



*Pre-Departure Concerns of
Prospective Migrants from
Hong Kong to Australia*

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Pre-Departure Concerns of Prospective Migrants from Hong Kong to Australia

Abstract

The present study explores the migration decisions and pre-departure preparations, feelings, and concerns of 16 currently employed Hong Kong adults accepted for migration to Australia. The number of skilled Hong Kong emigrants has risen sharply in recent years as people have been worried about the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997. Interviews with the prospective migrants confirm that for the majority worries about 1997 constitute the primary factor in their decision to leave valued family relationships and established careers in Hong Kong. Many migrants-to-be reported feelings of uncertainties about their future in Australia, but seemed motivated to prepare for the anticipated changes by collecting more information about life in Australia, exploring avenues for obtaining additional qualifications, and being prepared for lower levels of employment. There was also some concern about employment prospects and possible racial discrimination in Australia. The research findings could be the basis for further studies on pre-departure and post-arrival adjustment and for the provision of settlement services, which can begin at the pre-departure stage.

Previous studies on the migration experience have focussed on the post-arrival stage and have identified numerous difficulties associated with cross-cultural adaptation (Stening, 1979; Taft, 1977) and job search in a foreign country with a different mainstream culture and language (Borgen & Amundson, 1985). Recent migrants have been described as being prone to experiencing interpersonal anxiety (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; Westwood & Ishiyama, 1991), self-doubt (Zaharna, 1989), stress (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987), and cultural shock (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Oberg, 1960).

While the needs and concerns of prospective migrants have been largely ignored in prior research, they can be expected to experience considerable anxiety in anticipation of the uncertainties associated with an unfamiliar physical, social, and cultural

environment. They are also faced with the possible loss of their current life-style, career, and social support systems on leaving their home country. These major life changes call for substantial personal adjustments (Holmes & Rahe, 1967) and are likely to be perceived by the individuals involved as stressful.

Pre-migration anxiety may be affected by a range of individual and social factors. Prospective migrants may benefit from anticipated social support in the new country, previous experiences with living there or other countries with the same dominant language and similar culture, and a number of background characteristics (including younger age, higher level of education, fluency in the dominant language in the receiving country, and possession of marketable occupational skills). Individuals with more established careers and higher levels of current income may experience a higher level of anxiety due to higher levels of anticipated losses than people with fewer years of work experience and lower levels of income. Intending migrants motivated primarily by strong push factors (e.g., political reasons for leaving the home country) rather than by the attractiveness of the receiving country may also perceive the impending migration experience differently from people migrating for other or a greater variety of reasons.

The present research addresses an obvious need to investigate the experiences and concerns of people about to immigrate to a culturally different country. Research into the experiences of prospective Hong Kong emigrants are of particular value because of the dramatic increase in the number of individuals emigrating from Hong Kong to Australia in recent years, which is associated with people's desire to leave Hong Kong before its reversion to Chinese rule in 1997. The level of emigration from Hong Kong has jumped from a yearly average of approximately 20,000 in the 1980-1986 period to an estimated 62,000 in 1990 (Tsang, 1990). The three major receiving countries of the emigrants in 1989 and 1990 were Canada, the United States, and Australia. In the year ending 30 June 1991, Hong Kong had become the second largest source country of migrants to Australia, with 13,541 (out of a total of

101,977 settlers arriving in Australia) new arrivals having Hong Kong as their country of birth (Australian Bureau of Immigration Research, 1991).

Consistent with the shift in Australian immigration policy, recent Hong Kong migrants include a large number of highly skilled and educated individuals with established careers in Hong Kong. Indeed, the new wave of emigration from Hong Kong is seen as brain drain of unprecedented proportions and is expected to have far-reaching consequences in Hong Kong's business, industry, finance, and educational and health services (Chan, 1990; Kirkbride, Tang, & Ko, 1989; Tsang, 1990). Mak (1991) argues that recent emigrants include many formerly successful individuals who risk not only their customary life-style and social network but also their well-established careers and elitist status on leaving Hong Kong. They may suddenly find themselves reduced to strangers in the new country with a significant drop in employment-related competencies and rewards, including income, status, power, level of responsibility, and interpersonal communication competence.

The current study was conducted in the context of these special socio-political circumstances. The research seeks to explore the migration decisions and pre-departure preparations, feelings, and concerns of currently employed prospective migrants to Australia. In-depth interviews were conducted with a number of Hong Kong Chinese adults who were recently notified of their success in their application for immigration to Australia. The findings from this preliminary study could form the basis of a future quantitative, survey type of study that utilises a large number of respondents, which will enable the testing of specific hypotheses on the relationships between pre-migration concerns and a variety of individual, cultural contact, social support factors. This type of research is useful in informing the delivery of effective settlement programs, which can begin at the pre-departure stage.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were sixteen Hong Kong Chinese residents recently approved for migrating to Australia. Nine were male and seven were female. Their age ranged from twenty-three to forty years of age. Five people were single, while eleven were married, including five married couples.

Ten of the subjects were recruited through the Migration Section of the Australian Consulate-General in Hong Kong. Letters from the researcher seeking volunteers to participate in the study were sent to 150 Hong Kong Chinese adults approved by the Migration Section to immigrate to Australia under either the independent or the family concessions categories of the points system in October and November 1990. The invitation letter, accompanied by a letter from the Migration Section encouraging the prospective migrants to participate voluntarily in the study, was sent out together with the Section's letter notifying the applicants of their success in their application for immigration to Australia. Consenting prospective migrants were asked to fill in a consent form, including their contact telephone numbers, address and preferred time of the week for interview, and to send it back to the researcher care of the Migration Section. Subsequently, only fourteen prospective migrants sent back their consent forms. Four respondents were excluded in the final study. Two were excluded because they were over forty-five years of age; one respondent was to land in Australia in two days' time and was unable to be interviewed before then; another respondent could not be contacted despite repeated attempts. The remaining ten people consenting to participate in the study readily agreed to be interviewed when contacted by phone.

A young woman recruited through the Migration Section had a boyfriend whose application for immigration to Australia had also been approved recently. She spoke to him about the research and he agreed to participate in the study as well.

In view of the very low response rate of recruiting subjects through official channels, another five prospective immigrants were contacted from private sources, all of whom agreed to be interviewed.

Measures

A four-part interview schedule comprising a mixture of open-ended and close-ended questions was used.

Part 1 of the interview schedule establishes relevant background information about the prospective immigrants, including their age, sex, marital status, number and age of accompanying children, level of education, occupation, number of years of work in Hong Kong, self-rated fluency in English, previous visits to Australia, impressions of Anglo-Australians, understanding about Australia, any family members in Australia, and the number of relatives and friends in Australia.

Part 2 consists of questions on preparations for immigration to Australia. There are questions on when their application for immigration was approved, when they are planning to land in Australia, the preparations they are making for immigration, their plans for action after landing, their preferred type of work in Australia, their expected type of work in Australia, any perceived barriers to doing preferred work in Australia, and when they are planning to settle permanently in Australia after their initial landing.

Part 3 consists of questions on thoughts and feelings about migration. They include reasons for choosing to immigrate to Australia, their feelings when they first found out their application for immigration had been successful, current feelings about immigrating to Australia, what excites them most about immigrating to Australia, reasons for emigrating from Hong Kong, feelings about emigrating from Hong Kong, regrets about leaving Hong Kong, whether they would have applied to emigrate from Hong Kong if it were not for the 1997 concerns, and whether they would rule out the possibility of repatriating to Hong Kong. There

are also items on optimism and doubt about their new life in Australia.

Part 4 surveys the extent to which the prospective immigrants are concerned about their settlement in Australia in twenty-eight areas of daily life, including transport, deciding a location for settlement, moving personal belongings overseas, finding accommodation, doing housework, food, recognition of qualifications, recognition of previous work experience, obtaining employment, career development, possibility of having to change to another type of work, level of income, Australia's economy, understanding the Australian culture, understanding Australians' way of life, relating to Australians, understanding English as spoken by Australians, speaking in English at work, reading English, writing in English, racial discrimination, looking after parents, missing relatives and friends in Hong Kong, children's schooling, bringing up children, children's general adjustment, spouse's employment, and spouse's general adjustment.

Procedure

Subjects were individually interviewed in Cantonese at a time and place convenient to them. Seven subjects were interviewed at their home, three were interviewed at their or their spouse's office, two were interviewed on the campus of a tertiary institution, three were interviewed in a restaurant, and one at the researcher's office.

Before the interview, subjects were briefed on the purposes and general content coverage of the questions to be asked. Subjects were assured of the confidentiality of the interviews and that the information obtained will be used for research purposes only. No identifying information will be made known to the Australian Migration Section or any other agencies. The researcher also sought the subjects' consent to have the interview taped by a micro-cassette recorder to facilitate the recording of responses.

All the interviewees agreed to the use of the cassette tape recorder and responded to all the questions in the interview.

Wives and husbands were individually interviewed in private. Each interview took about an hour.

Results

A summary of the survey results is presented in five sections. The first section provides some demographic information about the respondents. The second section summarises their reported contact with and impressions of Australia. The third section describes the intending migrants' preparations for immigration to Australia, including their aspirations and expectations for type of employment. The fourth section reports their thoughts and feelings about leaving Hong Kong for Australia, including the bases of their migration decisions. In the final section, the subjects' concerns about settlement are summarized.

Demographic Information about the Respondents

Nine males and seven females were interviewed. Their mean age was 31.88 years, and median age was 31.5 years. Eleven were married, and five were single. For the married respondents, their spouses had a mean age of 33.09 years and a median age of 31 years; also, six of them had one child, and one had two children. The subjects interviewed included five married couples. Seventy-five percent of them were in the independent migration category, and 25% (two couples) in the family concessional category.

As for socioeconomic indicators, 43.8% of the respondents had Bachelor's degrees, 37.5% had post-secondary qualifications, 12.5% had five years of secondary education, with only 6.3% who had not completed high school. Seventy-five percent of respondents were professionals, 12.5% did managerial or administrative work, and 6.3% had a clerical position, and another 6.3% were in the skilled trades. Fifty percent earned HK\$20,000 or more per month. The mean income was HK\$19,500 per month, and the median income HK\$17,000 per month. The respondents' mean

number of years of work in Hong Kong was 10.13 years, and the median was 9.5 years.

Among the respondents' spouses, 54.6% were professionals, 9.1% held managerial or administrative positions, 27.3% had clerical positions, and 9.1% were in the skilled trades. Fifty percent earned HK\$20,000 or more per month, with a mean income of HK\$17,190 and a median income of HK\$17,000 per month.

According to the respondents' self-report, 12.5% were very fluent and 50% were quite fluent in their spoken English. Twenty-five percent described their spoken English as not so fluent, but could conduct simple daily conversations, and 12.5% reported that their English was not very fluent and could only speak in phrases and broken sentences. None of the subjects whose spoken English was not so fluent or not very fluent had a Bachelor's degree.

Contact with and Impressions of Australia

Only 18.8% of the respondents had visited Australia before. Another 31.3% had family members in Australia. Seventy-five percent had relatives and friends whom they could call on for help in Australia. The mean number of helpful relatives and friends was 2.63, but the median number was only 1.0.

Subjects were also asked to describe their impressions of Anglo-Australians, which are tabulated in Table 1. Some respondents gave more than one impression, including four people who gave a mixture of favourable and unfavourable impressions. As suggested by the contents of Table 1, most of the impressions were positive, portraying the Anglo-Australians as friendly, helpful, easygoing, and pleasant. However, there was also some concern that they could be racist. Subjects said their impressions were based on meeting Anglo-Australians in work situations and tour groups, fellow students at university, and Australians conducting assessments for immigration and marketing education courses in Hong Kong. Impressions were also formed from secondary sources: friends and relatives who had visited or lived in Australia and

from newspapers and television.

Table 1. Impressions of Anglo-Australians

Impressions	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Friendly, helpful	5	31.3
Easygoing	4	25.0
Racist	4	25.0
Pleasant	3	18.8
Australian accent	3	18.8
Casually dressed	2	12.5
Slack	2	12.5
Like to joke	1	6.3
Swear a bit	1	6.3
Speak too fast	1	6.3
Willing to slow down in speech for foreigners	1	6.3
Straightforward	1	6.3
Impatient	1	6.3
No particular impression	1	6.3
Total	30	

The intending immigrants were also asked to describe what they understood about Australia. The responses, listed in Table 2, are very diverse. Two or more people mentioned about an understanding of Australia's geography, its good living environment, simpler lifestyle (as compared to Hong Kong's), its open spaces, Australians' racism, its quiet environment, and the lower affordability of luxuries in Australia.

Table 2. Understanding of Australia

Categories	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Geography	3	18.8
Better living environment	3	18.8
Simpler lifestyle	3	18.8
Open spaces	2	12.5
Racist	2	12.5
Quiet	2	12.5
Fewer luxuries	2	12.5
Employment	1	6.3
Housing	1	6.3
Education	1	6.3
How people live	1	6.3
Culture	1	6.3
Tourist attractions	1	6.3
Greater freedom	1	6.3
Good welfare	1	6.3
Stable life	1	6.3
Family-centred life	1	6.3
More time spent on gardening	1	6.3
Multi-racial	1	6.3
Poor economy	1	6.3
Inconvenient transport	1	6.3
Water sports	1	6.3
Difficult to sponsor parents to immigrate to Australia	1	6.3
High taxes	1	6.3
A number of Chinatowns	1	6.3
Agricultural	1	6.3
Clean air	1	6.3
Hole in ozone layer is a worry	1	6.3
Total	38	

Preparations for Immigration to Australia

The respondents learned about the approval of their application for immigrant visas between one and seven months ago. The mean was 2.5 months, and the median 2.0 months.

They reported that they were planning to land as migrants in Australia in one to seven months' time. The mean was 4.5 months, and the median 5.0 months.

The intending migrants were asked about the preparations they had been making for immigration, and their responses are listed in Table 3. The most common preparation underway, mentioned by half of the respondents, was collecting information about life in Australia. Other preparations mentioned by three or more respondents were purchase of belongings to take over to Australia, making arrangements for overseas removal, finding out about further education in Australia, and plans to make an initial landing (but not settle immediately) to find out more about what preparations to make.

When asked when they were planning to settle permanently in Australia after their initial landing as migrants, only 31.3% indicated that they would settle immediately after landing. Another 18.8% said they would settle between one and two years after landing, 25% were planning to settle between two and three years after landing, and 25% were undecided about when to settle at the time of the interview.

The subjects' reported action plans after landing are summarized in Table 4. A quarter or more of the respondents were planning to find out about life in Australia, look for accommodation, or look for work. Other commonly mentioned action plans show more tentativeness, such as finding out about employment situation, sightseeing, considering further education, and visiting friends.

Table 3. Preparations Underway for Migration

Preparations	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Collecting information about life in Australia	8	50.0
Purchase of air tickets and things to take over to Australia	4	25.0
Arranging overseas removal	4	25.0
Planning to make an initial landing (but not settle immediately) to find out more about what preparations to make	3	18.8
Find out about further education in Australia	3	18.8
Study for an examination to qualify for professional practice in Australia	2	12.5
Saving money	2	12.5
Selling property in Hong Kong	1	6.3
Psychological preparation to take any job	1	6.3
Learning to drive a car	1	6.3
Increased interest in Chinese culture	1	6.3
Nothing, seems so far away	1	6.3
Total	31	

Of the respondents, 93.8% would prefer to do the same type of work they were currently doing on arriving in Australia, while one person or 6.3% did not anticipate she would work in Australia.

Only 50% of interviewees expected to do the same type of work in Australia as they were currently doing. Only 6.3% expected to do a different type of work. Another 6.3% did not expect to be able to do comparable work and expected to get work in a restaurant only. Three people, or 18.8%, said they would do any work. It is noted all three people earned HK\$10,000 or less, and none was tertiary educated, representing the lower end of the socioeconomic situation of the group of prospective migrants interviewed.

Table 4. Action Plans after Landing

Action plans	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Find out about life in Australia	9	56.3
Look for accommodation	4	25.0
Look for work	4	25.0
Find out about employment situation	3	18.8
Sightseeing	3	18.8
Consider further education	3	18.8
Visit friends in Australia	2	12.5
Apply for Medicare card	1	6.3
Apply for an Australian driver's licence	1	6.3
Learn to drive a car	1	6.3
Find out about social security pensions	1	6.3
Plan to have a second child	1	6.3
See how Anglo-Australians treat the Chinese	1	6.3
Total	34	

Another 18.8%, or three respondents, expected to work at a lower level than their current positions. All three subjects earned at least HK\$30,000 per month and were tertiary educated, representing the upper range of the socioeconomic situation among the respondents.

Subjects were asked about any barriers that might prevent them from doing their preferred type of work in Australia. As seen in the tabulated responses in Table 5, the most commonly perceived barriers were communicating in English, poor Australian economy and employment situation, and differences in culture and work environment.

Table 5. Perceived Barriers in Obtaining Preferred Type of Work

Barriers	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Communicating in English	7	43.8
Poor Australian economy and employment situation	7	43.8
Differences in culture/work environment	3	18.8
Different client characteristics/needs	2	12.5
Have to start at entry point/lower grade	2	12.5
Racial discrimination	2	12.5
(Older) age	2	12.5
Recognition of qualifications	1	6.3
Not native-born	1	6.3
Not trained in Australia	1	6.3
Lack of Australian Experience	1	6.3
No barriers	3	18.8
Total	32	

Thoughts and Feelings about Migration

Reasons for Immigrating to Australia

The prospective migrants' reported reasons for choosing to immigrate to Australia are presented in Table 6. Some subjects' responses included comparison of other destination countries (especially Canada) which are listed separately in the table. Other frequently mentioned reasons for choosing to immigrate to Australia include its climate, having good friends or relatives in Australia, and the expectation that immigrants can sponsor relatives to immigrate to Australia in the future.

Table 6. Reasons for Immigrating to Australia

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
<i>In relation to other destination countries</i>		
Harder to qualify for immigration to Canada	3	18.8
Prefer Australia to Singapore	2	12.5
Applied to immigrate to both Australia and Canada, but accepted by Australia first	1	6.3
Cannot go to the United States	1	6.3
<i>Other reasons</i>		
Climate	7	43.8
Good friends or relatives in Australia	5	31.3
Can sponsor relatives to immigrate in the future	3	18.8
Better education opportunities	2	12.5
Opportunity to migrate under the family concessional category	2	12.5
Good welfare system in Australia	2	12.5
Spouse's idea	2	12.5
Directions from God	2	12.5
Australia recognises professional qualifications	2	12.5
Studied in Australia before	1	6.3
Want to study in Australia	1	6.3
Better living environment	1	6.3
Australia has potential for development	1	6.3
For children's future	1	6.3
Better lifestyle	1	6.3
Total	40	

Feelings about Immigrating to Australia

Table 7 shows the respondents' reported feelings when they first found out that their application for immigration to Australia had been approved. A range of feelings was reported, with 31.3% of subjects saying that they were happy and another 31.3% of people reporting mixed feelings.

Table 7. Feelings when Immigration Visa was First Approved

Feelings	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Happy	5	31.3
Mixed	5	31.3
Worried	2	12.5
Felt safer	1	6.3
Surprised	1	6.3
Felt something was settled, now able to make preparations	1	6.3
Numb	1	6.3
Subject did not respond	1	6.3
Total	17	

Subjects' feelings about immigrating to Australia at the time the research interview was conducted are listed in Table 8. Their "current" feelings appear to differ from their initial ones and were more oriented towards the reality of migration in the near future. A quarter of the respondents said they felt more motivated to immigrate and another subject admitted that he had become more serious about actually immigrating to Australia.

Table 8. Present Feelings about Immigrating to Australia

Feelings	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
More motivated to immigrate now	4	25.0
Worried	3	18.8
Happy	2	12.5
Concerned about plans for life in Australia	1	6.3
Still stressed, but more accepting	1	6.3
Worried about adjustment	1	6.3
No special feelings, but prepared for the worst	1	6.3
Have to be prepared by learning new skills	1	6.3
Fluctuating and ambivalent	1	6.3
Seriously consider immigration to Australia	1	6.3
Clearer – now decided to postpone settlement	1	6.3
Subject did not respond	1	6.3
Total	18	

Subjects' responses to what excited them most about immigrating to Australia are tabulated in Table 9. One quarter of the respondents said they were not particularly excited about anything, whereas other commonly reported areas of excitement pertain to Australia's natural environment and the novelty of new experiences and challenges.

Table 9. What Excites Subject about Immigrating to Australia

Categories	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Nature	3	18.8
Australia's open spaces	2	12.5
Preferred environment	2	12.5
New experiences	2	12.5
Travelling overseas for the first time	1	6.3
Beginning a new life	1	6.3
Facing new challenges	1	6.3
Outdoor activities/sports	1	6.3
Simpler lifestyle	1	6.3
Eligibility for Australian passport after two years residency	1	6.3
Opportunities to improve qualifications	1	6.3
No excitement	4	25.0
Total	20	

Reasons for Emigrating from Hong Kong

Table 10 lists the prospective migrants' reported reasons for emigrating from Hong Kong. Most of the respondents mentioned either the reversion of Hong Kong to Communist Chinese rule in 1997, or the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing, China, on 4 June 1989, or both.

In addition, respondents were specifically asked whether they would have applied to emigrate from Hong Kong if it were not for the 1997 concerns (when Hong Kong will be reverted to Chinese rule). One person, or 6.3%, said definitely yes, 12.5% said probably yes, 18.8% said probably no, and a majority of 62.5% said definitely no.

Table 10. Reasons for Emigrating from Hong Kong

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
1997	9	56.3
June 4 Tiananmen Square massacre	6	37.5
Prefer lifestyle in foreign countries	2	12.5
Poor quality education in Hong Kong	1	6.3
Limited career prospects in Hong Kong	1	6.3
Attracted to scenery overseas	1	6.3
Broaden perspective	1	6.3
Spouse's idea	1	6.3
Trendy to apply for emigration	1	6.3
Family wants me to migrate	1	6.3
Total	24	

The intending migrants' feelings about emigrating from Hong Kong at the time of the interview are listed in Table 11. Many of the responses indicate sadness, with two subjects explicitly saying they did not really want to leave Hong Kong. Of the subjects, 18.8% denied any special feelings about leaving Hong Kong.

Table 11. Present Feelings about Emigrating from Hong Kong

Feelings	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Will miss Hong Kong – family and friends	4	25.0
Will miss present home	1	6.3
Will miss his/her work	1	6.3
Will miss Hong Kong a little	1	6.3
Do not want to go	2	12.5
Subject indirectly expressed sadness	1	6.3
Subject indirectly expressed worries	1	6.3
Do not feel too bad about it	1	6.3
Concerned about going through more life changes in a short time	1	6.3
Feelings not very intense – still a long time away	1	6.3
Struggling to pass time until the deadline comes	1	6.3
Nothing in particular	3	18.8
Total	18	

Table 12 presents what the subjects would regret most about leaving Hong Kong. The majority nominated leaving behind their family members and friends. A quarter of respondents said they regretted having to leave their work and career.

Table 12. What Subjects Would Regret about Leaving Hong Kong

Regrets	Frequency	Percentage of respondents
Leaving behind family and friends	11	68.8
Leaving work/career	4	25.0
Missing the Chinese language	2	12.5
Leaving place of birth	1	6.3
Will not regret too much	1	6.3
Nothing in particular	1	6.3
Total	20	

Optimism about Future in Australia

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they would strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree with, or feel unsure about each of three statements expressing optimism about their future in Australia. Subsequently, in response to a statement on "Look forward to starting a new life in Australia," 18.8% strongly agreed, 43.8% agreed, 12.5% disagreed, and 25.0% were unsure.

With regard to the statement "I shall have more opportunities to develop my potentials in Australia than in Hong Kong," no one agreed, 25.0% disagreed, 6.3% strongly disagreed, and a majority of 68.8% were unsure.

In response to the statement "I am confident about my future in Australia," 6.3% strongly agreed, 25.0% agreed, 12.5% disagreed, and 56.3% were unsure.

The response patterns to the optimism statements suggested that while most of the prospective migrants looked forward to starting a new life in Australia, they felt that Australia may not offer them as many opportunities as they might have had in Hong Kong and were generally unsure about their future in Australia.

Doubts about Immigration

Interviewees also indicated their extent of endorsement of each of three statements expressing doubt about migrating to Australia. In response to the statement "I am not sure whether I can adjust to life in Australia," 6.3% strongly agreed, 18.8% agreed, 43.8% disagreed, 18.8% strongly disagreed, and 12.5% were unsure.

In relation to the statement "I try not to think about what life will be like as an immigrant," 12.5% agreed, 43.8% disagreed, 37.5% strongly disagreed, and 6.3% were unsure.

With regard to the statement "I don't know if immigrating to Australia is a good decision," 31.3% agreed, 18.8% disagreed, 31.3% strongly disagreed, and 18.8% were unsure.

The response pattern in relation to the doubt statements indicated that most respondents felt they had some idea about what life would be like as an immigrant and would be able to adjust to life in Australia, even though half of the respondents were uncertain if immigrating to Australia would be a good decision.

Possibility of Repatriating to Hong Kong

In addition, respondents were asked to show their extent of agreement with the statement "I don't rule out the possibility of repatriating to Hong Kong." Some 18.8% strongly agreed, 50.0% agreed, 25.0% disagreed, and 6.3% strongly disagreed. This suggested that a majority of prospective migrants did not rule out the possibility of returning to Hong Kong.

Further analysis showed that all the subjects who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the possibility of repatriation to Hong Kong held Bachelor's degrees.

Concerns about Settlement

The prospective migrants were asked to indicate the extent to which they were worried about twenty-eight areas of concerns regarding settlement, ranging from transportation, accommoda-

tion, food, employment, the Australian economy and culture, use of English, racial discrimination, family in Hong Kong, to children's and spouse's adjustment.

Most of the prospective migrants said they were either not worried at all or only a little bit worried about most areas of concerns. Only five areas – employment, career development, Australia's economy, racial discrimination, and how parents in Hong Kong would be looked after – caused at least one-third of the respondents to be moderately or very worried.

Of the subjects, 31.3% were moderately worried, and 18.8% very worried about obtaining employment. Another 43.8% were moderately worried, and 6.3% very worried about career development. Also 25.0% were moderately worried, and 18.8% very worried about Australia's economy. Another 31.3% were moderately worried, and 12.5% very worried about racial discrimination. And 18.8% were moderately worried, and 18.8% very worried about how their parents in Hong Kong would be looked after.

The number of areas causing individuals to be moderately or very worried was tallied for each prospective migrant. The number of these areas of concerns admitted to ranged from 0 to 12, with a mean of 4.63 and a median of 3.5 concerns.

The one individual who indicated no substantial concern was undecided about when he might settle in Australia; he said he was hoping to be able to migrate to Canada instead, where some of his family members would be going.

Seven prospective migrants had indicated six or more substantial concerns about settlement. They consisted of four males and three females, ranged from twenty-five to thirty-nine years of age, and represented the whole range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Summary of Findings

1. Contact with and impressions of Australia

Most intending migrants have had very limited direct contact

with Australia or mainstream Anglo-Australians. Not surprisingly, their impressions are thus rather stereotyped, in some cases based primarily on the media's portrayal of the country and its people. Anglo-Australians tend to be perceived as friendly, easygoing, but racist, whereas Australia was seen as offering a quality living environment and a simpler lifestyle.

2. Preparations for immigration

It is interesting to note that only about one-third of the respondents indicated that they would settle immediately after landing. Many of the interviewees' tentative action plans after landing include collecting information about life in Australia, especially regarding employment and further education, so as to facilitate more detailed planning for future settlement. Some individuals' hesitation for immediate settlement seems to be related to their concern that they might not be able to continue their present line of work in the current slumped Australian economy and that unemployment levels could be expected to remain high.

3. Thoughts and feelings about migration

The interviews revealed strong push factors for emigration from Hong Kong. A majority of respondents said they would not have applied to emigrate from Hong Kong if not for the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997. The Tiananmen massacre in Beijing in June 1989 had reinforced many respondents' resolve to emigrate from Hong Kong. There were also pull factors attracting the subjects to apply for immigration to Australia, such as its pleasant climate and the presence of existing social networks there. Others had been tossing up between migration to Australia and other countries, especially Canada, but had been accepted for migration to Australia first. Some people were happy, and others had mixed feelings, about immigrating to Australia. Many said they would miss Hong Kong, particularly their families, friends, and work. While most of the prospective migrants were looking forward to starting a new life in Australia, they were not opti-

mistic about the opportunities that Australia might offer them. Hong Kong was generally perceived as a more vibrant and prosperous place offering lots of short-term opportunities despite the political uncertainties. Half of the respondents were doubtful whether immigrating to Australia was a good decision. A majority of interviewees did not rule out the possibility of repatriating to Hong Kong, presumably after securing a foreign passport.

4. Concerns about settlement

Most of the intending migrants were not too worried about different aspects of settlement in Australia. The few recurrent areas causing concern were obtaining employment, the Australian economy, racial discrimination, and how their parents in Hong Kong would be looked after.

5. Differences between the tertiary and non-tertiary educated

There are also tentative patterns of differences between prospective migrants who are tertiary educated and hold an established professional or administrative career attracting a high level of income in Hong Kong, and their less socioeconomically advantaged counterparts. The former were more confident about their fluency in English, but were more likely to expect to have to work in Australia at a level lower than their current position. Interestingly, they were also less likely to consider the possibility of repatriating to Hong Kong.

Discussions of Findings

The present study was exploratory in nature and was based on in-depth interviews with sixteen prospective migrants to Australia. Given the very low response rate in recruitment and the resultant small sample size, the obtained results cannot be considered representative of individuals migrating from Hong Kong to Australia

as independent or family concessional migrants. Nevertheless, the interviews have revealed some interesting patterns of perceptions regarding impressions of Australia, powerful political push factors deciding about migration, concern about employment prospects, and strategic plans for coping with the changes associated with migration.

Impressions of Australia as Racist

While most of the respondents had limited contact with the Australian way of life, they had a generally favourable impression of Anglo-Australians and perceived the country as offering a quality living environment with lots of open spaces. However, some respondents were also under the impression that Australians were racist. There was also concern that racial discrimination might be a barrier to obtaining their preferred type of employment in Australia. Their impressions of Australia being racist were obtained from a variety of sources, including the mass media.

It is not surprising that prospective migrants developed a concern about Australia being racist from the press and television reports on immigration issues in Australia. There were the so-called Asian immigration debates in Australia in 1984, and more recently, in 1988 (Blainey, 1984; Loh, 1988; Markus, 1988; Markus & Ricklefs, 1985; Rasmussen & Tang, 1988). Scholars, radio programme presenters, representatives from the Australian Returned Soldiers' League, and politicians conducted heated debates on whether there should be a reduction in general migration intake and in Asian immigrants in particular. Various polls have suggested a call to reduce the migrant intake, especially those of Asian origins, among sizable proportions of the Australian community. The Labour Government in Australia, however, firmly stood by its non-discriminatory immigration policy and somewhat expanded, rather than reduced, the size of migration intake. The Government further affirmed and elaborated on its multicultural policy following the second round of Asian

immigration debate in 1988. The 1988 debate was especially well-covered in the media in Asia, including Hong Kong. Hong Kong residents interested to immigrate to Australia thus became aware of the anti-Asian sentiments in some segments of the Australian society.

These racist sentiments among some Australians were the theme of a television presentation entitled "G'Day If You Are White," from the documentary series "The Hong Kong Connection" produced by the Radio and Television Hong Kong. The programme, transmitted on Hong Kong's television channels in April 1990, dealt with incidents of perceived racism and discrimination experienced by Asian immigrants and students in Australia. The contents of the programme were clearly of little comfort to Hong Kong residents planning to make Australia their future home.

Concern about Job Search

Concern about racial discrimination in job search and career development has not made it easier for intending emigrants contemplating to leave their valued work and careers in prosperous and vibrant Hong Kong to leap into a foreign job market in an unfamiliar culture.

The challenges of cross-cultural adaptation are well-documented in the literature (Oberg, 1960; Stening, 1979; Taft, 1977). The re-adjustments faced by new migrants are made more demanding by the difficulties involved in job search in an unfamiliar labour market. Research has shown that in Australia, overseas qualifications of migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds are sometimes discounted or not recognised (Iredale, 1988). New settlers also tend to lack local cultural expertise in approaching prospective employers, preparing résumés, and presenting themselves over the telephone or in interviews (Borgen & Amundson, 1985). Consequently, many new Australians may take over six months to find their first job (Mitchell, Tait, & Castles, 1990). Underemployment has also been

found to be common among recent migrants from a non-English speaking background (Department of Employment, Education, and Training, 1989). New settlers seeking senior positions or those requiring a near-native proficiency in the English language may find it particularly difficult to enter the foreign job market. Having to change to another line of work is not unlikely for migrants whose skills are not recognised, are not in demand, or are not readily transferable.

Some respondents' concern about Australia's recessed economy, particularly its unemployment rate, was a legitimate one. At the end of 1990, when the study commenced, Australia's unemployment rate was 8.5%, as compared to Hong Kong's mere 1.5%. Australian's economy has gone into recession since then and has been maintaining an unemployment rate of over 10%, so that unemployment and underemployment are realistic prospects for any job seekers. Unfortunately, new arrivals with a non-English speaking background can be expected to be among the hardest hit.

In view of the relative economic and employment situation, some intending migrants' plan to postpone their settlement in Australia, in some cases up to three years after the initial landing, may represent a realistic approach.

Ambivalence about Migration

Traditionally, economic betterment has been a stated primary reason for international migration, although researchers have noted that the real motives are likely to be complex and may not be totally conscious to the migrants (e.g., Luthke & Cropley, 1990). For many of the subjects with established professional careers in the present study, they actually anticipated a possible drop in career prospects and living standards on immigrating to Australia. So why would they choose to emigrate from Hong Kong, and how did they feel about the impending life changes?

Current findings reveal the respondents' ambivalence about leaving Hong Kong as well as relatively weak pull factors for

immigrating to Australia. A majority of interviewees stated that if Hong Kong were not to be returned to Communist Chinese rule in 1997, they would not have applied to emigrate. Many enjoyed their work, economic situation, and social ties in Hong Kong, but felt being pushed by impending political changes into having to emigrate from Hong Kong. While Australia would seem to provide a more stable political and social environment, many were not optimistic about their future in Australia, especially regarding employment and career prospects. Most of the individuals interviewed were hesitant about immediate settlement on landing, and a majority of them did not rule out the possibility of repatriating to Hong Kong.

It is possible that some prospective migrants were more interested in the security afforded by Australian passports after the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997 than actually settling in Australia. There is an increasing number of reports of Australian and Canadian immigrants returning to work and live in Hong Kong (e.g., *South China Morning Post*, 22 July 1990; also see Mak, 1991). There is also a growing population of "*tai-kong-ren*" (having the double meaning of frequent flyers and men without their wives) in Hong Kong. They are "emigrants" who keep their jobs and business in Hong Kong while sending their families off to establish residence in Australia and Canada, and who frequently fly between Hong Kong and the immigrant countries to maintain contact with their families (Chan, 1990). For their families and some other Hong Kong emigrants who only plan to stay in the host countries for the required residency period, the sojourn is referred to as "*zuo yi min jian*" (or completing the immigration jail sentence).

In keeping their options open, the reluctant emigrants postpone their decisions of whether and when to settle in the new country. The continuing ambivalence about emigration may undermine their motivation to familiarise themselves with the new culture and integrate into the adopted society (Chan, 1990). It may also interfere with the setting and achievement of individual goals in work, relationships, and personal development, and erode their

determination to rebuild their careers in a foreign country (Mak, 1991). To postpone making a painful decision does not appear to be an effective strategy to cope with migration stress in the longer term.

Coping Strategies

In contrast, a commitment to taking up the challenges of cross-cultural transition is likely to facilitate the settlement process. Despite the majority of the interviewees' expressed ambivalence about leaving Hong Kong, many said they looked forward to starting a new life in Australia and recognised it would require a lot of learning and re-adjustment. For some, their resolve to settle in Australia had already strengthened in the few months since they had first found out that their application for immigration had been successful.

Others appeared to be more tentative. Like the determined ones, however, they were keen to collect more information about living and working in Australia, and would prepare for settlement accordingly.

The interviews also revealed two other useful coping strategies. Some prospective migrants said they were prepared to be flexible about the level and type of work they would be applying for in Australia. Some expressed willingness for re-training or upgrading their academic qualifications to improve their chances of obtaining appropriate employment.

Future Studies

It is obvious from the present findings that individuals' decisions to migrate and feelings about migration are varied and complex. How these may in turn affect the migrants' decisions to settle permanently and their adjustment in the new country would merit future investigations. Further studies based on larger and more representative samples can also delineate how pre-departure and post-arrival adjustment may be influenced by a variety of

factors like anticipated social support, previous experience with the new culture, age, gender, level of education, fluency in the mainstream language, transferability of marketable skills, and levels of anticipated losses in income and career opportunities in the transition.

Implications for Support Services

On the whole, the current findings reflect intending migrants' feelings of uncertainty about their future in Australia and, for many, considerable doubts about immigration. Pre-departure support services, including employment guidance service and briefing sessions, can play an important part in allaying some of these doubts and fears and help the prospective migrants make specific preparations for migration. Some of the uncertainties and concerns, especially those about racial discrimination, may be reduced through favourable direct contact with Australians at the pre-departure stage. One way to achieve this is to make pre-departure English classes and briefing sessions conducted by Anglo-Australians available to individuals already accepted for immigration. Support services offered as group sessions can be expected to be particularly effective, as participants can benefit from the social support by interacting with other prospective migrants with similar anxieties. Individuals with a more positive outlook and better informed about their adopted country will probably find it easier to cope with the numerous challenges of cross-cultural transition.

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香港往澳洲準移民出發前之調查

麥呂瑞華著

(中文摘要)

本研究目的在於探討香港往澳洲準移民如何達致移民的決定及為移民作出的準備、其感想及關注的事項。調查的對象是十六位現於香港就業、最近被澳洲接納為移民的人士。香港將於1997年歸回中國統治，近年移民離港的人數相應激增。大部份接受訪問的準移民，表示他們決定離開在港的家人及事業的主要原因，是基於對九七問題的顧慮。很多準移民感到在澳洲的前途不大明朗，但已開始為將要面對的改變作出準備，包括搜集有關在澳洲生活的資料、探索如何提高資歷、及有心理準備可能要由較低職位做起。有些受訪者特別關注到他們在澳洲的就業前景及可能會受到種族歧視。本研究的結果，可應用於設計其他移民前後的適應之研究，亦可應用於策劃移民出發前及初期定居的社會服務。