilation, or social adjustment, implicates both majority and minority groups, the assimilation of individuals of minority origins involves changes that enable them to function in the mainstream society. But the question is what makes some mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility, and what allows them to bypass or escape this undesirable route. In other words, what determines into which segment of Hong Kong society mainland migrants may assimilate? Thus, examining and analysing contemporary mainlander adjustment, the review of the evidence indicates that assimilation as a social process is in progress along a variety of variables, or determinants. The different outcomes from the process that mainland migrants experience in succeeding generations are treated as “segmented assimilation”. As stated by Portes and Zhou (1993), the variety of variables can be classified into two sets: individual-level determinants and structural determinants. By regarding the major factors included in the two sets, this researcher attempts to control some of them while examining the effects of others in the mainlander assimilation process. Factors that remain constant are all taken from the individual-level set. They are: place of birth, age upon arrival and length of residence in the host society. The remaining – education and linguistic proficiency from individual-level, as well as socio-economic status and spatial distribution from structural – are left in the framework as variables for delving into the complex process of mainland migrants in post-industrial Hong Kong.

The education and the linguistic proficiency of the mainland migrants have been proven by a number of studies (see, for example, The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, 1995; Chan, Ip & Yuen, 1997; The Boys and Girls Clubs Association, 1995; Chow & Ho, 1995) that they deserve attention and even investigation. Regarding the results drawn from the studies, the mainlander children and adolescents usually exhibit issues in their academic performance, as well as their usage of Cantonese dialect and traditional Chinese characters. In this research, it is then interested in examining whether and how these two determinants, education and linguistic proficiency, effect the migrants' assimilation within the new society.

Then, how about socio-economic status and spatial distribution? Chow and Ho (1995) stated that new arrived mainland migrant families usually belong to the lower social and economic strata of the society. As many scholars have noted, a defining feature of current immigration is the diversity of the socio-economic backgrounds of contemporary Chinese new arrivals. Rather than primarily from rural communities like the Chinese immigrants in the 1970s did, contemporary mainlanders come from both rural and urban backgrounds, from underdeveloped regions as well as from industrially developed cities in the Mainland. Do what they were effect what they are? Katz (1994) further discussed that,

Their slower pace of assimilation can be attributed to the transformation of the host economy, therefore, the general erosion of labour market demand for unskilled labour and the increasing demand for highly skilled workers. (p.22)

This makes the determinant – socio-economic status more valuable for examination.

A study by the International Social Service Hong Kong Branch (1997) showed that new arrived mainland migrant families resided in certain districts with public housing estates and low-rented private flats localized. Is some degree of spatial concentration an inevitable by-product of immigration? Researches conducted in western countries have proven the certainty (Alba & Nee, 1997). The geographical patterns of migrant families have been understood, but it is significant to examine the comprehensiveness beyond the determinant – spatial distribution in the case of Hong Kong.

In the context of the framework, it is also essential to clarify why the age upon arrival, the length of residence and the place of birth are selected as controlled variables, and how such selections are relevant to the circumstances of contemporary mainland migrants in Hong Kong.

The age of an immigrant upon arrival remains important in respect to understanding their divergent outcomes as a result of social adjustment. As introduced in Chapter 1, most of the present-day legal entrants from mainland China are wives and children of Hong Kong residents. The percentages for these two groups of entrants, wives and children, made up 93 per cent of total mainland migrants in 1994 and 1995 and grew to 95 per cent in 1996. It is widely accepted that the immigrant generation does experience change as it accommodates itself to life in a new society. However, these changes are limited for individuals who come mostly as adults, such as wives among mainland migrants, and have been socialised in another society (Alba and Nee, 1997). Hence, as elaborated by Alba and Nee (1997),

It is only with the native born, or at a minimum the foreign born who immigrate at young ages and are raised mostly in the host society, that there is the possibility of assessing the limits of assimilation for new immigrant groups. (p.843)

Rumbaut (1997) further illustrated,

Perhaps at no stage of the life course are assimilative processes more intensely experienced, or assimilative outcomes more sharply exhibited, than during the formative years of adolescence. (p.930)

Hence, for mainland migrant children, the theoretical framework fixes their ages upon arrival between 9 and 15, and remains constant in the present research for testing whether assimilation processes and outcomes are more likely to become visible during the formative years of adolescence.

The second variable under control is the immigrants' length of residence in the new homeland. Landale and Oropesa (1995) found that some disadvantages were reproduced, rather than diminished, in poor immigrant families who had lived a longer time in the host society. Most important, recent studies have revealed a pattern: the longer the residence the more maladjusted the outcome, whether measured in terms of school performance, aspirations, or behaviour and regardless of immigrant groups (Kao and Tienda, 1995; Rumbaut and Ima, 1988; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995). However, in the context of this study, it is not possible to calculate if the residential period is too short, say just three to four months, as the mainland migrant families do not fully know the new society they are living in. The generalisation ability of the empirical data obtained is then weakened, as the mainlanders are not entirely aware of what kinds of assimilation issues they have

encountered. Thus, the critical resident length of mainland migrants is calculated at less than 12 months in the research conducted for this study.

Lastly but most importantly is place of birth of the immigrants. In the context of Hong Kong, the migrants mainly enter from mainland China and constitute a major share of the population growth, as the review of evidence indicates. The case is dissimilar to that of other countries, such as the United States and Canada. Contemporary immigrant groups in the United States, for example, are mainly composed of entrants from Western Europe, India, China, Africa, Mexico and other countries. However, one of the most noted features of the new category of immigrants in Hong Kong is their place of birth, mainland China. This is also the most consequential criterion for the present research as it focuses on the assimilation processes, patterns and outcomes of these mainland migrants. It is justifiable for the framework controlling this variable in order to proceed to the following chapters.

3.2 Model of the Present Research

In view of the variables in the present research, it is better to illustrate the conceptual framework with the assistance of a diagram. Figure 3-1 shows the inter-relationship of different variables in exploring the research question: *What makes some mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility and what allows them to bypass or escape this undesirable route?*

Figure 3-1 Model of the Present Research

3.3 Proposition of the Present Research

Considering the conceptual framework, the four determinants have roughly the same affect on the assimilation patterns and outcomes of mainland migrants'. Previous research has drawn that no one determinant plays more significant role than the others in the assimilation process as the research emphasises the sufficient importance of each determinant (Gibson, 1989; Rumbaut, 1996; Portes and Schaufli, 1994; Suarez-Orozco, 1989).

Then, what do we expect from the answers to the research question? Children of mainland migrants do significantly better in terms of educational achievement than local students after a period of time. One key reason for the improved performance of migrant students, despite their significant socio-economic and linguistic handicaps, is expected to be elementary: they work for it. Rumbaut (1997) showed that migrants usually dedicate more hours to schoolwork after settling

in their new homeland. For linguistic proficiency, previous findings on language preference, a key index of cultural assimilation, are unequivocal (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996; Rumbaut, 1997; Rumbaut and Ima, 1988). Most of the immigrants' children speak their parents' native-tongue at home. Adult migrants prefer to use their mother-tongues. However, Rumbaut (1997) further proposed that after a period of time migrant children prefer to use the language of their new homeland (both spoken and written) instead of their parents' native-tongue. Socio-economic status is often defined as achieving "parity" (Rumbaut, 1997) with the native majority in such indicators as education, employment and income. When newly arrived mainland migrants first enter the Hong Kong labour market, their wages are much lower and their job opportunities are more limited than that of local residents. Over time, as migrants assimilate to the labour market, therefore, they become more and more like local residents and their socio-economic statuses begin to catch up to those of local residents. Concerning spatial distribution, growing up in a poor neighbourhood can have an adverse social affect on minority mainland migrants and their children. Assimilation processes count neighbourhood and peer-group settings in examining the adjustment processes of contemporary new arrivals. Recent research has shown that immigrant children from families associated with tightly knit social support networks consistently show better psychological health, higher levels of academic achievement and stronger educational aspirations than those in socially isolated families (Portes, 1995; Portes and Schauffler, 1994; Rumbaut, 1994, 1996; Suarez-Orozco, 1989; Zhou and Bankston, 1994).

Unlike Chinese immigrants in other countries, mainland migrants in Hong Kong are less likely to follow the path of upward mobility towards middle-class because of

their socio-economic and linguistic disadvantages. However, what makes some mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility and what allows them to bypass this and seek to preserve their own values and solidarity, depends on the extents of the four determinants.

Chapter 4

Research Method

This chapter discusses the research method of this study. It consists of three sections. Section 4.1 states the conceptualisation and operationalisation. Section 4.2 discusses the consideration before the study and selection of cases. 20 mainland migrant families are selected as case studies. Section 4.3 then discusses the methodology. Obtaining subjects for case study is usually laborious. Hence, in this section the researcher explains how most of the subjects were accessed and then how a snowball sampling method was used to obtain the rest of cases that were required by the researcher.

4.1 Conceptualisation and Operationalisation

4.1.1 Measurement of Assimilation

Generally, assimilation refers to the process of adjustment of distinct groups towards their new environments in order to share a common culture and gain equal access to the opportunity structure of society. The necessity of assimilation comes from the adoption of the cultural norms and lifestyles of the Hong Kong society in a way that eventually leads to the disappearance of the mainland migrants as a separate group.

Regarding the assessment of mainland migrant families' assimilation, there are two ways, namely, from the subjective perspective and the objective perspective.

Subjective assessment refers to the self-perception or the attitudinal evaluation of mainland migrants towards their assimilation in the new host society. It can be measured by examining the patterns and outcomes to which mainlanders express

themselves as assimilated or not with various aspects of the new life chances they have adjusted, such as conditions on new working or schooling environment, and situations in re-establishment of new social life.

Objective assessment refers to extent of conformity of mainland migrants' behaviour to the norms and expectations of the new society to which they migrated and assimilated. It can be measured by examining the general life patterns of the migrants in the Mainland China and then followed by a comparison of their life patterns with that of the local residents (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1985). For example, to study whether mainlanders become susceptible to downward mobility or not, it is interested in exploring if they have come across certain difficulties in approaching the mobility ladders of the host society. Suppose the present research finds out that they have difficulties in approaching the mobility ladders. However, this does not sufficiently imply that mainland migrants are downward assimilated because maybe all or most of the local residents share the same situation with them. In such circumstance, "difficulties in approaching mobility ladders" become a normal social phenomenon in the host society and should not be considered as an assimilative issue of the mainland migrants as a result of migration. On the contrary, if the local residents indeed do not find any difficulties in approaching mobility ladders, then the mainlanders' difficulties become an assimilative issue.

In most cases, data concerning the general life patterns of the local residents is not easily accessible. Thus, in addition to the methodology – case studies that the present study employed, it focuses mainly on the subjective assessment of

assimilation of the mainland migrants by directly asking their subjective perception and evaluation towards their assimilative patterns in Hong Kong.

4.1.2 Areas of Investigation

This study examines an important question: What makes some mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility and what allows them to bypass or escape this undesirable route? Concerning the theoretical framework, answers to this question will be drawn from examining the following four major determinants effecting assimilation.

4.1.2A Education

Education can be generally defined as the formal and systematic training provided by the Hong Kong Education Department in the form of a schooling system. Operationally, it mainly refers to mainlanders' educational level, educational enrolment and educational aspiration in Hong Kong. The educational level refers to the promoting system used in the schools in Hong Kong. The educational enrolment is counted in terms of years in order to find the duration of education in Hong Kong. Educational aspiration means the mainland migrant's motivation, expectations and response to the local education system.

4.1.2B Linguistic Proficiency

Linguistic proficiency fundamentally refers to the degree of knowledge of the *new language(s) and the fluency of using such language(s)* in the host society. For mainland migrants, both adult or children, the new language required to be learned in Hong Kong is Cantonese (spoken) and traditional Chinese characters (written).

Operationally, linguistic proficiency refers to the ability of mainlanders to speak, read, listen, write and understand Cantonese and traditional Chinese.

4.1.2C Socio-economic Status

Socio-economic status is defined as achieving “parity” and equating with attainment of an average or above average standings and positions within a social system. Sociologists usually use a number of categories such as occupation and income, to categorise people into different socio-economic strata. Thus, operationally, it refers to the opportunities open to mainland migrants to change their status by means of occupation and income. Occupation refers to paid employment in Hong Kong. They can generally be ranked into a classification of occupations based on the skills needed to perform the job. The classification is: professional, lower-professional, skilled non-manual, skilled manual, semi-skilled and unskilled (menial) occupations. Even if a mainlander does the same kind of job in Hong Kong as had been done on the mainland, the transferability and recognition of his accomplishments and skills needs to be considered. Income refers to the money earned from paid employment in Hong Kong.

4.1.2D Spatial Distribution

Spatial distribution, conceptually, means the geographic distribution and pattern of immigrants. It focuses on the tendency towards a dispersion or concentration of immigrant group members, opening or blocking the way for increased or reduced contacts with members of the host majority and thus desegregation or segregation. Operationally, it refers to the willingness of migrants to enter into relatively advantaged communities in Hong Kong that contain many local residents.

4.2 Consideration before the Study and Criteria for Selection of Cases

After taking up residence in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, mainlander families are challenged by the socio-cultural changes between their country of origin and their new host society. In fact, it would be advisable and desirable to collect all the opinions of mainland migrants who are confronting the adjustment processes, patterns and outcomes but, owing to the scattering of the population, unavailability of a population list, limitations of time and capital, as well as a lack of co-ordination from social agencies, it is not possible to conduct the research by certain modes of observation, such as surveys and experiments. Besides, a statistical approach depends greatly on a general analysis of the whole research question. It provides a preliminary interaction outline among variables, but cannot deeply study their complex dynamic relationships. Because of these restrictions, the case study method, formally called field research, offers an alternative and more appropriate means of study. It typically yields qualitative rather than quantitative data.

Before discussing the method of case studies, the relative strengths of this particular method must first be assessed. According to *The Practice of Social Research* written by Babbie (1991), the case studies method “is especially effective for studying the subtle nuances of attitude and behaviour and for examining social processes over time” (p. 305). Becker (1968) elaborated this research method in this manner:

The dual purposes of a case study consists of arriving at a comprehensive understanding of the group under study and developing more general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process.
(p.232)

When considering the measurement under natural settings and the depth of understanding it yields for this research, the case studies method seems to provide superior validity as compared with surveys and experiments. The informants are able to give account of themselves in the processes of change and of decision-making.

As this research studies how possible determinants lead to various adjustment patterns and outcomes of mainland migrants, 20 mainlander families were selected as the subjects. In this research the quality of the data was determined from its generalisability rather than its representative nature. In other words, it is "casing" (the analyticity of the samples to address an appropriate theoretical framework), but is not the number of "cases" that is given attention. Regarding the research framework, the subjects were selected for this study according to certain criteria. The age of young mainlanders upon arrival had to be between 9 and 15. Their length of residence in Hong Kong had to be less than 12 months and, their place of birth, of course, had to be mainland China. In addition to the above criteria mentioned in Chapter 3, a practical consideration also had to be taken into account. *The informants had to speak and understand Cantonese*, although they did not have to be fluent in the language. Since the case studies originally come from different provinces in mainland China and spoke different dialects and languages, this criterion was used in order to eliminate misunderstanding or a communication breakdown between the researcher and the informants.

With the above criteria, the selected mainlander families had to be from heterogeneous backgrounds. The children of mainland migrants had to vary

according to education and their parents had to come from different socio-economic strata. A general set of questions for guiding the interviews with the families was drawn up and is provided in Appendix 1.

4.3 Research Methodology

4.3.1 Unit of Analysis and Point of Focus

The families of mainland migrants are the unit of analysis in this research. As Rumbaut (1997) emphasised,

The family may be the strategic research site for understanding the dynamics of immigration and of immigrant adaptation processes, as well as for their long-term consequences. (pp.937-938)

The points of focus are the self-perception or the attitudes of the members of a mainlander family towards the social adjustment process and life opportunities in their new homeland.

4.3.2 Population of Study

The population of this study is all the mainland migrants in Hong Kong. Recalling the figures shown in Table 1-5, covering the period between 1987 and 1996, a total of 344,065 mainland migrants took up residence in Hong Kong. This number was mainly composed of 164,668 children and 133,754 wives of local permanent residents. During 1997, 50,287 mainland migrants came to settle in Hong Kong. Of these, 21,758 were children and 25,088 were wives. More than 50 per cent of the above mentioned migrants were below the age of 15 (Hong Kong Yearbook, various years). Mainland wives and children made up 93 per cent of

total mainland migrants in 1994 and 1995, 95 per cent in 1996, and back to 93 per cent in 1997. Over the past decade, the ratio of mainland migrant children to wives was roughly maintained at 1.2 to 1.0. Hong Kong has been continually accepting 150 immigrants from China each day since 1995, making a total of about 55,000 each year. An announcement from the Security Bureau in June 1999 states that the daily quota will not change in the near future and thus this research was done during a time when 150 mainland migrants were allowed to enter Hong Kong daily.

4.3.3 *Sampling Method and Procedure*

As mentioned above, since it is not possible to obtain information from government agencies on the exact number of mainland migrants or households concerned, thus, the population list of mainlander families could not be calculated. It was then not feasible to use the representative random sampling method to select samples directly from the population.

Because of this, the sampling process was divided into two stages. The first stage was to get access to subjects who fitted the criteria mentioned above. Thus, using the *Directory of Social Services 1995* (The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 1995), which lists all social service organisations and associations in Hong Kong, two organisations were selected at random from the directory. Invitation letters (see Appendix 2) were sent to them to request samples for case studies to be interviewed. However, obtaining the co-operation from social service agents was not easy. From August to September in 1997, this researcher tried to contact seven local social service organisations by post and telephone. They all refused to co-operate in the study. After each refusal, another organisation was selected at

random from the directory to replace the rejected one. Eventually, in October 1997, this researcher was able to obtain the co-operation of two organisations and was able to take a sample selection with the assistance of the staff of these organisations. The samples were selected based on the above mentioned criteria. 16 mainland migrant families were finally selected and interviewed. Of these, one of them was interviewed for the pilot test.

The second stage was to gain access to more samples in order to obtain a significant sample size. This was done by this researcher without the assistance of the organisations. A snowball sampling method was used. During interviews, the researcher asked the subjects that were selected by organisations to introduce other families. The subsequently interviewed subjects were asked for further recommendations. When the researcher found that further cases could not provide any more significant insights into migrant assimilation issues, the snowball sampling was stopped. As a result, 7 more mainland families were introduced and interviewed. Of these, two of them were used for the pilot test.

4.3.4 Pilot Test

In order to predict possible problems and limitations encountered in the actual fieldwork, the researcher conducted a pilot test. With references from real experiences, the pilot test made it possible to properly evaluate and revise most of the mechanisms of the study: research design, interview arrangement, testing of guided questions, data collection and processing, and data analysis. The samples used in the pilot test also had to be representative. Thus, during the sampling procedure, three more mainland migrant families were selected for the pilot test of the present

research. From the families, 3 migrant wives and 4 children were interviewed. The ratio of children to wives in the pilot test was 1.3 to 1.0. This was close to the population ratio (1.2 to 1.0).

Of course, one of the main tasks of the pilot test was the testing or re-testing of the set of guided questions (see Appendix 1) that the researcher had designed for the interviews. Questions concerning education, linguistic proficiency, socio-economic status, spatial distribution, as well as assimilation patterns were all asked in order to test whether these questions were appropriately worded and how they could be fully utilised. Attention was also paid to whether the interviewees were willing to co-operate.

All three interviews were conducted in social service centres from October to November 1997. Each interview for the pilot test lasted about four hours. However, one of the migrant wives asked why the interview did not take place in the interviewee's home. This drew the attention of the researcher to the possibility of conducting interviews in interviewees' homes. Doing interviewing in respondents' homes is significantly advisable as such arrangement can eliminate respondents' fear of an unfamiliar environment. This encourages them disclosing their own stories in a natural as well as customary place without strangers wandering.

The responses were collected by means of notes and tapes. They were then analysed according to the theoretical framework in order to examine whether the framework worked or not. They also provided references for the quality, validity and generalisations of the responses in the up-coming formal interviews.

4.3.5 *Samples*

From the final total of 20 mainlander families, 20 wives and 23 children were interviewed (for general information about interviewees, see Table 4-1). The sample combination was kept at a ratio of about 1.2 children to 1.0 wives in order to match the population ratio mentioned above. As age upon arrival was kept constant by the theoretical framework, all the children in the sample were between the ages of 9 and 15. Both the mainland migrant wives and their offspring were asked to describe how they and their families had adjusted to the new society, and from the responses this researcher analysed the patterns of adjustment of the children, adults and the family as a whole. Case study interviews were conducted from December 1997 to May 1998. They were carried out with one family at a time and lasted for about two to three hours. Interviews were mostly conducted in the interviewees' homes, but some took place in social service centres according to the interviewees' preference. Some follow-up interviews were conducted by phone in the succeeding months. The interviews were recorded, with the prior consent of the respondents. Scribbled notes were taken during the interviews in order to write down interviewees' non-verbal responses. With the notes and tapes as a stimulus to recreate as many details of the interview experiences as possible, comprehensive transcripts were then produced for data analysis.

Table 4-1 General Profile of Interviewees.

Interviewee	Children's Age Upon Arrival	Length Of Residence In HK (Months)	Place Of Birth	Educational Level In China / HK	Parent's Mother-Tongue	Husband's Occupation / Income (HK\$) In HK	Occupation / Income (HK\$) Before Settling In HK	Occupation / Income (HK\$) After Settling In HK	Type Of Housing Area Of Housing (Sq. Feet) In HK
#1 + Her Daughter	14	12 5	GuangZhou GuangZhou	P6 / S1	Cantonese	Waiter / 8300	Waitress / 7000	Waitress / 7000	Rental Private Housing / 200
#2 + Her Son	13	6 5	ZhongShan ZhongShan	P6 / P5	ZhongShan	Worker / 7000	No	Cook / 6000	Rental Private Housing / 150
#3 + Her Daughter	13	11 11	KaiPing KaiPing	P6 / P6	KaiPing	Waiter / 8800	Garment Worker / 1000	Waitress / 7000	Public Housing / 200
#4 + Her Daughter	14	12 3	QuNan QuNan	P6 / S1	Cantonese	Worker / 8700	No	No	Public Housing / 300
#5 + Her Elder Daughter + Her Younger Daughter	13 11	7 3 3	HuiZhou HuiZhou HuiZhou	S1 / P4 P5 / P3	KeJia	Watch Repairer / 5000	No	No	Rental Private Housing / 180
#6 + Her Son	11	2 2	HuiYang HuiYang	P6 / P5	KeJia	Worker / 8200	No	No	Rental Private Housing / 200
#7 + Her Daughter	9	11 10	GuangZhou GuangZhou	P3 / P1	Cantonese	Worker / 7000	Teacher / 1300	No	Rental Private Housing / 40
#8 + Her Daughter	10	10 9	Hainan Hainan	P5 / P3	Hainan	Worker / 9000	Clothes Retailer / 1200	Waitress / 8000	Rental Private Housing / 250
#9 + Her Daughter	9	7 3	GuiZhou GuiZhou	P3 / P1	GuiZhou	Worker / 8500	Farmer / 600	Worker / 4500	Rental Private Housing / 100
#10 + Her Daughter	9	6 4	GuangZhou GuangZhou	P3 / P2	Cantonese	Worker / 13000	Worker / 1100	No	Private Housing / 600

#11 + Her Daughter	11	7 3	GuangDong GuangDong	P5 / P3	KeJia	Unemployed	No	No	Public Housing / 300
#12 + Her Daughter	11	10 10	GuangDong GuangDong	P5 / P4	KeJia	Unemployed	Watch Repairer / 1200	Cleaner / 3500	Public Housing / 150
#13 + Her Daughter + Her Son	13 11	5 6 6	GuangDong GuangDong GuangDong	P6 / P3 P5 / P3	KeJia	Vegetable Retailer / 5500	No	Vegetable Retailer / 4500	Rental Private Housing / 100
#14 + Her Daughter	10	3 3	GuangDong GuangDong	P5 / P3	KeJia	Worker / 7500	No	No	Rental Private Housing / 70
#15 + Her Daughter + Her Son	12 10	12 5 5	GuangDong GuangDong GuangDong	S3 / S3 P5 / P5	Cantonese	Worker / 7000	Teacher / 1300	No	Rental Private Housing / 90
#16 + Her Daughter	11	5 5	NanHai NanHai	P5 / P4	NanHai	Waiter / 9500	No	No	Public Housing / 300
#17 + Her Daughter	14	10 3	TaiShan TaiShan	S4 / S3	TaiShan	Cook / 7500	No	Cook / 6500	Rental Private Housing / 100
#18 + Her Daughter	13	10 3	GuangDong GuangDong	S2 / S3	KeJia	Waiter / 9000	No	No	Rental Private Housing / 200
#19 + Her Daughter	14	12 3	JiangMen JiangMen	S3 / S3	JiangMen	Worker / 7000	No	Cashier / 5500	Rental Private Housing / 140
#20 + Her Daughter	13	12 3	GuangDong GuangDong	S1 / P5	KeJia	Waiter / 8500	No	Cleaner / 5800	Public Housing / 100

Chapter 5

Individual-Level Factors

This chapter illustrates and analyses the individual-level factors, mainly education and linguistic proficiency, determining the various outcomes emerging from the segmented assimilation of mainland migrants and their children. The question, “*What makes some mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility and what allows them to bypass escape this undesirable route?*” will be partially answered here. To provide better answers to this research question, this chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section shows the linguistic proficiency of mainland migrants and their children. The second section interprets the children’s education.

5.1 Linguistic Proficiency

5.1.1 *Linguistic Differences Between the Mother-tongue Languages of Mainland Migrants and the Spoken Language Used by Hong Kong Society*

Where there are different groups, there are different sorts of boundaries. Where there are boundaries, there are different sorts of mechanisms to maintain them. These boundary mechanisms are usually cultural traits, or cultural markers reflecting differences (Nash, 1996). Language is one of the major markers. The mother-tongue languages of different mainland migrants serve as a reminder of cultural differences. To blur these differences between themselves and the native population, mainlanders need to learn and use the dominant language of Hong Kong residents in order to overcome cultural barriers. However, such motivation is partly affected by the linguistic differences between the mother-tongue languages of mainlanders and the spoken language of Hong Kong society. 5 out of the 20 families interviewed

used the same mother-tongue – Cantonese – as that of Hong Kong residents. Both the parents and children of the 5 families spoke Cantonese fluently without any noticeable accent or dialect.

“...Before migrating, perhaps, we have been speaking the same language. In other words, we can at least communicate with Hong Kong people and are not considered to be different. I think we are better than many [other] mainland migrants.” (Interviewee #7, p.8, ln.18-19)

Such migrants are classified as Fluent Cantonese Proficient (FCP). It is evident in the example above that such visible cultural similarity builds up confidence among FCP migrants about further assimilation.

However, the members of the other 15 families tell a different story. Their mother-tongue languages include Kejia, Hainan, Huizhou, Nanhai, Taishan, Dongguan, Jiangmen, Zhongshan, and Kaiping. They do encounter linguistic adjustment difficulties.

“Yes...it is too hard to memorise the pronunciation of Cantonese. We all spoke Kejia in the mainland. Even if we speak Cantonese now, the other people sometimes do not understand what we are talking about.” (Interviewee #20’s daughter, p.11, ln.7-12)

Such migrants are classified as Limited Cantonese Proficient (LCP). For example, all the mothers of LCP families speak a form of Cantonese that mixes certain accents or dialects of their mother-tongue. 7 of them did not fully understand the Cantonese of the interviewer.

“My daughter learns Cantonese much better than me. After she [had arrived Hong Kong] for a few days, [she then] could speak and understand

[Cantonese]. My Cantonese speaking [is] not very good...but [people] understand what I am saying. However...[my Cantonese speaking is] not accurate in pronunciation..." (Interviewee #8, p.10, ln.20-23)

"...I think all the time, all the time...before I speak Cantonese. Usually, I don't know how to pronounce [certain phrases]...it is too difficult [for me] to learn [Cantonese]...and [I] speak Kejia unintentionally." (Interviewee #11, p.21, ln.6-8)

The limited Cantonese proficiency was not only evident among adult mainland migrants with different mother-tongues, but also among their children. Among the children of 15 families, 14 out of 17 spoke Cantonese with an accent or used tones from their mother-tongue. 4 of them had noticeably stronger accents than the rest. Their tones were significantly different from those used in the language of the host society and as a result they may be marked off as outsiders.

"When I pronounced something incorrectly, then my classmates said that, from their impression, they knew we are mainland migrants, not Hong Kong residents...and [we] are so 'cheap'." (Interviewee #18's daughter, p.10, ln.8-9)

"I don't understand. Just a little bit different in pronunciation of Cantonese. Since my mother-tongue isn't Cantonese, it is quite usual that it takes some time for us to speak Cantonese well. Why [do others] usually treat us differently?" (Interviewee #19's daughter, p.10, ln.13-15)

These results are significant enough that although most of the mainland migrants interviewed came from Guangdong province and speak a form of Cantonese with similar tones and accents as used by Hong Kong Cantonese, variations were still noticeable some time after their arrival. There was a considerably larger proportion of LCPs than FCPs among those migrants interviewed. Linguistic differences between their mother-tongue languages and Cantonese spoken in Hong Kong could determine into which segment of Hong Kong society the

mainland migrants would assimilate.

5.1.2 The Influence of Pre-Migration Linguistic Proficiency of Mainland Migrants' on Their Linguistic Adjustment in Hong Kong

Two essential languages are crucial to linguistic proficiency. One is spoken language – Cantonese – and the other is written language – traditional Chinese characters. As determined above, most of the mainland migrants do experience linguistic adjustment difficulties. However, not all of them have difficulty in dealing with the language of the host society. Such variations in linguistic adjustment can lead to divergent outcomes.

5.1.2A Spoken Language – Cantonese

Cantonese is the dominant spoken language, or second language of the population in some provinces in mainland China. In regards to spoken language, 16 out of the 20 mainland migrant families interviewed had some knowledge of Cantonese prior to immigration. Among the 16 families, Cantonese was the mother-tongue of 5 families.

“...We spoke Cantonese in the mainland. After residing in Hong Kong, we also speak Cantonese. Communication with others is as easy as before so that we don't think of any differences between Guangzhou and Hong Kong.” (Interviewee #7, p.8, ln.20-22)

These respondents came from highly developed cities such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Being able to speak Cantonese fluently and having a similar cultural background to that of Hong Kong, the 5 families had relatively few difficulties being accepted by the host society.

“...There is nothing special and difficult in communicating with Hong Kong people. Because I like to reside here...Although I was not born in Hong Kong, I must stay here, no matter [what] the future will be.” (Interviewee #1, p.13, ln.7-8)

The remaining 11 families that had some knowledge of Cantonese prior to their arrival in Hong Kong were composed of 11 mothers and 12 children. Their mother-tongue was not Cantonese. It was presupposed that although they had some pre-migration knowledge of Cantonese, these 11 families had to start almost at the beginning to learn Cantonese, but that was not always the case. Previous knowledge of Cantonese helped their linguistic adjustment to a certain extent. 6 mothers spoke Cantonese comparatively better than the others. 3 of the young newcomers spoke Cantonese as well as local youth.

“In the mainland, I learned by myself. I usually listened to Hong Kong radio programmes or watched Hong Kong television programmes. I sometimes also listened to the conversations between my father and mother...and then try, and try...I think this helps me in learning and speaking Cantonese.” (Interviewee #20’s daughter, p.12, ln.18-19)

Some of the mainland youth may have visited Hong Kong before immigrating and had established contacts in the territory (including family and friends) with whom they kept in regular communication.

“...We visited Hong Kong before by applying [for a] two-way permit. My cousins live in Hong Kong. I stayed at their home when I visited Hong Kong. We always kept in touch by long-distance calls and they taught me Cantonese.” (Interviewee #19’s daughter, p.9, ln.11-13)

8 out of the 12 children were distinguishable because they had non-Cantonese accents. Linguistic adjustment does not mean that immigrants have to give up their mother-tongue. Indeed, mainland migrants usually keep their native language while

learning Cantonese. Among the 15 families that did not have Cantonese as their mother-tongue, 14 said that they commonly used their native language to communicate with each other at home. Cantonese was treated as a second language.

“I do not know how to speak Cantonese. I speak it poorly...and I always use my native language, Kejia. I seldom speak Cantonese at home. I shall try...and try to speak Cantonese only if I go outside...” (Interviewee #5, p.13, ln.10-11)

Language use at home is dependent on individual choice. This study's findings on language preference, a key index of segmented assimilation, were unequivocal. Upon interviewing the 14 mothers, 5 of them spoke Cantonese poorly. The speech patterns of the 9 remaining adult mainlanders also varied from the native population of Hong Kong.

“I have been speaking Kejia for over 50 years. It becomes a part of our daily life. Change? Not necessary. Maybe I will speak Cantonese...only when I go out.” (Interviewee #20, p.10, ln.4-6)

“I like to speak Kejia at home...It seems ‘warmer’. We only speak Cantonese when we are not at home.” (Interviewee #19, p.15, ln.32-33)

Similarly, out of 16 young newcomers belonging to the 14 families, 5 of them spoke poor Cantonese. 8 of them spoke a Cantonese that was significantly different from that spoken by local residents, with differences apparent mainly in accent, vocabulary and grammar. Only 3 of them spoke it well. Such individual levels of ability can greatly handicap immigrant family members from adjusting easily to a new society and in the case of Hong Kong can lead to LCP migrants.

Language use in school or at work is not dependent primarily on individual choice, but has to be more or less structured. This makes the outcomes of linguistic assimilation vary differently between adult female and young mainlanders. All mainland immigrant children have to speak Cantonese at school in Hong Kong. Although “the teachers know that most of the mainland migrants do not speak Cantonese, or speak it poorly, they accept that they are gradually learning to use the language. However, this period of acceptance is not unlimited. The teachers demand that mainland migrants should be able to understand and speak Cantonese within a month” (Interviewee #8, p.12, ln.1-3).

In contrast, the experience of adult mainland migrants is quite different. The use of language at work is not solely structured. In other words, school is compulsory for mainland migrant children, but work is not compulsory for adults. Not all the adult mainlanders participate in the workforce. 9 out of the 20 mothers interviewed had found work in Hong Kong. One spoke Cantonese well because her native language was Cantonese. 4 of them spoke Cantonese poorly while the remaining 4 spoke a form of Cantonese mixed with their mother-tongue dialect or accent. The variations emerged due to the nature of their work. One adult interviewee was a waitress. In the interview, she said,

“I always need to talk to customers in Cantonese. You know, I am working in a restaurant and the customers always call for the waiters. I usually learn Cantonese by repeating what the customers say.”
(Interviewee #8, p.10, ln.24-27)

Another interviewee was a cleaner. She said during the interview,

“I usually work alone. I handle the rubbish [in] an estate. I seldom talk with others and I just try to work as fast as possible every day in order to go back to home early...” (Interviewee #12, p.6, ln.29-31)

The amount of language spoken can depend on an immigrant's work and this can affect their ability to make linguistic adjustments. For those non-working adult mainland immigrants, opportunities for learning and using the language of the host society are comparatively fewer. The greater opportunities open for young immigrants to learn Cantonese over their adult counterparts explain why there are variations between the paths of assimilation for adult and young mainland immigrants.

If the language used within the most primary immigrant group – the family – is not the same as used by the host society, such immigrant families often consist of LCP. The ability of migrants to assimilate can be influenced by the opportunities the migrants have to learn Cantonese – whether they are at school, working or unemployed. The mainland migrants' paths of assimilation can then be projected into divergent outcomes. In other words, their choice of language use and linguistic proficiency determines which group, FCP or LCP, the migrants will assimilate into, as well as how they are treated by local residents.

5.1.2B Written Language – Traditional Chinese Characters

Simplified Chinese characters are used when writing Chinese in Mainland China. Although Hong Kong is now part of China, in the mainstream traditional Chinese characters are still used when writing Chinese. 10 out of the 20 mainland migrant families interviewed said that they had some knowledge of traditional Chinese characters prior to immigration.

“...My relatives taught me traditional Chinese characters when they visited me, so I had a little knowledge about it. Furthermore, textbooks for Primary Six students contain exercises involving traditional Chinese [characters]...” (Interviewee #5’s daughter, p.12, ln.21-23)

“My father bought some magazines for us when he visited us. I knew how to read, but I didn’t know how to write at that time. I began to learn how to write traditional Chinese [characters] only after I came to Hong Kong.” (Interviewee #6’s son, p.18, ln.9-10)

“After settled in Hong Kong, I taught [my daughter]...how to write traditional Chinese characters. In fact, she was only able to read at that time, but not to write. You know, she rarely used traditional Chinese characters in the Mainland...” (Interviewee #7, p.15, ln.18-20)

The other 10 immigrants said that they did not know traditional Chinese characters before immigrating. Among the 10 families that had learned traditional Chinese characters in the Mainland, 3 of them said that they were still encountering difficulties when writing.

“Although someone taught me how to read and write traditional Chinese [characters] in the Mainland, I...sometimes write the simplified Chinese [characters] again. It is quite difficult to memorise the patterns of traditional Chinese [characters]. So...if I forget, I [will] use the simplified one as a substitute...” (Interviewee #3’s daughter, p.25, ln.15-17)

Among the 10 families that did not learn traditional Chinese characters while on the Mainland, 5 admitted difficulties in writing.

“In the mainland, teachers didn’t teach any traditional Chinese [characters]. After I arrived, I read the newspapers and watched television. But, it only helped me [in] reading...My mother assists me in learning traditional Chinese [characters]. In the textbooks, she writes a simplified Chinese character beside the corresponding traditional one. Then, I can understand and identify it. But, my mother does not write down all the simplified Chinese [characters] because she also doesn’t know [all of them]. I still don’t know certain characters.” (Interviewee #8’s daughter,

Although pre-migration knowledge of traditional Chinese characters is helpful to mainlanders, especially the young, it seems applicable to reading, not writing. This is owing to their familiarity with simplified Chinese characters in the Mainland China. However, as noted earlier, all the children of mainland migrants are required to write traditional Chinese characters at school. One interviewee expressed some anxiety over the requirement,

“I sometimes write simplified Chinese [characters] in my homework! Teachers circle the word and require me to write the appropriate traditional Chinese [characters] again. In examinations, writing simplified Chinese [characters] will result in mark deduction. So, I usually pay attention in doing all the schoolwork and try not to write simplified Chinese [characters]...” (Interviewee #3’s daughter, p.25, ln.15-16, 19-20)

For those mainlander children attending compulsory schooling, writing traditional Chinese characters is a must. Pressure from major institutions in the new host society forces immigrants to quickly adjust linguistically, and in a secure environment, such as schools, improvements are rewarded.

“I usually check my daughter’s homework and examine whether she writes traditional Chinese [characters] correctly or not. I check and know she improves [in the usage of traditional Chinese characters], at least [her writing is] more tidy...and the teacher sometimes appreciates her improvement.” (Interviewee #11, p.26, ln.20-22)

“Normally, my teacher encourages me to try my best in writing traditional Chinese [characters]. If there are simplified Chinese characters in my homework, she will tell me the right ones. But, this is not the case in an examination. Marks will be deduced if I write simplified Chinese [characters].” (Interviewee #1’s daughter, p.25, ln.25-26)

It is almost impossible to maintain a sound level of literacy in a language – in

particular in a language with entirely different and complex writing patterns – without schools that teach it and a community in which it can be regularly practised. Thus, for adult mainlanders, 18 out of the 20 mothers interviewed expressed difficulty in learning traditional Chinese characters. One of the interviewees explained,

“Too hard! You know, I have used simplified Chinese [characters] all my life in the Mainland. How do I learn? My brain is just full of simplified Chinese characters. In my daily life nowadays, it is useless to learn how to read and write traditional Chinese [characters]. I don’t have to use it...” (Interviewee #5, p.28, ln.14-15)

In fact, the speed and ease with which spoken Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters are learned and used by members of another cultural group can vary widely. Besides pre-migration linguistic knowledge, language shifts are also likely to occur if individuals can find a secure and rewarding place in the host society where the new languages are taught. Linguistic proficiency determines not only how mainland migrants assimilate, but also what segments of society they integrate into.

5.2 Education

In order to assimilate and climb the economic ladder, mainland migrants need to learn how to fit into Hong Kong society and overcome their deficits with respect to languages and also to education.

5.2.1 Educational Level and Enrolment

For the children of mainland migrants, the first essential challenge they have to face is in education. Although all of the immigrant children were enrolled in

schools within a month of their arrival, most of them had to be assigned to a lower grade level than comparable to that they enrolled in the Mainland. The young migrants explained the reasons beyond such downgrading arrangement that,

“The Principal told me that, after the admission testes...my Chinese and English standard could not fulfilled the school’s requirements. I don’t know why my results didn’t meet his requirements. In the Mainland, my Chinese, English, and Mathematics standard was not bad...as a result, he asked me to enroll in a lower [grade] level...otherwise...I had to find another school for study...”(Interviewee #16’s daughter, p.20, ln.7-12)

“I studied Primary Five last term...and study also Primary Five this term. I don’t want to do so...My teacher told my mother that my academic performance was not satisfactory last term and encouraged her [to let me] repeat [Primary Five] level again this term. My mother promised [my teacher] and told me that...I have to build up a better [academic] base in order to promote to a better [secondary] school...” (Interviewee #6’s son, p.17, ln.13-17)

Among 22 immigrant children interviewed, 15 of them were emotionally affected by the unexpected downgrading in educational level. Many mainland migrant children expressed feelings of depression.

“I have been downgraded by two grade levels...It seems a waste of time. I was really unhappy when I heard [that arrangement]. I don’t understand why the Principal did that? Although my [usage of] traditional Chinese [characters] and English is not good, I can catch up if I am given an opportunity...”(Interviewee #17’s daughter, p.6, ln.7-9)

“Yes...my daughter was very depressed when she heard that she had to repeat the same [grade] level after arriving Hong Kong. No other means [to avoid such arrangement]...In the Mainland, she only learned to write simplified Chinese [characters]. In Hong Kong, she has to study traditional Chinese [characters], English, and something else. All of these are new to her...”(Interviewee #10, p.19, ln.29-30)

Although many of immigrant children interviewed said it was difficult to accept

the downgrade in grade level, their aspirations were very high. Educational level was not the chief determinant. Moreover, depression did not have a great impact on the children's educational achievement. However, their educational aspirations made most of them outperform their local counterparts. This is illustrated in the next section.

5.2.2 *Educational Aspiration*

Aspirations were very high among all the young interviewees, as was the expectation that secondary-level education would be completed.

“Even though my [grade] level was lowered by the school principal, I will work harder than before in order to prove my ability to learn.” (Interviewee #4's daughter, p.17, ln.4-5)

“I will study hard and achieve senior secondary-level, or even higher. Although my languages are not good now, I will improve...I think that my teachers like the mainland migrants in my class as we work hard and respect to them...” (Interviewee #17's daughter, p.4, ln.16-18)

Even though their educational aspirations were unexpectedly high, not all the migrant children interviewed were treated with respect. 2 of them reported incidents of discrimination by their peers.

“In Hong Kong, people sometimes call you ‘New Immigrants’. It seems we are labelled with the identity of mainland migrants. Somebody always talks about the issue of ‘permanent residence’. I have been here for less than half a year. Even my teachers and school textbooks talk about questions of identity in Hong Kong, it is embarrassing! One time, an Economic and Public Affairs teacher asked those born in Hong Kong to raise their hands. I was so ashamed...Certain classmates ask us explicitly...where we were educated before... Where were we born? I hate them and do not [want to be] Hong Kong people.” (Interviewee #1's daughter, p.10, ln.11-17)

As shown above, young mainlanders' experiences in Hong Kong schools can shape their attitudes and expectations. Yet, despite being in a disruptive new environment, caught between rising hopes and shrinking opportunities, 17 of the young mainlanders interviewed, continued to have high aspirations about their ability to achieve success at school and to become upwardly socio-economic mobile. One of the children stated,

"I want to study hard and achieve better at school. Only by this, can I have better earnings in the future and so rise my status...and living standards in Hong Kong..." (Interviewee #5's daughter, p.28, ln.9-11)

High aspirations made it possible for 13 of the mainland immigrants interviewed to outperform their local counterparts. Most of them got within the top ten in their respective classes. Some of the interviewees stated,

"At the beginning of settlement in Hong Kong, [the academic performance of] my daughter was very poor because of the below average Chinese and English standards. But I told her that she was the eldest in her class and had to repeat two grade levels...[she] had to work hard! After studying for a term, her academic results are better now...and get the second best in her class. I haven't worried about her study then..." (Interviewee #20, p.7, ln.12-16)

"I am older than other classmates are and...I am also a mainland migrant. If my [academic] results are not good, Hong Kong people will always look down upon me. So, I must work hard to improve my deficits in Cantonese, English as well as traditional Chinese characters. ...My ranking in the last examination was the fifth. My parents and teachers were satisfied with my [academic] performance...and now I think that my teachers like mainland migrants much more [than local students] as we are usually working hardly..." (Interviewee #17's daughter, p.4, ln.10-16)

One interviewee further expressed,

"Although her academic result was not content when she entered the local school, it is now very good... [She] got the seventh position in the last

examination...and I am pleased with her [academic] performance. She always tell me that the teachers pay much attention on her...and I encourage her if she does the best in study all the time and then nobody will blame her..." (Interviewee #12, p.10, ln.22-26)

As shown above, one key reason for the students' above-average academic results was elementary: they worked for it. This is what the proposition of the present research presupposes. Evidence also shows that their academic success was also partly due to their family environment, which placed a high value on education and had a positive attitude towards schooling. One interviewee said,

"...We, including my husband, have great expectations for my daughter. We hope that she can do better than her classmates in all aspects. From our point of view, she has done very well..." (Interviewee #18, p.24, ln.1-2)

One immigrant child said,

"I seldom play with Hong Kong-born peers as my mother does not like me to do so. Most of my friends are also mainland migrants... And she usually encourages me [to study]. I understand that she cares about me." (Interviewee #1's daughter, p.25, ln.11-13)

Mainland migrants frequently seek to become upwardly socio-economic mobile, so education is often given high priority. The outstanding performance of mainland immigrant children is partly due to parental pressure put on the children to adhere to their own mainlander families and to avoid excessive social contacts with local peers, as shown above. In providing answers to the research question, education is shown to play a crucial role in determining what makes mainland migrants choose divergent paths of assimilation. The educational aspirations of young mainlanders provide them with the momentum to bypass or escape poverty. Parental pressure on

children acts as a supplementary pushing force in making them outperform their local counterparts. However, parental pressure exerted on migrant children acts, at the same time, as another pulling force in making them become susceptible to maintain certain extent of family adherence by means of discouraged relationship development with local peers. The two forces are competing and a balance between them has to be sustained in order to provide smooth acceptance of the host society. The findings show that during the early stages of assimilation the children usually do what their parents ask.

Chapter 6

Structural Factors

This chapter illustrates and analyses the structural factors, mainly socio-economic status and spatial distribution, determining the divergent patterns and outcomes emerging from the segmented assimilation of mainland migrants and their children. The question, “*What makes some mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility and what allows them to bypass or escape this undesirable route?*” is partially answered in the last chapter of this thesis. In this chapter the above question is considered and explained. To provide better answers to the research question, this chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section outlines the socio-economic status that opens to mainland migrants and their children. The second section considers their spatial distribution.

6.1 Socio-economic Status

6.1.1 *Pre and Post Migration Occupational Status of Mainland Migrants*

Zhou (1997) argued that socio-economic status shapes the immediate social conditions for assimilation. Occupation is the most crucial factor in determining such conditions.

Regarding the occupations of mainland migrant wives before taking residency in Hong Kong, 8 of the 20 adult mainlanders were employed by several sectors, such as garment industry, education, and agriculture. Although the income they earned in the mainland cannot be comparable to that in Hong Kong owing to very different living standards, 7 of them expressed satisfactory with their pre migration occupational status. Two interviewees said,

“Having a job, ...furniture worker, [in the mainland] was lucky for me. I had worked in that furniture factory for over ten years and everybody treated me kindly, ...and friendly. But, only me in the factory married with a man from Hong Kong... So, although my hometown is not here, I still have to go here for living with my husband...” (Interviewee #10, p.32, ln.8-11)

“I was a primary school teacher [in the mainland]. The salary of this job wasn't high...compared to that of other jobs in the mainland, but the status it gave me was a concern. Many parents were respectable to the working attitudes and natures...” (Interviewee #15, p.38, ln.19-21)

In the research, only one adult mainland migrant interviewed was disappointing about her pre migration occupation. She expressed aspirations after being employed in Hong Kong,

“Now in Huizhou, there isn't any land for growing crops even if you want to be a farmer. It is hard for us to make a living in the Mainland because there aren't any jobs. You know, money is needed for children's education, for family's meals and for household's consumption. How [do we] earn a living in the Mainland China? In Hong Kong, I have a job even though I am over 40. We have a better life [in Hong Kong] and it is [our] home.” (Interviewee #9, p.35, ln.17-21)

Mainland migrants to Hong Kong come from both rural and urban backgrounds, from underdeveloped regions, such as Huizhou, as well as from industrially developed areas, such as Guangzhou.

“We originally lived in Guangzhou. The living environment is similar to Hong Kong. Not much different...and I am a schoolteacher. However, the consumer price index is much lower in Guangzhou... This creates a [price index] gap compared to that in Hong Kong.” (Interviewee #15, p.3, ln.2-4)

In terms of occupation, the mainland migrants had access to the full spectrum of jobs available in their homeland, China. Their previous occupations mainly

composed of certain professional jobs, such as teacher and watch repairer, and some other jobs – salesperson, garment worker and farmer. Among the 8 interviewees who had jobs in the mainland before migration, 3 of them are not employed after taking residency in Hong Kong. The other 5 are employed to be waitress, worker, or cleaner (see Table 4-1). All of them have a feeling of depression upon their changing socio-economic status between pre and post migration. Occupational aspirations and achievements are no longer found in their expressions of life chances in the Hong Kong social structure. Comparing their occupations in China with their post migration occupations, reduced social attainment and downward social mobility is encountered by these mainland migrant wives. One interviewee showed,

“I was a watch repairer for more than 20 years in the Mainland. The monthly income was quite high. I enjoyed the social welfare and relatively higher status [in China]. However, after arriving [in Hong Kong], I can not find any work related to my previous field as local employers think that my skills are not certified...” (Interviewee #12, p.7, ln.26-30)

Another interviewee stated,

“Before marriage, I was a worker in a factory manufacturing furniture. For six years [after my marriage]... I had not worked. Then, I worked for the same employer again up to the moment before migration. My family living was satisfied at that time. Since having arrived in Hong Kong I can't find any work...” (Interviewee #10, p.9, ln.3-7)

It is evident that finding work in Hong Kong is not easy for many mainland migrants. Nevertheless, 10 interviewees are now employed and all said that they had good relations with their fellow workers. This indicates that those migrants who are able to join the labour force in the host society find it easier to identify with the host culture and assimilate more rapidly. This is due to an increased possibility

of gaining equal privileges, occupational statuses and positions of power within the host society's major social institutions. One interviewee said that,

"I, of course, think that I am one of the Hong Kong people. Why? Because...the situation is different in Nanhai... We can work together with Hong Kong people here...[we] work like them, and therefore adjust to the society of Hong Kong..." (Interviewee #8, p.16, ln.1-3)

Among those who do not find work in their new homeland, many are confined to the domestic arena – staying at home to care for children or the elderly. As one of the interviewee explained,

"If I go out to find a job, then nobody will be at home. This is troublesome! First, nobody will prepare meals for my husband and children. Second, I worry that my children will go somewhere after school. You know, I am not at home if I have job. They would then more likely get into trouble or difficulties outside. This is troublesome... So, they haven't to do household tasks...I do all of them [by] myself." (Interviewee #5, p.3, ln.20-24)

Because some mainland migrants chose not to be employed, they have relatively fewer contacts with the host society, especially indeed local residents. This reduces their likelihood in building up secondary relationships. Occupation status is as a result reduced and the move towards downward social attainment and mobility is increased. Interviewee #5 firmly responded,

"I think that I belong to the society of the Mainland China. We, mainlanders, [are] worse off than Hong Kong people! Totally different...especially [in] economic aspects..." (Interviewee #5, p.8, ln.10-11)

In general, failure to join the local labour force market limits the ability of migrants to enter the social structure of their new homeland, and as a result many

find themselves unable to advance economically. A closer look at the evidence shows that the aspirations and consequences of assimilation have not changed entirely, but that the process has become segmented. In other words, failure to find work may lead some migrants to assimilate into a segment of Hong Kong society that is not similar to that of other mainlanders who have work and are earning an income.

6.1.2 Occupational Ladders for Mobility among Mainland Migrants in Hong Kong

Vulnerability to assimilation into divergent destinies, according to Portes and Zhou (1994), can result from changes in the economy that have led to the elimination of occupational ladders for mobility. As stated in Chapter 1, economic restructuring in Hong Kong has led to the elimination of many manufacturing jobs and the degrading of others. This reduced the spectrum of jobs open to mainland migrant workers with low-level service skills. But, these are niches that seldom or never offer opportunities for upward mobility. There is evidence of this vulnerability. Among the 10 interviewees who are working, the spectrum of jobs available to them is primarily limited to the low skilled service industry: waitress, cleaner, salesperson, cashier, and junior cook.

“Promotion? I am lucky to find a job [in Hong Kong]. We are newcomers that do not know [things about Hong Kong] very well. My education is low...and [my] knowledge is limited. What can I do? So, having a job...[like] cleaning dishes...is lucky to me. Don't talk about any promotion...” (Interviewee #20, p.4, ln.7-9)

“I have completed senior secondary level schooling in the Mainland...and now work in a restaurant...as a waitress. My employer doesn't consider my educational level. In Hong Kong, the most important thing is to earn

money, no matter what the job duties are..." (Interviewee #1, p.11, ln.21-24)

Another interviewee had similar views,

"Yes, I have no other choice. Such a service job, I think, is good for me. Serve customers, cook sweet soup, and clean dishes... My boss asked me to work hard in order to earn more money, but... General service job! What can I be promoted to? There are only 3 employees in the food store, including the boss, a fellow worker and myself..." (Interviewee #5, p.7, ln.4-8)

The results of economic restructuring is described by Portes and Zhou (1993) as an "hourglass economy", with a narrow band of mid-level jobs and a bulging strata at the bottom and the top. The evidence shows that it is more difficult for mainland migrants, many of whom enter the labour force market at or near the bottom of the hourglass, to move upwards into higher paid jobs.

"...My job duty is to collect rubbish, to do painting and maintenance work when boats come back to pier. [I earn] Two hundred dollars a day. My fellow workers tell me what to do and then I follow. You know, I don't know much and...my educational level is low. So far so good! Earning money is important [to me]..." (Interviewee #9, p.12, ln.8-11)

In other words, the present Hong Kong economy has taken away several rungs of the mobility ladder that are crucial for enabling mainland migrants, especially those with little education and few job skills, to climb up. The occupational opportunities open to migrants are crucial to explaining the research question of what makes mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility or more actually, to limited upward mobility.

6.1.3 *Socio-economic Status Information on the Husbands of Mainland Migrants*

In the mainland migrant families, the principal providers are always the husbands. Among the interviewed families, the husbands play an important and significant role in determining the families' socio-economic status, especially in accordance with husbands' occupations and incomes. One adult interviewee said,

“Before my children and I settled in Hong Kong, my husband had been a waiter in a restaurant. At that time, his salary seemed to be enough... Only a few hundred Hong Kong dollars was enough for us to have a living [in the mainland]. After we arrived [at Hong Kong], expenditures are much greater [than before]...I have not been employed! His income and our expenditures are just in balance...how can we have excess money to rent a bigger house?” (Interviewee #18, p.36, ln.17-22)

Another mainland migrant wife stated,

“My husband had bought a flat in Kowloon City before my daughter and I came to Hong Kong. We are now living there and although I am not employed, his salary can temporarily make a living...and I think I will work only when my daughter grows up...” (Interviewee #10, p.39, ln.12-14)

It is evident that most of the families' socio-economic statuses are effected primarily by the principal providers, which are husbands in most cases, especially in the aspect of housing. Most of the husbands have been living individually in relatively tiny rental private or public flats for years. Their family members moved to Hong Kong under the one-way permit quota system. However, with their recent incomes or public housing regulations, it is not possible for them to settle in bigger flats, as excess expenditures cannot be covered. The situations are even worse if the spouses, usually the wives from the mainland, are not employed.

What is going on to the mainland migrant wives and children of these families?

One adult interviewee expressed the view,

“I haven’t imagined that the housing in Hong Kong is so small and crowded... How to live in such a tiny space? My daughters and I expected to have a better living [in Hong Kong]...but now most of my aspirations are given up. Now I only hope that my children can be educated better [in Hong Kong]...and...my family can live together happily... You know, it is easy to have quarrels within such a small space!” (Interviewee #5, p.28, ln.3-7)

One mainland migrant child said,

“...Living in Hong Kong is not good...I mean housing... I couldn’t adjust when I initially settled in Hong Kong and I always missed my house [in the mainland]. Now my feeling is better...I forget my disappointment and only want to work hard...even in this small home...” (Interviewee #19’s daughter, p.31, ln.5-8)

In the assimilation process, husbands of mainland migrant families are important in understanding the families’ socio-economic statuses. What they are influences where they live, in turn affects the assimilation patterns and outcomes of adult mainland migrants and their children. Their aspirations are changing along with the reality they face. Forces for assimilation emerge and what they will be depends on the extent of acceptance upon their socio-economic statuses within the Hong Kong social structure.

6.2 Spatial Distribution

The distribution of mainland migrant households into a variety districts or regions puts mainlanders in close contact with concentrations of local residents. Some degree of spatial distribution is really a by-product of immigration.

Immigration is influenced by social supports and networks, and leads to settlement patterns determined partly by the needs of mainlanders. Those unfamiliar with Hong Kong society and lacking linguistic proficiency often seek the assistance from kin and relatives. Most importantly, many mainland migrants are dependants of Hong Kong residents who live in a variety of areas and work in a wide range of fields. Thus, mainland migrants are dispersed into a variety of areas, partly due to their income level and their dependence on Hong Kong relatives and kin. This leads to interactions with local residents.

“I greeted my neighbours who live nearby...and one of them replied, ‘I don’t know much about you!’ However, I try again and again to greet everybody [that I meet] in the morning. It is better now...now, I do dare to talk with others...” (Interviewee #5, p.6, ln.27-29)

“I have met with all my neighbours and they are nice. Every time when I meet with them, we greet each other...I know much more about Hong Kong because they sometimes teach me... So, it is essential to communicate with Hong Kong people because they will help you unintentionally...” (Interviewee #9, p.33, ln.23-27)

It can be seen from the cases above that most mainland migrants enter the labour force at or near the bottom of the economy with little education and few job skills. Their geographical patterns can lead to the tendency to see the majority of mainland migrants as identical to the local poor.

“The neighbours living beside us have almost the same living conditions [comparable to us]...for example, about 100 square feet of living space. Sometimes, when they prepare meals, they also prepare for us as well... All of us are very poor...” (Interviewee #1, p.16, ln.12-14)

Mainland migrants are therefore found in the same locations and in similar circumstances as the majority of the poor in Hong Kong. Mainland migrants have

similar accommodation opportunities as that of local residents with corresponding income. "Opportunities" here should be given a broad interpretation to include not just locations, but also types as well as areas of housing. Among the 20 interviewed households, 14 of them rent flats ranging from 40 to 200 square feet. 5 live in government-sponsored public estates. One interviewee said,

"We have applied for a public estate flat. Here we have only 70 square feet for 4 persons. You can imagine what our living conditions are. But, you know, it is difficult and time-consuming [for us] to successfully apply for a public estate flat. Many local residents are also waiting for flats...we have to queue up in the waiting list..." (Interviewee #15, p.15, ln.2-5)

Perhaps this has little bearing for the adult migrants themselves, who may maintain a life similar to the one they had in their homelands, but it has a considerable impact on their children. This is discussed above in the Section 6.1.3. Interviewees further illustrated,

"My husband and I live in a environment...like this, and it is all right. But, how about my children? I just want them to have better living conditions in Hong Kong as they will grow up and be educated here..." (Interviewee #14, p.21, ln.13-15)

"My brother and I want to move to a bigger house, even though we know that it will not be comparable to the one in the Mainland... [It was] about 2000 square feet. A house bigger than this would be all right. If there are playgrounds and shopping centres nearby, then it will be perfect! We can then play with my classmates in holidays..." (Interviewee #8' daughter, p.15, ln.24-27)

The children of mainland migrants grow up in environments that bring them frequently together with local children in schools and in playgroups. Even more importantly, it exposes the children of mainlanders to the sub-culture that local youth

have developed to cope with their own difficult situations.

“We always play with friends and classmates on Saturday. We go to playgrounds and have fun together. Generally, my mother doesn’t worry [about us]. They are very nice. They always teach us something new...especially [when] we just resided in Hong Kong. My sister and I like to communicate with them...” (Interviewee #5’s daughter, p.9, ln.8-11)

“I go to church on Saturday afternoon. There are many local children there. Some tutors help me when I do not understand how to do my schoolwork. But I like most to play with the children there and they...teach me many new stuff...” (Interviewee #7’s daughter, p.8, ln.14-16)

“I usually go to Y. W. C. A. [social service agency] at nights. Tutorial classes are held there in order for me to ask academic questions that I don’t understand. I can meet some of my migrant friends there and we join activities altogether...” (Interviewee #8’s daughter, p.7, ln.2-5)

Spatial distribution of mainland migrant families often leads to their contacts with certain secondary relationships, such as people in church and staff in social service agencies. It is shown in the above cases those churches or social service agencies, in particular, are also an important resource for mainland migrants, especially children in terms of social support and social activity. The social support from kin, relatives and neighbours are significant to the extent of assimilation of mainland migrants. However, it is not possible to exclude the effects of social support and network from certain secondary relationships. Although they are not including in the variables of the present research, especially within the structural factors, how they participate in the process of socialization and assimilation of mainland migrants is more or less playing a role, particularly if the mainlanders are paid less attention by the local government than that these secondary relationships expect.

This process of socialising can have an influence on which divergent segments of Hong Kong society the children of mainland migrants assimilate into. It is quite different from that of their parents. Interacting with local peers, the mainland migrant children are able to follow a path that more or less will allow them to bypass or to get out of a downward economic spiral.

Chapter 7

Interaction Effects between Factors

According to the segmented assimilation theory, the absorption of today's mainland migrants and their children into the Hong Kong fabric is likely to be fragmented. The assimilation path an immigrant will follow will be determined by a variety of factors – linguistic proficiency, education, socio-economic status and spatial distribution. The determinants, both individual and structural in nature, that affect the life opportunities of mainland migrants can be not only combined but also interactive. After discussing the factors one by one in the previous two chapters, this chapter focuses on their interaction and examines the possible effects they have on each other. In the Hong Kong context, the assimilation experiences of contemporary mainland migrants reflects a new “picture” of how the segmented assimilation theory is applied in a Chinese society experiencing the arrival of new Chinese immigrants. This chapter is arranged into three sections. The first section shows the contextual effects between socio-economic status and education. The second section discusses how immigrants are effected by the interaction of spatial distribution, linguistic proficiency and education. The last section examines, in light of the segmented assimilation theory, why the structural determinants, not the individual-level ones, shape the adjustment patterns of mainland migrants and their children.

7.1 Status and Achievement

Family socio-economic status shapes the immediate social conditions for assimilation. As noted before, socio-economic status is one of the most crucial factors because it determines the type of neighbourhood in which immigrant children will live, the kind of extra-curricular activities in which they will participate and the

group of peers with which will they associate. One interviewee from a relatively higher socio-economic background said,

“We live in a self-owned flat with a dining room and two bedrooms, as one for my daughter and the other for my husband and me... Every weekday I take my daughter to school. Other local mothers told me that they invite some part-time tutors into their homes in order to teach their children. [It takes them to] spend about a thousand dollars each month. They said it is useful for their children. Thus, I also hire a tutor. My daughter’s academic results are not good and I hope she can do better because of the extra teaching from the tutor. Because of this... she has to attend a tutorial at home from 8 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. every night and I seldom let her go outside. We’re mainland migrants and have to catch up [with local children] in school...” (Interviewee #10, p.10, ln.3-8)

However, another interviewee of a lower socio-economic background said,

“After arriving home from school, I spend some time doing my homework and then go out to play with my classmates... either at the playground or at classmates’ houses. We usually wander about the streets and my classmates sometimes take me to new places... It is funny and exciting!” (Interviewee #5’s daughter, p.9, ln.2-4)

Tsang (1993) discussed that the ascribed attributes, such as family background, assert their effects mainly through their influence on educational achievement. Clearly, in other words, mainland migrant children from less fortunate socio-economic backgrounds have a much harder time achieving educational success than other middle-class or near middle-class children. As further stated by Interviewee #5’s daughter,

“When I don’t know how to do my schoolwork, I will leave it aside and then ask my classmates at school on the following day. But, they may not assist me all the time. Hence, I will suffer difficulties in my study and I don’t know what to do next...” (Interviewee #5’s daughter, p.9, ln.6-8)

The significance of socio-economic status has a direct impact on the assimilation patterns of mainland migrant children. As shown above, those of middle-class or near middle-class backgrounds are able to benefit from the financial security provided by their families in so far as it will ensure them better opportunities in life. In contrast, children from more financially insecure family backgrounds often find themselves growing up in underprivileged neighbourhoods and are subject to poverty and a generally less favourable social environment.

“My home is very small, about 100 square feet, and there is not enough space for me to study. I always do my homework and study my textbooks on the bed. Since my father and mother weren’t educated much, so I rarely ask them if I have problems in my studies, except with traditional Chinese [characters] as my father is familiar [with them]. I am...afraid that my academic results are not as good as others! I had studied to Form One in mainland, but was downgraded to Primary Five after coming Hong Kong. I am the eldest [in my class], but...I am afraid my results are the worst...” (Interviewee #20’s daughter, p.7, ln.10-16)

Among the 20 mainland migrant families under study, over three-fourths of them can be categorised as having a relatively lower socio-economic status. These results are remarkable enough in view of the relatively low socio-economic status of a substantial proportion of mainland migrant families in Hong Kong. Perhaps this situation has little bearing on adult mainland migrants, but it has a considerable impact on their children. Considering such family conditions, mainland migrant children often choose one of two possible assimilation patterns.

First, understanding the immediate social conditions for assimilation, the children recognise that they fall into an unfavourable category and it will be more difficult to make the gradual transition upwards because footholds in the middle of the occupational structure are relatively scarce. One interviewee elaborated,

“After arriving, I knew that my family was not wealthy. We live in a flat of only 150 square feet with limited facilities and living equipment. My parents and I seldom go shopping...or even go outside as they told me that money would be spent if we go out. I understand what they mean and am sometimes unhappy... It is difficult for them to earn much money and have better living conditions. They both have expectations on me. But...mainland migrants often find it hard to compete [with Hong Kong people], unless I work for it, especially doing better in my studies...” (Interviewee #12’s daughter, p.7, ln.2-8)

Movement upwards, or to a higher socio-economic strata requires substantial human capital, particularly a higher educational achievement and advanced training that is not likely to be within reach of all the members of a mainland migrant household. Some can, but some cannot, depending on their educational aspirations and the group of peers with which they associate. Tsang (1993) stated that family background maintains its effects through its influences on educational attainment, which in turn imposes significant effects on occupational-status attainment. The segmented assimilation theory further states that current mainland migrants are at risk of never moving upwards or even experiencing downward social mobility, unless they achieve a higher level of education and unless the economy of the host society becomes more dynamic than before its economic restructuring.

As for the second possible assimilation pattern, seeing their parents confined to menial jobs and as they become increasingly aware of discrimination from locals, many children of mainland migrants readily join a reactive sub-culture in an effort to protect their sense of self-worth.

“In school, my class consists of large proportion of mainland migrants. Only a few are local students. Sometimes, when we come out of the classroom, students from other classes look at us in an unfriendly way. We know what they think...[we are] mainland migrants! No problem... Most of my classmates are [mainlanders] too and we always meet together.

We are best friends and...most of my friends are also mainlanders. We do our best! I believe we are not going wrongly in any way!" (Interviewee #1's daughter, p.17, ln.11-13 & 23-25)

This sub-culture erects serious hurdles to upward mobility because educational achievement is seen as a threat to mainland migrant solidarity. Mainlander children are at risk of being socialised into adopting a reactive sub-cultural attitude complicated by the notion that "we are not strangers" (Interviewee #2's daughter). In an attempt to protect themselves, these children assimilate into a segment of society that strongly identifies with their mother-tongues, and as a result they can find themselves having as limited socio-economic opportunities as their parents.

"We often use the language of our homeland to communicate with classmates... Yes, they are also mainland migrants...[We perform in this matter] in order not to let the other Hong Kong classmates know what we are talking about. They don't understand and are isolated..." (Interviewee #4's daughter, p.17, ln.19-21)

When mainland migrant children are under pressure to assimilate but are not sure which direction of assimilation is more desirable, family socio-economic status is of paramount significance. Those of relatively low socio-economic status are less likely to move up the mobility ladder. On the one hand, recognising their unfavourable status, some children of mainland migrants seek to become upwardly mobile through education. On the other hand, by joining a reactive sub-culture, other migrant children develop a strong sense of identification that brings them closer to their parents' cultural mind-set. The different patterns, resulting from socio-economic status, are not likely to benefit the path of upward mobility and thus can make the children of mainland migrants become susceptible to downward mobility or the preservation of their own values and social identity as a distinct group.

7.2 Spatial Patterns and Social Support Networks

Interaction effects are guaranteed to determine how residential distribution corresponds with personal characteristics, such as educational attainment and linguistic proficiency, and household characteristics, such as the socio-economic opportunities open to a family. Mainland migrants geographically distribute in way to expose to the members of the host society. As such, this would increase in parallel with the family's socio-economic status, or at least would raise mainland migrants' aspirations in participating in institutions such as the labour force market and educational establishments on the basis of parity with local residents of similar backgrounds. Their aspirations can be identified from the experiences of some interviewees and their children.

“As I see most of my neighbours are better off than us, both my husband and I want to earn more money in order to live as they do...or even better! So, I always ask my daughter that she must work hard, and learn more useful skills so that [she will] find a better-paid job in the future...”
(Interviewee #5, p.5, ln.21-24)

“My classmates usually have much more money [than me] to buy the things they want... I know my mother and father work very hardly to earn money for us to make a living, so I haven't asked them to treat me in a similar way as my classmates' parents do. But, I will work hard, finish at least secondary grade level, and then find a better job so that enough money will be made...to give benefits back to my parents. I just wish to have the kind of living conditions most Hong Kong people have...”
(Interviewee #9's daughter, p.25, ln.26-31)

Clearly, patterns of assimilation vary, depending on where mainland migrants settle – whether in affluent middle-class or in impoverished neighbourhoods. Two of the interviewees showed,

“I greeted my neighbours who live in the same apartment...and one of

them replied, 'I don't know much about you!' However, I try again and again to greet everybody [that I meet] in the morning. It is better now...now, I do dare to talk with others..." (Interviewee #5, p.6, ln.27-29)

"I have met with all my neighbours in the private owned building that we are living now and they are nice and well-educated. Every time when I meet with them, we greet each other...I know much more about Hong Kong because they sometimes teach me... So, it is essential to communicate with Hong Kong people because they will help you unintentionally..." (Interviewee #9, p.33, ln.23-27)

The existing middle-class population in Hong Kong society seems untouchable to most today's mainland migrants. A substantial number of mainlanders have converged on underprivileged neighbourhoods, as shown in previous chapters of this research. Among the 20 interviewed households, 14 of them had rented flats with floor space ranging from 40 to 200 square feet. 5 of them have taken residence in government housing estates where the flat sizes are less than 300 square feet. Therefore, it can be generalised that most mainland migrants and their children have come into direct contacts with the underprivileged sector of society rather than the middle-class and are also apt to be exposed to obstacles for assimilation.

"...The house that we rent is divided into four rooms. My family rents one of them, about 80 square feet. Toilet, kitchen and other appliances are all shared among tenants... The four rooms are of a similar size. I think the neighbours have similar living conditions as us... I mean...they are not very rich. However, they are very nice! Sometimes, they prepare meals for us. I feel comfortable living with them and we are all just like a big family...and don't have [any necessity] to communicate with people outside..." (Interviewee #7's daughter, p.7, ln.25-29)

Ownership of a private home also tends to increase the exposure of migrants to the local host society, especially members of the middle-class. This has a significant impact on their socio-economic status. Among the 20 families interviewed, only one owned their home. This mainlander household usually came

into direct daily contact with the middle-class instead of the underprivileged. Such close residential association with the local middle-class contributes towards the migrants' assimilation into a distinct segment of society. A member of this family stated,

“My husband bought a flat of 600 square feet in Kowloon City before my daughter and I arrived Hong Kong. The neighbours are all right as we usually greet with them. ...Most of them are white-collar workers. Sometimes when my daughter doesn't understand the English [in her schoolwork], she will ask my neighbours. She told me that the sisters and brothers living beside are very nice. And I, of course, hope that she can incorporate into the Hong Kong society and do better, ...just like the sisters and brothers living nearby. Many of them are university students...” (Interviewee #10, p.10, ln.18-25)

Most importantly, spatial distribution effects the development of a social relations network. Mainlander children from families associated with tight knit social networks consistently show better psychological development, stronger educational aspirations and higher levels of linguistic proficiency than those from socially isolated families. As mentioned before, the impact of better psychological conditions can be seen from the response of Interviewee #7's daughter who described her families' relationship with their neighbours as being “just like a big family” (p.7, ln.29). Furthermore, stronger educational aspirations, as shown above, can be seen from the response of Interviewee #10 who said she was eager for her daughter to “incorporate into the Hong Kong society and do better, just like the sisters and brothers living nearby” (p.10, ln.24-25). Reflecting the connection between spatial distribution, social networks and linguistic proficiency, one interviewee said,

“My neighbours are very kind and friendly. If we prepare soup at nights, all the families in the house will have it together... Yes, the house involves 5 families, 3 of them are Hong Kong local families, the others,

including my family, are mainlanders. We all live together happily. They supported [us] when we just arrived [Hong Kong]... Now, we all speak Cantonese in the house, except some times I speak Jiangmen with my mother in my bedroom..." (Interviewee #19's daughter, p.9, ln.19-25)

Clearly, the network of social relations involves social support. It explains how mainland migrant families are related to other local or mainland households in the district, and how mainland children are involved in these social support networks. For example, the daughter of Interviewee #19 received helping hands with her English studies from her neighbours. This is one of the forms of social support that builds certain patterns of social relations.

Social networks can help members of mainland migrant households moving up the social status ladder. As seen from most of the interviewees' responses, migrant families live in immediate social conditions that have an impact on their academic achievement, linguistic proficiency and economic advancement. Zhou (1997), in the segmented assimilation theory, suggests that migrant families who are supported by strong local better-off social networks consciously give up traditional values and encourage their children to assimilate into better segments of the society in which their network is located. In contrast, those who are supported by strong mainland migrant networks preserve their own values and solidarity and encourage their children to adhere to the families.

By analysing spatial distribution, socio-economic status, education and linguistic proficiency, it is possible to show that these factors can be not only compounded but can also be interactive. The interactive effects of socio-economic status and residential pattern play important roles in allowing mainland migrants to

bypass or escape downward mobility. Social networks, resulting from spatial contacts with local residents, build up opportunities for mainland migrant adults and children to escape downward mobility. Social support networks exist within the family and outside the family – from neighbours. But then, what will be their ultimate outcomes or what will be the patterns of their assimilation? The next section discusses how the theoretical framework explains the assimilation patterns and outcomes of mainland migrants.

7.3 Segmented Assimilation: Structural Determinants Shape Patterns and Outcomes

The theoretical framework of Zhou and Portes' segmented assimilation theory defines four possible determinants influencing immigrant adjustment. Recalling the research model, they are education, linguistic proficiency, socio-economic status and spatial distribution. The former two are referred to as individual-level determinants, while the latter two are structural. The segmented assimilation model also specifies that these two sets of variables contribute to migrant assimilation patterns and outcomes. Of course they do, but, in the Hong Kong context, they paint a distinct "picture".

Undoubtedly, linguistic proficiency and education are two key variables when looking at the assimilation process of mainland migrants. Most of the provinces in China where most of the mainland migrants come from already speak Cantonese as a second language. If not, many of the families had at least one member who had knowledge of Cantonese prior to migration. Often this turned out to be the father who would act an informal language teacher. Thus, the presupposition that

mainland migrants have to start from scratch to learn to speak Cantonese and read and write traditional Chinese characters was false and not the case in the findings. Many of the mainland migrants and their children did have a certain degree of understanding of the new host language. Minority migrant groups tend to learn the language of the dominant local resident group, rather than vice versa. With pre-migration linguistic knowledge and a high motivation to learn new languages, linguistic assimilation is the domain of adjustment most likely to proceed as a linear function, in the direction predicted by the segmented assimilation theory. As the proposition stated, the children of mainland migrants, in fact, prefer to use the new language of the host society instead of their parents' mother-tongues. However, the findings in the Hong Kong context do not exactly meet the theory's predictions. Most of the mainlanders are classified as "Limited Linguistic Proficient" rather than "Fluent Linguistic Proficient". What is the real situation?

What is the impact of education on the assimilation of mainland migrant children? As argued by the segmented assimilation theory, in order to get ahead mainland migrants have to learn how to fit into the new society and overcome their deficiency with respect to education. The segmented assimilation theory points out that immigrant groups frequently seek upward mobility, so that education often is the key to achieving immigrant aspirations. Indeed, the educational aspirations among the children of mainland migrants are high, as reflected in the findings. Many mainlander children outperform their local-born peers. The outstanding performance of Chinese immigrants in other Western countries has been widely documented, but, it is still interesting as to why mainlander children still outperform their peers in another Chinese society, in this case Hong Kong. The same question

arises: What is the real situation?

The segmented assimilation theory argues that the two sets of variables have the same weight of influence on an immigrant's pattern and outcome of assimilation, but this is not the case in the Hong Kong context. In Hong Kong, it is obvious that some forces exist beyond the determinants of linguistic proficiency and educational attainment. From the evidence shown above, the forces stem from the structural determinants, that is, socio-economic status and spatial distribution. In other words, while studying the assimilation of mainland migrant families in Hong Kong, the individual-level factors are not independent variables. They are intermediate variables, or mediator, compared to the most powerful determinants affecting assimilation, which are the migrants' socio-economic position and their residential distribution. Even though individual-level factors have some direct effect upon structural ones, they are weak, or "feedback" in nature.

The socio-economic status of mainland migrant families shapes the immediate social conditions for assimilation because it determines the type of neighbourhood in which migrants settle, the kind of activities in which they participate and the group of peers with whom they associate. As a result, educational aspirations as well as linguistic proficiency are then in turn effected. As mentioned in the previous sections, the two possible patterns of mainland migrant children, either escaping unfavourable standing through education or joining a reactive sub-culture, depends largely on the socio-economic opportunities open to their families. Spatial distribution also shapes the immediate social conditions for assimilation. Mainland migrants distribute residentially and are exposed to the host society. This also

determines the socio-economic status of migrant families, the kind of activities which they join and the group of peers with whom they associate. The degree of linguistic proficiency is also influenced by the migrants' daily contacts with the host society. The segmented assimilation theory does apply to the Hong Kong context in one respect. The theory points out that the variables of socio-economic status and spatial distribution are inter-dependent. The better the migrants' income and the better their living conditions the larger the percentage of local residents in the neighbourhood in which they reside. Reversibly, the larger the percentage of Hong Kong residents in mainlanders' neighbourhoods, the higher the aspirations they maintain in participating in social institutions on the basis of parity with local residents of similar backgrounds. Because they are inter-related it is not easy to determine which is the more important – residential distribution or socio-economic status.

With independent variables derived from structural factors and intermediate variables derived from individual-level factors, how are the assimilation patterns determined and influenced? Recalling the segmented assimilation theory, three possible assimilation patterns are suggested. The theory delineated that,

One of them replicates the time-honoured portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the middle-class; a second leads straight into the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass; a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity. (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p.82)

In the Hong Kong context, the findings show that the possibility of the first pattern, that is upward mobility towards the middle-class, is not likely to occur. For

moving upwardly through the mobility ladder, mainland migrants have to equip with comparable education levels and job skills to local residents. However, variance exists between the reality and the imagination. Educational attainments of adult mainlanders are not high. It is also evident from the findings that seeking work in Hong Kong is not easy for them. Economic restructuring in Hong Kong has led to the elimination of many manufacturing jobs and the degrading of others. This reduced the spectrum of jobs open to mainland migrant workers. Resulting from incomparable schooling levels and inadequate working skills, the possibility for migrants to undergo upward mobility is limited. Concurrently, the contemporary Hong Kong economy has taken away several rungs of the mobility ladder that are crucial for enabling mainland migrants to climb up. This makes the possibility even lower and spells out why mainlanders with such a pattern just constitute an insignificant proportion of the total migrants.

Having relatively low socio-economic standing and residing at regions distributed with fewer mainlanders, most of the mainland migrants tend to assimilate towards downward mobility pattern. Recalling the explanation above, adult migrants are downward assimilated because of unparalleled educational attainments, unmatched job skills, as well as unavoidable economic restructuring in Hong Kong. It has been shown that such trend will lead essentially to the outcomes of divergence, as stated in the proposition.

The stories of mainland migrant children are somewhat different. Their experiences in schools can shape their attitudes and expectations. For becoming upwardly mobile, mainland migrant parents give children's education high priority.

They exert pressures on their offspring and frequently ask them to work for academic success. From time to time, the educational aspirations of young mainlanders provide them with the momentum to bypass or escape downward mobility pattern. Excessive assimilation towards the host society, as stated by the migrant parents, is not a good way for their children. All play and no work, like local peers in these parents' perception, makes their children lazy. Fewer contacts with local peers are advisable. Parental pressure on children then acts not only as a force in making them outperform their local counterparts, but also as a force in making them susceptible to downward mobility by means of discouraged social relationship development with local peers. However, their spatial distribution and their unwillingness of contacts with the locals offer them the development of a kind of social relations network – mainland sub-cultures. The network of social relations involves social support that assist members of mainland migrant families move up the social ladder with preserving their own values and beliefs. Such trend towards preserving values and solidarity while achieving some economic advancement is likely to occur when families have relatively few socio-economic opportunities, but reside in a neighbourhood with a substantial number of mainlanders. As mentioned, mainland migrants with such a pattern form communities or sub-cultures and will develop outcomes of convergence.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Following the discussion of the interactive effects of the two sets of determinants – individual-level and structural – over mainland migrants' segmented assimilation process, Chapter 8 concludes the whole research with five sections. In Section 8.1 examines, in the light of the segmented assimilation theory, whether the theoretical framework of the present research can explain the assimilation experiences of mainland migrants and their children. Section 8.2 discusses the significance of the research design. Section 8.3, from the research analysis, draws social implications concerning new arrivals' social adjustment in Hong Kong. What measures can be implemented to ease migrants' assimilation? Section 8.4 points out certain further research upon mainland migrants in Hong Kong. Lastly, Section 8.5 states the limitations of the present research.

8.1 Rethinking the Segmented Assimilation Theory

Based on the segmented assimilation theory developed by American sociologists, Portes and Zhou (1993), the theoretical framework of the present research is formulated in order to answer the principal research question: *what makes some mainland migrants in Hong Kong become susceptible to downward mobility and what allows them to bypass or escape this undesirable route?* The theory places the process of assimilation in the context of a society consisting of segregated and unequal segments. It argues why different patterns of adjustment emerge among contemporary immigrants and how these patterns necessarily lead to the outcomes of divergence or convergence. The theory considers that three possible patterns are likely to emerge among immigrants and their children. They are “the time-honoured upward mobility pattern dictating the acculturation and economic

integration into the normative structures of the middle-class; the downward mobility pattern, in the opposition direction, dictates the acculturation and parallel integration into the under-class; and economic integration into the middle-class, with lagging acculturation and deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and solidarity" (Portes and Zhou, 1997, p.82). The process by which immigrants become incorporated into the different segments from these distinct patterns of adjustment are referred as "segmented assimilation" (Portes and Zhou, 1993).

As a core building block of the framework, the segmented assimilation theory does provide an explanation on the ongoing process of adjustment of immigrants. Hong Kong society, like any other societies in the world, consists of a number of segregated and unequal segments and they are inter-related. Even though the local residents belong to different segments. When mainland migrants enter such a segmented society and start over their social adjustment, they must be absorbed by distinct segments of the society. The findings of the present research have proven such argument of the theory. Besides, in Hong Kong context, the three possible multi-dimensional patterns suggested by the theory emerge. Most of the mainlanders go into the downward mobility pattern and the pattern of economic advancement with preservation of their own values and solidarity. Upward mobility pattern does exist but only an insignificant number of total migrants take it. Up to the above explanation, the theory works and is applicable to the situations of Hong Kong.

Then, what determines into which segment of Hong Kong society mainland migrants may assimilate? The theory suggests that possible determinants are many-

fold but mainly classified into two sets, involving a range of factors intrinsic and external to immigrants. Intrinsic factors, or individual-level factors, include chiefly education and other factors associated with exposure to the host society, such as linguistic proficiency, place of birth, age upon arrival and length of residence in the new homeland. External factors, or structural factors, include primarily socio-economic status and spatial distribution. The two sets of determinants, as stated by the theory, have comparable influences on the assimilation process of migrants. Although the theoretical framework includes only four possible determinants – education, linguistic proficiency, socio-economic status, and spatial distribution – that influencing mainlanders' adjustment, they, in the Hong Kong context, are not in equal weight of effect on mainland migrants' patterns and outcomes of assimilation. While studying the segmented assimilation of mainland migrant families in Hong Kong, intrinsic factors are not independent variables. They are intermediate variables indeed compared to the most powerful factors affecting assimilation, which are the mainlanders' socio-economic position and their spatial distribution. Hence, the segmented assimilation theory is not exactly fitting the case of mainland migrant families in Hong Kong. To a certain extent, the factors it suggested are influential, but not the exact picture provides by the theory. From the present research, independent variables are derived from structural or external factors while intermediate variables are derived from individual-level or intrinsic factors. The combination or nature of variables may be varied from society to society. It depends on the characteristics migrants from other societies bring along with, and also the characteristics the host society has. So, the theoretical framework, after analysing the findings from the present research, is modified accordingly with Hong Kong context is taking into account. The modified framework is illustrated in

Figure 8-1.

With considerations of the research results, the segmented assimilation theory can only still be regarded as a middle-range theory, but not a grand one. When applying the theory to different societies, its core argument is workable. However, careful examinations are necessary, as societies are different from one to another.

8.2 Rethinking the Research Design

The present research is conducted through the method of case study. The method really arrives at a comprehensive understanding of the mainland migrant families under study. Not only their opinions, but also their immediate responses, frustrating emotions, and detailed feelings are collected.

However, owing to the manipulation of the number of variables, some determinants are set under control in order to develop more general theoretical statements about the segmented assimilation process of mainland migrants and their children. The controlled variables are the age upon arrival, the length of residence in new homeland, and the place of birth. In fact, all three controlled variables have certain affects on the ongoing process of assimilation of mainlanders.

From the findings, it is seen that the age upon arrival is the most influential among the three controlled variables. Mainland migrant children assimilate more rapidly than migrant adults do. They easily absorb, remember, and then adjust what is going on in the new host society and work out their attitudes and behaviours accordingly. As adult mainlanders spent comparative more days in the mainland

Figure 8-1

Modified Model of the Present Research.

and therefore they are reluctant to social changes. Resulting from past experiences, their extent of assimilation is much slower than that of their children.

Among the young respondents, the slight differentiation in their age upon arrival also induces the variance in the degree of segmented assimilation. Primary level migrant children adjust socially better than the secondary level ones. Recalling what Rumbaut (1997) stated,

Perhaps at no stage of the life course are assimilative processes more intensively experienced, or assimilative outcomes more sharply exhibited, than during the formative years of adolescence. (p.930)

Place of birth and length of residence in the new society influence mainland migrants' assimilation slightly. The similar mainlanders' homeland to the new one and the longer their residence in the host society, the better their assimilation is.

8.3 Social Implications and Recommendations

Recalling the last section in Chapter 7, most of the mainland migrants tend to assimilate towards the downward mobility pattern and the pattern with preservation of migrant families' own values and solidarity. It is imagined that if no immediate measures as well as long-term policies are taken into consideration, two possible social implications will be uncovered. The first one is the growing size of an unfavourable class in Hong Kong as more and more mainland migrants take residence here and they assimilate into this new category of social stratum. The second one is prolonged mainland migrant sub-cultures and some kinds of migrant sub-communities, like the China Town in western countries, exist in Hong Kong. These are not advisable social phenomena for that Chinese migrant sub-communities

emerge in a Chinese society, Hong Kong.

So, with the understandings from the patterns and potential outcomes of segmented assimilation, concerns of policymakers are enriched in order to carry out appropriate measures. For those with downward mobility patterns, housing and vocational re-training programmes are immediately essential in order to assist them to make a better life in Hong Kong. For those with preservation of migrant families' own values and solidarity, formal and informal education for mainlanders as well as local residents is necessary to blur the boundaries between the two groups. Only the migrants and the locals work together as a whole, then immigration issues and population problems of Hong Kong can be dealt with.

8.4 What Will Be Next?

The present research shows that structural determinants of spatial distribution and socio-economic status are the most powerful factors influencing the assimilation of mainland migrants and their children. As proved by the segmented assimilation theory, spatial distribution and socio-economic position are independent variables. The other two – education and linguistic proficiency – under examination are not the case as stated by the theory. In the context of Hong Kong, they are best treated as intermediate variables instead of independent ones. Whether the path of downward mobility or the path leading to preservation of values and solidarity is taken by mainland migrants depends on structural factors. For further theoretical inquiry, the following questions may offer some stimuli: For how long will the mainland migrants' assimilation into Hong Kong society be influenced by socio-economic status and spatial distribution? Will mainland migrant families and immigrant

communities persist in influencing the lives of children of the second generations? Will those who preserve their own values and solidarity be the best assimilated socially, or vice versa? Each of these questions has theoretical as well as practical implications.

8.5 Limitations of the Present Research

Some of the limitations of this research were the portion of research design, especially the sampling method. Firstly, as this research adopts the non-sampling method, the findings cannot pretend to offer an accurate measure of the general situations. The sampling method could be biased since in the second stage, some of the respondents were introduced by other interviewed mainland migrant families. However, the variables of such a non-representative snowball sampling method are easier to control, because the respondents were chosen from a mixture of residential regions and varied according to their socio-economic status. This makes it possible to obtain detailed information from a variety of points of view.

Secondly, applying the snowball sampling method in the second stage is significant as the respondents from the first stage were primarily selected with the assistance and cooperation of two social service agencies. It is more feasible for the study to be conducted in this way as the population list of mainland migrants is unavailable but, this biases the samples in some other way. Thus, by using the snowball sampling method, mainland migrant families who have not been registered with social service agencies were then introduced by the respondents from the first stage. This helps to reduce the bias in sampling.

Thirdly, regarding the criterion for selection of samples, the respondents had to speak and understand Cantonese, although they did not have to be fluent in the language use. There are individual interviewees with poor skills in Cantonese, however, none of the samples were rejected or refused to be interviewed for language reasons. According to recent literature, over 70 per cent of mainland migrants were using Cantonese as their major language in the Mainland (The International Social Service Hong Kong Branch, 1997; Chan, Ip and Yuen, 1997). Therefore, about 30 per cent of mainlander families have missed and addressed an issue for the present research design.

There were several limitations in organising the interviews. As all the interviews involving the children of mainland migrants lasted for about three hours, some of the children became impatient towards the end of the interviews. Therefore, interesting questions had to be asked in order to make them pay attention. Sometimes, it was not easy to arrange a venue for an interview because the respondents were not willing to be interviewed at home. A number of social service agencies were helpful in co-ordinating venues. But, the environment for interviews had an influence on the accuracy of the findings because some of the respondents were hesitant to answer questions in a public setting. Conference rooms proved to be the best environment for conducting interviews outside the migrants' homes.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Guidelines for Interviews

Guidelines for Interviews:

The Assimilation of Mainland Migrant Families in Hong Kong

Purpose

1. To examine determinants or factors affecting the assimilation patterns and outcomes of mainland migrants and their children after taking residence in Hong Kong.
2. To construct 'pictures' of contemporary mainland migrant families in Hong Kong.
3. To find out the relationship between the determinants, the assimilation patterns, and the assimilation outcomes of mainland migrants in Hong Kong.

Preparation

1. Study the background of the interviewees found in relevant literature and from information provided by social service organisations or by recommending families.
2. To become familiar with the list of guided questions and allow for flexibility in achieving the purpose of the interview.
3. Develop contact with interviewees and arrange when and where the interviews were to be conducted.
4. Prepare essential material, such as cassette tapes, notebooks and stationary for interviews.

Interview Format

Interviews are conducted to collect substantial data on the experiences of mainland migrants and their children after settling in Hong Kong. Factual data, such as personal information, was important, but was not as significant as the values and responses, verbal and non-verbal, that the interviewees expressed about various aspects of their assimilation into Hong Kong. Thus, in order to construct 'pictures' of contemporary mainland migrant families in Hong Kong, the interviews had to be recorded, with the prior consent of the respondents. Scribbled notes were taken during the interviews in order to note interviewees' verbal and non-verbal responses. The notes and tapes made it possible to capture as many details of the interviewees' experiences and comprehensive transcripts for data analysis were then produced immediately after the interviews.

Interview Procedure

The researcher first introduced himself. It was essential to state in a clear and simple way the purpose of the interview and answer any questions concerning the usage of the information obtained during the interviews.

"My name is CHAN Shing Tak Pedro. I am writing a master's thesis examining the assimilation of mainland migrant families into Hong Kong. I would like to emphasise that all information you provide during the interview will be kept strictly confidential and only be used in my research. When writing up the thesis, all interviewees will be identified by numbers only, with no further possibility of identifying individuals."

In order to encourage active responses from the interviewees, the researcher had to ask as many open-ended questions as possible. The questions listed below were only used as guidelines in the interviews. When possible, follow-up questions were

asked to clarify what the interviewees were saying or to obtain more related details. Certain empathic responses were given by the researcher to feelings expressed by the interviewees. This may have helped to encourage interviewees to disclose further important facts. However, care was taken not to direct or influence interviewees answers during the interviews. The questions used as guidelines in interviews are:

Personal Information

- (1) How long have you been in Hong Kong?
 - Asking the adult(s)?
 - Asking the child(ren)?
- (2) How old are you?
 - Asking the child(ren)?
- (3) Which province of mainland China did you come from?
 - Asking the adult(s)?
- (4) How long did you have to wait after applying for residency in Hong Kong?
 - Asking the adult(s)?
- (5) Have you ever been to Hong Kong before?
 - Asking the adult(s)?
 - Asking the child(ren)?
- (6) Then, when you were waiting to come to Hong Kong, what did you expect the social life in Hong Kong to be like?
 - Asking the adult(s)?
[#including living environment; living standards; employment; income and expenses; children's education; human relationships; thoughts; values; habits; security; social welfare and social environment]
 - Asking the child(ren)?
[#including living environment; living standards; education; human relationships; thoughts; values; habits and social environment]

Education

- (1) What educational level did you attain before coming Hong Kong? How about your current level at school now in Hong Kong?
 - Asking the child(ren)?
- (2) How did you feel when you were told you would have to be downgraded to a lower educational level in Hong Kong?
 - Asking the child(ren)?
- (3) Today, after a period of study in Hong Kong, do you think it is necessary to downgrade your educational level?
 - Asking the child(ren)?
- (4) Do you accept such arrangements in education? Why or why not?
 - Asking the child(ren)?
- (5) What do you think about your current academic level or achievement?
 - Asking the child(ren)?

- (6) What do you think about your child(ren)'s current academic level or achievement?
– Asking the adult(s)?
- (7) Could you tell me how you study after school?
– Asking the child(ren)?
[#including when you start studying at home? Where do you study after school? How long do you spend studying after school?]
- (8) Do you like going to school? Why or why not?
– Asking the child(ren)?
- (9) Do you feel studying in Hong Kong is difficult? Do you adapt? Why or why not?
– Asking the child(ren)?
- (10) What has been the most difficult thing you have encountered studying in Hong Kong? Why?
– Asking the child(ren)?
- (11) What are your expectations about your future studies?
– Asking the child(ren)?
- (12) Now you are being educated in Hong Kong, what do you expect regarding your future in Hong Kong?
– Asking the child(ren)?
- (13) Do you think higher educational attainment will help develop your future in Hong Kong? Why or why not?
– Asking the child(ren)?
- (14) If you can choose once again, would you decide to study (to let them study) in Hong Kong? Why?
– Asking the adult(s)?
– Asking the child(ren)?

Linguistic Proficiency

- (1) In your hometown, what language did you use to communicate with others? And did you learn Cantonese, English and traditional Chinese characters before arriving in Hong Kong?
– Asking the child(ren)?
[#including: Who taught you? (frequency and by what means?) How much did you learn?]
- (2) Do you think learning Cantonese is difficult?
– Asking the child(ren)?
[#including speaking; listening and understanding]
- (3) Do you think learning traditional Chinese characters is difficult?
– Asking the child(ren)?
[#including reading; writing; understanding; and ability to memorise]
- (4) What language did you use at home, at school and outside? Mother-tongue or Cantonese?
– Asking the child(ren)?
[#including frequency; reason(s); and upcoming habit in the future (becoming more or less frequent in using mother-tongue)]
- (5) What is the educational level of your husband and yourself?
– Asking the adult(s)?
- (6) If you encounter problems in learning Cantonese, and traditional Chinese, are

there any people helping you?

– Asking the child(ren)?

[#including: Who? (father, mother, classmates, teachers, or other people?) Do you feel they are helpful? (father, mother, classmates, teachers, or other people?) How do they help you? (where, when, frequency and by what means?)]

(7) Do you want to improve your language skills? Why?

– Asking the child(ren)?

[#including: Owing to better achievement, better communication, better assimilation, lesser discrimination, or other reason(s)?]

Socio-economic Status

(1) Before coming to Hong Kong, what were your living standards and conditions like?

– Asking the adult(s)?

[#including type of housing (farm village, town, or city); area of housing; living standards (hi-fi, television, telephone, refrigerator, air-conditioner); employment; income and education]

(2) Is your original hometown highly developed compared with other provinces?

– Asking the adult(s)?

[#including industries; metropolis; highways and telecommunication]

(3) How about your living standards and situation now?

– Asking the adult(s)?

[#including type of housing (public, private, rented, or hostel); amount of rent (if any); size of housing; living standards (hi-fi, television, telephone, refrigerator, air-conditioner); employment; income and education]

(4) Are you working now? What is your occupation? (If any)

– Asking the adult(s)?

[#including the working environment; number of working hours; amount of salary; and nature of work]

(5) How about your husband? What is his occupation? (If any)

– Asking the adult(s)?

[#including the working environment; number of working hours; amount of salary; and nature of work]

(6) Concerning your work, are your skills transferable?

– Asking the adult(s)?

[#including: Has it been necessary for you to learn a skill again in order to find work in Hong Kong? Does the skill that you learned in your hometown help you in your current work? Do you suffer difficulties when working now?]

(7) Do you think that your current status, for example, housing and work, is different from that of other Hong Kong people? Why?

– Asking the adult(s)?

[#including: Is it related to your identity as a new immigrant?]

– Asking the child(ren)?

[#including: Is it related to your identity as a new immigrant?]

(8) How do you think Hong Kong people view your status?

– Asking the adult(s)?

[#including: Do they have positive or negative opinions about your identity and social status? Why?]

– Asking the child(ren)?

- [#including: Do they have positive or negative opinions about your identity and social status? Why?]
- (9) Comparing your socio-economic status in Hong Kong and China, is it different?
- Asking the adult(s)?
 - [#including: In what aspect? (housing; work; income; basic needs) Better? Worse? The same? How do you adapt?]
 - Asking the child(ren)?
 - [#including: In what aspect? (housing; schooling; basic needs) Better? Worse? The same? How do you adapt?]

Spatial Distribution

- (1) Are all your family members in Hong Kong?
- Asking the adult(s)?
 - [#including who they are]
- (2) Do you still have relatives living in mainland China?
- Asking the adult(s)?
 - [#including who they are]
- (3) Would you usually go back to China? How often? Why?
- Asking the adult(s)?
 - [#including the reason(s): Is it difficult for you to adapt to the new social environment? Is the past social life still unforgettable and desirable for you? Or do you miss your relatives living in mainland China? Is Hong Kong now your home? So, what are your reason(s) for visiting the mainland? Why?]
 - Asking the child(ren)?
 - [#including the reason(s): Is it difficult for you to adapt to the new social environment? Is the past social life still unforgettable and desirable for you? Or do you miss your relatives living in mainland China? Is Hong Kong now your home? So, what are your reason(s) for visiting the mainland? Why?]
- (4) After coming Hong Kong, do you have many basic still needing to be satisfied?
- Asking the adult(s)?
 - [#including what they are, for example, clothing, food, daily necessities]
 - Asking the child(ren)?
 - [#including what they are, for example, clothing, food, daily necessities]
- (5) Do your family members provide enough material support to you?
- Asking the adult(s)?
 - [#including your husband; other family members; enough? If not, why?]
 - Asking the child(ren)?
 - [#including your parents; other family members; enough? If not, why?]
- (6) Have your family members provided enough emotional support to you after your arrival in Hong Kong?
- Asking the adult(s)?
 - [#including your husband; other family members; in what ways? Do they help you to adapt to the new social environment? Enough? If not, why?]
 - Asking the child(ren)?
 - [#including your parents; other family members; in what ways? Do they help you to adapt to the new social environment? Do you think they love you? Enough? If not, why?]
- (7) If you encounter problems or difficulties, would you discuss them with your family members?

- Asking the adult(s)? [With whom? If not, why?]
[#including children's education; children's feelings; working experiences; living difficulties; economic difficulties and human relationships]
- Asking the child(ren)? With whom? If not, why?
[#including study at school; emotion; relationship with teachers and classmates]
- (8) Do you have relatives or friends in Hong Kong? How often do you meet with them?
– Asking the adult(s)?
[#including degree of participation; frequency; duration; activities concerned and extent of support, material and emotional]
- (9) How do you feel about your neighbours?
– Asking the adult(s)?
[#including: Are they Hong Kong people or new immigrants? Degree of participation; frequency; duration; activities concerned and extent of support, material and emotional. Do they help you? In what ways? Finding a job, new home, or introduction to the social environment?]
- (10) How do you feel about your colleagues?
– Asking the adult(s)?
[#including: Are they Hong Kong people or new immigrants? Degree of participation; frequency; duration; activities concerned and extent of support, material and emotional. Do they help you? In what ways? Finding a job, new home, or introduction to the social environment?]
- (11) How do you feel about your schoolmates?
– Asking the child(ren)?
[#including: Are they Hong Kong people, or new immigrants? Degree of participation; frequency; duration; activities concerned and extent of support, material and emotional. Do they help you? In what ways? Helping you to solve learning difficulties, by introducing new classmates, helping you become familiar with the new study environment, or to learn English, Cantonese and traditional Chinese?]
- (12) Is it difficult to meet other Hong Kong people? How? Why?
– Asking the adult(s)?
[#including: Good or bad relationships? Why? If it is difficult, for what reason(s)? Different interests; thoughts; or languages? Discrimination? Don't have any time or motive to make contact? Or is social life not important to you?]
– Asking the child(ren)?
[#including: Good or bad relationships? Why? If it is difficult, for what reason(s)? Different interests; thoughts; or language? Discrimination? Don't have any time or motive to make contact? Or is social life not important to you?]

As much detailed information was collected as possible. Interviews ended in such a way that was appropriate to shared experiences and was flexible according to the situation. Interviewees were thanked for their participation and asked to be available for further contacts in succeeding months, if follow-up interviews were

necessary.

Appendices

Appendix 2

Invitation Letter to Social Service Agencies for Cooperation in Selecting Samples (Chinese Version)

敬啟者：

香港嶺南學院於一九六七年創立，繼承廣州嶺南大學的傳統美德，以「作育英才，服務社會」為目標，在推動和發展香港教育及研究的舞台上，擔當一個重要的角色。

社會科學院政治及社會學系屬香港嶺南學院其中一學系。本人有幸成為該學系研究生之一，希望能藉此機會，對香港社會問題深入探討，為學術界及社會服務發展盡點綿力。

經過初步資料收集及文獻查閱後，本人發現隨著香港特別行政區之成立，新來港家庭成為政府及社區人士之關注。本人認為新來港家庭在多方面適應上受著不同壓力，特別是當他們面對家庭網絡及環境的改變、同輩關係的建立、文化價值觀的差異、英語的學習、社會的參予，和自我身份形象的認同等問題。故此，若我們忽略他們的看法、感受，及在各方面適應時之難處，可能會引致他們在港成長及建立歸屬感時構成障礙。

素仰 閣下及 貴會對香港的新移民開拓、計劃及提供各類服務，並為他們建立支持互助網絡，現本人誠意邀請 貴會與本人一同合作，由 貴會安排新移民學童及其家長接受本人深入不記名之訪問，藉此得知他們於適應上所遇之難處，從而透過詳盡分析，撰寫成不對外發表之報告書，希望一方面能為 貴會提供對新移民多一點點的了解及參考，而另一方面亦盼有助於 貴會制定日後之新移民服務。

本人謹此希望 台端撥冗考慮，如蒙答允，不勝銘感！本人定必於報告書之內鳴謝 閣下及 貴會之慷慨幫忙，並將報告書乙份贈予 閣下及 貴會以作參考及收藏。如有查詢，請致電 2616 7211 或 9196 7819 與本人聯絡。

此致

香港基督教女青年會
執行總幹事郁德芬女士

香港嶺南學院
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政治及社會學系
哲學碩士研究生

陳盛德先生

一九九七年九月

Appendices

Appendix 3

Synopses of the Respondents Case-study Histories

Appendix 3.1 — Case One

Respondents: Interviewee #10 and her nine-year old daughter

Venue of interview: Conference room of a social service agency

Duration of interview: Three and a half hours

Synopsis of the respondents case-study histories:

This adult mainland migrant has settled in Hong Kong for over six months. Two months after her arrival, her nine-year old daughter was also permitted to take up residency in Hong Kong. GuangZhou was their hometown in which Cantonese was their first-language. Thus, language has been the easiest part in their process of assimilation in the Hong Kong social structure. The interviewee was a furniture worker and had a considerable income in the mainland. Her pre migration occupation was satisfactory and memorable to her, especially in comparison with her ten-year working peers. However, only she in the furniture factory was married to a Hong Kong citizen and this marriage, in the eyes of her peers, was a source of admiration. Leaving Mainland China and entering Hong Kong was her aspiration. Her husband is a worker dealing with dangerous chemicals so his salary is higher than those of ordinary workers in Hong Kong are. He had bought a private flat about 600 square feet before the interviewee and her daughter arrived Hong Kong. Hence, housing is much better for them when compared with other mainland migrant families. Because of her husband's considerable income, she decided not to work and to concentrate on taking care her daughter and her family. Although she has not been employed since arrival, she does not have any feeling of downward mobility. By contrast, she treats her family's socio-economic status as comparable to those her neighbours. The family's neighbours, mainly better-off local residents, provide social support network in its process of assimilation. With the assistance from a private tutor, her daughter has achieved more or less an above average result in school. Nevertheless, the relations between teachers and the adult interviewee are not good as the respondent thinks that teachers in school "discriminate" against mainland migrant students, as reported by her daughter after school. On the whole, this mainland migrant family has assimilated into the pattern of upward mobility, solely because of her husband's comparatively favourable socio-economic status.

Appendices

Appendix 3

Synopses of the Respondents Case-study Histories

Appendix 3.2 — Case Two

Respondents: Interviewee #5, her thirteen-year old elder daughter, and
her eleven-year old younger daughter

Venue of interview: Interviewees' home

Duration of interview: Over four hours

Synopsis of the respondents case-study histories:

This adult mainland migrant has resided in Hong Kong for over seven months. About three months ago, her daughters were also allowed abode in Hong Kong. HuiZhou was their homeland in which KeJia was their mother-tongue. To them, learning Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters has not been an easy step in their process of assimilation, especially to the adult interviewee. Up to the moment of interview, the adult interviewee spoke Cantonese with a great accent of KeJia. Reading traditional Chinese characters was even not possible for her. In the mainland, their livings were mainly paid by her husband. After settling in Hong Kong, she has not been employed, as she cannot adjust to the pressures of working. She was not employed before and after migration. Her husband is a watch repairer. His income is no longer very high as this field has been fading out. Since her husband is the principal provider of the family with very limited income, family expenditures must be kept under control, for example, the expenditure of each meal is restricted to less than HK\$30. Housing is another assimilation issue for this mainland migrant family. Her husband has been residing in a public housing unit of 180 square feet for many years. But then since their arrival, four persons take up the unit as they are temporarily ineligible for applying a change of public housing unit. Contacts with neighbours are rare and it is not possible to concern about any social support network. However, the educational achievements of the children make the parents satisfied. Both daughters gained a position within the top ten in their respective classes. Living in Hong Kong is hard for this mainland migrant family and assimilation is still an ongoing, long-lasting process for all the family members.

Appendices

Appendix 3

Synopses of the Respondents Case-study Histories

Appendix 3.3 — Case Three

Respondents: Interviewee #15, her twelve-year old daughter, and
her ten-year old son

Venue of interview: Conference room of a social service agency

Duration of interview: Three and a half hours

Synopsis of the respondents case-study histories:

This adult mainland migrant has been living in Hong Kong for over a year. Her daughter and son were permitted to live in Hong Kong about five months ago. Guangdong was their homeland and Cantonese was their first language in the mainland. Clearly, linguistic adjustment was not a great assimilation issue for them. The adult interviewee was a primary schoolteacher in the mainland. Although the income was not a considerable amount, her social status was highly respected by many other parents in her hometown. After her move to Hong Kong, serving in the education sector has not been possible for her, as her professional qualification gained in the mainland is not recognised in Hong Kong. Her skills cannot be transferred and her status is no longer maintained. Local employers treat her the same as other mainland migrant women. She cannot accept the sudden change in occupational status and so decided not to work and she takes care of the family. As a result, her husband has become the principal provider of the family. Her husband earns about HK\$7000 per month and this amount has to cover the expenditures of the entire family. Housing is a big issue for the family. Her husband has been residing in a rental, sub-divided private flat of about 90 square feet for many years. But then, four persons occupy such a small flat, as extra money for moving to a bigger one is not available. Most of the pre migration aspirations of the adult interviewee, or even of the children, have been given up after settling in Hong Kong. The great variance between their aspirations and the reality makes them adhere tightly to the family's own values and solidarity.

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