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Intergenerational Social Mobility in Hong Kong

A Review of Recent Studies

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Abstract

This paper reviews several recent studies on intergenerational social mobility in Hong Kong. I argue that the analyses of these papers are flawed, and that their conclusions do not follow from the evidences presented. But the shortcomings of these papers do not undermine the value and promise of mobility research as such.

Researchers of social mobility want to know how far the occupational attainment of a person is determined by his/her family background. This is a very important question, and at long last Hong Kong's sociologists are paying attention to it. This paper reviews several recent studies on social mobility in Hong Kong (Wong and Lui 1992; Tsang 1992, 1994a, 1994b). I start by recapitulating an optimistic view of Hong Kong's 'openness'. I also point to several features of the post-war Hong Kong society that may lead one to expect Hong Kong to have relatively high mobility rates. I then examine the paper by Wong and Lui and those by Tsang. I will show that many of their key arguments do not stand up to critical examination. Limitation of space does not allow me to repeat, in this paper, a comparative analysis of Hong Kong's mobility regime that I have undertaken with the collaboration of Lui and Wong (Chan 1994; Chan, Lui and Wong, forthcoming), but I will provide a summary of our main findings.

An Open Society?

> Hong Kong society has become to a much larger degree than 40 years ago a place where the individual can and must succeed on his own merit and achievements. There is considerable social mobility, and examples of millionaires who have risen from rags in 20 years are well known to all. If the poorest, least advantaged citizens are Chinese, so too are the very wealthiest men, and also the expanding middle classes. The effort required to raise one's economic and social status (the two are very closely associated) is enormous, but it has been achieved by many, and the constantly changing pattern of economic activity in Hong Kong as well as improvements in universal education have both contributed to making upward mobility more possible. (Baker 1983:472)

Many social scientists (e.g. Lau 1982; Lee 1982; Scott 1989) consider Hong Kong as a relatively open and meritocratic society (though it must be said that their claims are often based on personal impressions rather than systematic evidence). Some also argue that the concept of social class itself has become obsolete, and thus class analysis is irrelevant to understanding Hong Kong society. Lee, for example, claims that, 'it is no longer realistic to describe Hong Kong as a class society' (1982:31). This is, according to him, a result of the following changes during the post-war period: growing affluence since the 1970s; internal fragmentation of the major social classes in terms of income and other firm-specific conditions; the emergence of new social divisions according to residential communities, consumption pattern, professional affiliation, and so on; and a trend for social selection to become progressively more meritocratic, and hence for mobility rates to become higher. In elaboration of the last point, Lee argues:

> [F]amily background, race, sex and other ascriptive factors are no longer as important as they were in the past, in deciding a person's achievement. Technical competence has become the central criterion for appointment and promotion in most industrial and administrative bureaucracies. Achievement in competitive examinations testifies in objective terms a person's ability and qualifies him for a job. In this way, the bureaucracies level off social differences and break down barriers to social mobility. (1982:25-26)

For Lee, the summary effect of the above changes is that, 'the 1970s marked the end of ideology in Hong Kong'. Lee's is a set of familiar arguments about the fading away of social class. Similar arguments have sometimes been found to be empirically wanting for other countries. Whether they are valid for Hong Kong remains to be tested. Here I am interested to focus on the last claim, viz. that on the trend towards meritocratic social selection and higher mobility rates.

In this regard, it is relevant to note that most Hong Kong people agree with Lee in that they also consider Hong Kong as an open, meritocratic society. Surveys of social attitudes conducted since the 1970s have repeatedly reported that something between 60 to 80% of the respondents would endorse views such as, 'that Hong Kong is truly a land of opportunity and people get pretty much of what they deserve here', or 'Hong Kong offered opportunities for upward mobile common people'.[1] In other words, there is a general optimism about mobility chances, at least since the 1970s.

But there are several reasons for treating these findings cautiously. First, many of these surveys were about young people. Some of them were conducted in selected localities. This raises the question of how far they represented the opinion of people of all ages across the whole territory. Secondly, given Hong Kong's geographical proximity to mainland China, and the fact that 36% of Hong Kong's population were born there (see Hong Kong 1991 census), it is highly possible that many respondents were implicitly comparing these two societies when questions about mobility chance or efficacy of individual effort were put to them. Since there is little scope for career choice or job mobility in China (Walder 1986; Davis 1992), one may argue that the reported optimism simply means that most Hong Kong people know that the

formal freedom of choosing and leaving jobs that they enjoy in Hong Kong does not exist in China. In this sense, personal effort or merit does make a relatively big difference in Hong Kong. Thus, while Hong Kong people clearly do see themselves as living in an open society, they may do so only by comparison with their neighbours across the border.[2]

Thirdly, the same optimism probably did not exist in the 1950s and 1960s. There is very little data from the early post-war period, but a survey on the background, aspirations and performance of Form 5 students done in 1967 suggests that although '[an] emotional commitment to success is distributed widely throughout the class structure' (Mitchell 1972:76), many students believed that they had little chance of succeeding in Hong Kong:

> [T]*hey feel Hong Kong is a closed society that provides very little opportunity for people like themselves.* Most pupils have a very pessimistic view of Hong Kong, as seen in responses to the question: 'How much opportunity is there in Hong Kong for you to be a success in your career?' Only five per cent feel there is 'a great deal' of opportunity, 15 per cent feel there is 'quite a bit', 69 per cent say 'some, but not too much', and 12 per cent say there is 'very little or none'. (Mitchell 1972:82, emphasis added)

The picture painted by Mitchell is far different from the more recent surveys cited above. Some corroborative but indirect evidence for Mitchell's finding can be found in the commentaries on the 1966 youth riots. The Commissioners of Inquiry for the incident state in their report that they 'do not believe that political, economic and social frustrations were the direct causes of the 1966 riots'. But they note the 'comments of some social scientists stressed a growing awareness amongst young people of the social and economic conditions in Hong Kong and a growing sense of frustration at their limited chances in life and the apparently wide gap between their aspirations and their achievement' (Hong Kong Government 1967:147-148). A recent commentator also concurs with this view. He suggests that the riots developed from these conditions:

> The economic, political and social structure of colonial Hong Kong had produced a grey industrial world in which sixty- to seventy-hour weeks, often in unsafe and unhealthy conditions, over-crowding and *limited prospects of upward mobility were the norms for young males.* They did not have the optimism about their economic future or even the cultural values which had carried their fathers through the difficult years of the 1940s and 1950s. (Scott 1989:89, emphasis added)

On the whole, it seems to me that the optimism often reported (and celebrated) by Hong Kong's sociologists needs to be qualified: it is a relatively recent phenomenon (which may reflect real changes in the opportunity structure), and its contextual meaning needs to be assessed more carefully. With these qualifications in mind, what can we make of this optimism? Insofar as one is concerned with actual instances of mobility, one may argue that subjective perception of mobility prospects is only of secondary relevance. However, as Parkin points out, 'optimistic attitudes concerning mobility chances cannot be sustained in the face of continuously disconfirming evidence' (1971:156). Thus, given the 'consistent' optimism on the part of the general public since the 1970s, and the following features of the post-war Hong Kong society (namely, its demographic fluidity, economic dynamism, and the prevalence of small firms), there is some grounds to think that social mobility rates, at least in the absolute sense, are indeed quite high in Hong Kong.[3]

Population and Immigration

Hong Kong is an immigrant society. The first post-war census reports that in 1961 slightly less than half (48%) of the population were born locally. This figure rose to 60% in 1991. Not surprisingly, over 90% of the immigrants came from mainland China. Although there are very little systematic data on their class origin, it should be safe to assume that many of them had experienced

drastic occupational change and thus social mobility when they came to Hong Kong. For example, if the immigrants were predominantly of rural origin, the shift from farming to industrial labour was, by definition, a form of class mobility. Given the obvious connection between immigration and class mobility, let us consider Hong Kong's immigration history briefly.

Table 1 Numbers of immigrants from China, 1946-1989

1946	486,000	1968	16,928
1947	371,000	1969	10,846
1948	166,000	1970	12,179
1949	262,000	1971	15,136
1950	-242,000	1972	37,626
1951	27,000	1973	98,503
1952	22,000	1974	62,920
1953	-57,000	1975	35,343
1954	-28,000	1976	40,599
1955	N.A.	1977	47,000
1956	57,500	1978	108,500
1957	63,813	1979	180,700
1958	43,156	1980	124,500
1959	28,181	1981	N.A.
1960	N.A.	1982	N.A.
1961	40,407	1983	27,000
1962	90,668	1984	27,700
1963	27,813	1985	27,730
1964	27,641	1986	27,100
1965	15,277	1987	27,300
1966	14,530	1988	28,000
1967	15,307	1989	27,300

Sources: Hambro (1955, Table IX) for 1946-54; Sit (1981, Table 1.2) for 1961-79; *Hong Kong Annual Report*, various years, for 1956-60, 1980, 1983-89.

Note: N.A. = Not available.

Table 1 shows the number of immigrants from mainland China to Hong Kong between 1946 and 1989. To my knowledge, there is only one systematic immigrant study in which the author reports that, 'the majority [of the refugees] come from urban, non-manual occupations, with an education level far above the standard of the Chinese population in general' (Hambro 1955:63). Nonetheless, as can be seen from Table 2, while one-tenth of the immigrants were previously farmers or fishermen, less than 2% of them stayed in farming or fishing after their arrival in Hong Kong. So in terms of worklife mobility, there was indeed an outflow from primary production to industrial occupations. If one further assumes that some of the urban, non-manual refugees were of farming origins, then the shift, from an intergenerational viewpoint, would be even more impressive. More generally, Hambro observes:

> [A] considerable shift of occupations amongst immigrants after their arrival in Hong Kong. The general features of this shift are: (i) An almost complete reorientation of farmers, mainly towards other manual occupations; (ii) A considerable increase in the proportion of manual occupations; (iii) A considerable reduction in the proportion of higher occupations; (iv) A huge rise in the proportion of the unemployed. (1955:45)

Hambro also estimates that, in terms of occupation and social status, about two-thirds of the refugees had experienced downward mobility (1955:64). I do not know of any systematic immigrant study after 1955. But from journalistic accounts and findings of small scale surveys, it seems that while there were more peasants among the post-1954 immigrants, a sizeable group of them had at least some industrial experience.[4]

Immigration also affects mobility rates indirectly. For example, the émigré capitalists from Shanghai played a key role in building up Hong Kong's textile industries during the 1950s (Wong 1988). At the same time, the constant influx of labour had kept wages down. Both factors contributed to Hong Kong's export-oriented industrialization. Economic growth in turn induced

changes in the occupational/class structure, which then led to more structural mobility. The causal chain between migration, economic growth, changes in the occupational structure, and mobility rates is long and complex. So I will make no further speculation here.[5] Suffice it to say that immigration from China is an important source of, at least, structural mobility in Hong Kong.

Table 2 Distribution of immigrants by previous occupation in mainland China, and by occupation in Hong Kong as of June 1954 (%)

	Mainland China	Hong Kong		
		HK-born	Pre-war immigrants	Post-war immigrants
Farmers	9.6	20.0	1.1	1.6
Fishermen	0.2		0.7	0.2
Coolies and amahs	0.8	5.0	11.4	11.0
Cottage craftsmen	1.4	3.2	6.8	9.5
Industrial labourers	2.7	7.8	8.6	12.6
Independent craftsmen	1.9	3.3	4.5	2.7
Hawkers	2.4	6.1	8.5	7.4
Clerks and shop assistants	9.9	6.6	6.5	5.3
Businessmen	5.3	2.1	2.2	1.6
Professionals and intellectuals	10.0	1.7	1.9	3.5
Army and police	16.4	1.2	2.1	0.2
Others	4.7	6.5	4.6	4.8
Unemployed	2.0	8.0	11.5	15.1
Housewives	32.7	28.5	29.6	24.5

Source: Hambro (1955, Table XXIX and Table XXXI).

Economic Shifts

A second factor that may heighten mobility rates is Hong Kong's economic dynamism. Before the Second World War, Hong Kong thrived on commerce and entrepôt trade. In 1931, manufacturing employed about one-fifth of the working population (see Table 3), and most of the pre-war industries, such as ship-building, ship-repairing and rope-making, were developed around port activities. The economy was severely disrupted by the Japanese occupation, but the entrepôt trade recovered quickly after the war. However, the communist victory in mainland China in 1949, and the subsequent United Nations embargo against China (as a result of the Korean War) brought the trade to a sudden halt. The loss of this traditional source of income forced Hong Kong to switch to manufacturing in the early 1950s (Phelps Brown 1971).

Because of the inflow of capital, labour and industrial expertise from China, the liberalization of world trade, and other factors such as the trading advantages gained through Hong Kong's British connection (as a result of the Commonwealth Preferential Tariff System), Hong Kong's export-oriented industrialization soon gathered momentum. In 1961, 43% of the working population were employed in manufacturing. By 1971, this figure rose to 47.7%. But since the late 1970s, consequent on changes such as growing protectionism in Europe and the United States, competition from other countries with even cheaper labour cost, Hong Kong has experienced yet another wave of economic restructuring (Lui and Chiu 1993). This time the change is towards finance, commerce and service, and away from manufacturing. By 1991, manufacturing accounted for only 28.2% of the working population.

Table 3 Distribution of Hong Kong's working population by industry (%)

	1931	1961	1971	1981	1991
Agricultural and fishing	13.7	7.3	4.0	2.0	*(1)
Mining and quarrying	0.4	0.7	0.3	0.1	*
Manufacturing	19.1	43.0	47.7	41.2	28.2
Electricity, gas and water	0.4	1.1	0.6	0.6	*
Construction	4.5(2)	4.9	5.3	7.9	6.9
Wholesale and retail trade, restaurant and hotel(3)	–	14.4	16.0	19.1	22.5
Transport, storage and communication	15.1	7.3	7.2	7.6	9.8
Financing, insurance, real estate and business service	20.6	1.6	2.6	4.7	10.6
Service	–	18.3	14.7	15.4	19.9
Others	4.7	1.4	1.6	1.4	2.1
Public administration and defence(4)	5.0	–	–	–	–
Professions	2.1	–	–	–	–
Entertainment and sports	1.4	–	–	–	–
Personal service	13.0	–	–	–	–

Sources: Hong Kong Census, various years.

Notes: (1) Grouped under 'Others'.
(2) Originally as 'Building and decorating'.
(3) This category and the category of 'Service' were not present in the 1931 census.
(4) This and the next three categories were present in the 1931 census only.

The post-war economic history of Hong Kong deserves more detailed and theoretically informed analyses. But it will serve my present purpose to note simply that the transitions outlined above took place in a very short period of time. The economy of Hong Kong has truly been in a state of flux over the past forty years.

Such economic dynamism provides, in a modified sense, an 'open frontier' for the people of Hong Kong.[6] As firms, branches of industry, even economic sectors, come in and fade out in rapid succession, one possibility is that people in previously booming sectors quickly lose their advantaged positions, while those of humble origins are able to exploit new niches in the growing sectors. In other words, rapid economic shifts may lead to quicker circulation of people between social classes, i.e. higher relative mobility rates. Alternatively, people in privileged positions may keep their economic and social advantages by transferring their resources to the new sectors. For instance, a textile manufacturer may pull down his plant and go into property development. Which of these two scenarios is true is an empirical question.

The Prevalence of Small Firms

The factories of Hong Kong are distinctly small in size. In 1986, 99% of all industrial establishments belonged to the small or small-medium sectors (defined as factories employing 0-49 and 50-199 people, respectively). Together, these two sectors accounted for almost three quarters (73%) of all manufacturing workers, and each of them contributed about a third of the gross output (Sit and Wong 1989:25-27). The prevalence of small firms may also facilitate social mobility.

Some preliminary evidence for this claim can be found in a survey of the proprietors of small/small-medium factories in Hong Kong (Sit and Wong 1989). The survey shows that close to two-thirds (64%) of the industrial entrepreneurs were born in mainland China. In terms of class origin (Table 4), about a third (34.7%) of them came from merchant families, one-fifth were of peasant origin, a quarter came from the working class (i.e. father being artisan/skilled worker or manual worker), and less than 5% were of 'industrialist' background. The last figure leads Sit and Wong to suggest that, 'the small industrial sector is a very compet-

itive arena and it is difficult for entrepreneurial families to maintain vocational continuity in this sphere' (1989:93).

Table 4 Distribution of entrepreneurs by occupational origin, i.e. father's occupation

Father's occupation	%
Merchant	34.7
Farmer/Fisherman	19.0
Artisan/Skilled worker	16.5
Industrialist	4.8
Manual worker	8.1
Professional	6.5
Manager/Executive	1.6
Civil servant	1.6
Hawker	2.0
Others	5.2
(N)	(248)

Source: Sit and Wong (1989, Table 7.11).

Sit and Wong also report that most of their respondents became factory owners when they were still quite young: 44% of them were in their thirties, 25% were even younger; and 80% of them had held only one previous job (1989:69-71). Not surprisingly, most (close to 80%) of those with prior work experience were employed in manufacturing. This is important because the majority of the entrepreneurs were not particularly well qualified, and they had to pick up technical and managerial skills through work experience (Sit and Wong 1989:100-102). From Table 5, it can be seen that about 60% of the entrepreneurs started their worklife on the factory shopfloor as operatives, about one-fifth were clerks or executives, while those who began their career as managers or minor shareholders constituted only a very small minority (Sit and Wong 1989:102-108).

Table 5 Distribution of entrepreneurs by first job

First job	%
Shareholder	3.8
Manager	5.9
Executive	8.9
Clerk	11.8
Mechanic/Engineer	17.3
Supervisor	8.4
Worker	22.8
Apprentice	9.3
Others	11.8
(N)	(237)

Source: Sit and Wong (1989, Table 8).

To launch their business, almost all of the surveyed entrepreneurs had to rely on their own funds; less than 1% of them were able to obtain a bank loan. This certainly limited the size of their investment and the scale of their operation (hence the small size of the average Hong Kong factory). But as Sit and Wong put it, 'it does prove that small businesses function as easy entry points for people with the desire and ambition to run their own show and be manufacturers' (1989:147). Putting these observations together, they suggest that going into small scale manufacturing is a typical mobility path for people coming from disadvantaged background:

> The typical pattern for about 80% of the entrepreneurs is that they worked in one job, accumulating capital and know-how, before becoming employers ... our respondents usually have few career options open to them at first so that they tend to take up a job which they regard as below their worth ... the entrepreneurs tend to secure their employment mostly in the industrial sphere where educational qualifications are not particularly important. As a result, they gain industrial experience

> which later facilitate their transition into entrepreneurial role. (Sit and Wong 1989:104)

Readers should recall that most of the self-made entrepreneurs surveyed by Sit and Wong are small proprietor-managers rather than major industrialists. However, the movement from, say, an unskilled manual job to the proprietorship of a small business is still a significant one. It can also be argued, as Szczepanik does, that small business may function as a stepping stone for subsequent movement into even more advantaged class positions:

> Most Hong Kong firms, both commercial and industrial, started as modest ventures of single proprietors, gradually changing into a partnership and sometimes into a private company ... thus the original capital normally has to be provided from the founder's past personal savings, supplemented perhaps by a loan from friends and relatives. The expansion of the firm depended subsequently on the volume of profits ploughed back and on the credits provided by banks, wholesalers, docks, and godowns. (1958:21-22)

Of course, a small factory may go bankrupt instead of growing into a larger concern. For the moment, let me simply note that the prevalence of small firms may reflect an opportunity structure which allows easy access to the entrepreneurial route for mobility.

Counter-evidence?

Having considered three factors that may lead us to expect Hong Kong to have relatively high mobility rates, I will now examine the recent mobility studies. Let me start with the work of Tsang (1992). From a 5% sample of the 1981 census, he selects all households in which (a) there were at least two generations, (b) both father and child were economically active, and (c) the child was between the ages of 15 and 27. The *current* occupations of father and child are taken as the child's origin and destination respectively. The mobility table constructed in this manner contains 19,375 cases.[7] To code occupational data into social class, Tsang adopts the eightfold occupational classification of the 1981 census, but he makes some distinctions within certain groups so that there are 14 categories in the full version of his schema.[8] This 14-category schema can be collapsed to a 10-category version and a 5-category version (see Table 6).

Tsang fits a perfect mobility model (i.e. independence model) and a quasi-perfect mobility model (i.e. quasi-independence model) to his mobility tables.[9] The perfect mobility model assumes that there is no association between origin and destination (i.e. that a person's family background plays no part at all in determining where he/she will end up in the class structure). The quasi-perfect mobility model recognizes that there is a tendency for people to inherit their father's class position, but it also assumes that no other association exists between origin and destination. As one would expect, these two models do not fit any of the three tables satisfactorily by conventional standards of goodness of fit.[10] But by inspecting the residuals of the *non-fitting* perfect mobility model, Tsang makes several inferences about Hong Kong's mobility regime. For example, he claims that the tendency for immobility is strongest for the two classes of 'hawkers' and 'agricultural workers and fishfolks'; that mobility crossing the manual/non-manual boundary is rare (1992:60-66); and that, 'there are relatively greater opportunities for inter-class mobility between professional and managerial classes and the routine non-manual workers' (1992:74-75). Putting these findings together, Tsang concludes that, 'four definite closures of mobility opportunities prevail, showing that four social classes exist in the social structure of Hong Kong' (1992:81), namely non-manual, skilled manual, semi-skilled manual, and unskilled manual.

Table 6 Tsang's class schemata

Code	Major occupational groupings classified by Census and Statistics Department	Class category	Major occupational groupings used in this study
1	Professional, technical and related workers	1	Professional, technical and related workers—employers
		2	Professional, technical and related workers—except employers
2	Administrative and managerial workers	3	Administrative and managerial workers—employers
		4	Administrative and managerial workers—except employers
		5	Supervisors and foremen
3	Clerical and related workers	6	Clerical and related workers
4	Sales workers	7	Sales workers—except hawkers
		12	Sales workers—hawkers
5	Service workers	10	Service workers—except domestic helpers
		14	Service workers—domestic helpers
6	Agricultural workers and fisherfolks	13	Agricultural workers and fisherfolks
7/8/9	Production and related workers, transport equipment operators and labourers	9	Technicians and craftsmen
		8	Operative workers
		11	Manufacturing labourers
0	Arm forces and unclassifiable		

Source: Tsang (1992:55, Table 8).

Generally speaking, Tsang's findings — principally that (a) the tendency for immobility is strongest at the two ends of the occupational hierarchy, and (b) that there is more mobility within the manual or the non-manual classes than movement crossing the manual/non-manual boundary — are consistent with results obtained in other mobility studies (e.g. Hout 1983). However, it has to be said that they are based on data of quite doubtful quality and that they result from rather unsatisfactory analyses. Let me elaborate my criticisms. I believe that census data are unsuitable for mobility research. To see this, readers should note that census data are collected by living quarters, not families. In other words, they are occupational (and other) data of those family members who live together in the same dwelling; but those who did not live with their father at the time of the 1981 census had no chance of appearing in Tsang's mobility tables at all. The crucial question is whether there is a systematic relationship between patterns of intergenerational coresidence and social mobility. If so, Tsang would have introduced a serious bias into his study.

Tsang is aware of this problem. In defence of his data, he compares the 5% sample he uses for constructing the mobility tables with a separate 20% sample of the same census. He finds that there is relatively little difference between the two samples in terms of average educational attainment, monthly income, and socio-economic status.[11] Moreover, the differences that exist are not in the same direction. Given these findings, he argues that the 5% sample contains 'no apparent bias in market and class situations' (1992:29). This line of defence is, in my judgement, inadequate, because income and education are incomplete measures of market and class situations. In terms of the neo-Weberian framework of social class (to which Tsang himself subscribes), other factors such as job security, promotion prospects, the degree of autonomy that one enjoys and the authority that one exercises at work are equally important in determining class position (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992:42). Thus, the question of bias remains unanswered.[12]

Even if it is true that the aggregate class compositions, properly measured, of the two samples are the same, we still cannot be sure that census data are suitable for mobility research, as the same aggregate (class) distribution may mask diverse underlying (mobility) processes. Indeed, there are good reasons to think that pattern of intergenerational coresidence is linked to social mobility in multiple and systematic ways. Consider the following: to achieve mobility and to set up separate residence for parents and children both require resources. For disadvantaged families, this may well be a zero-sum situation. Henretta argues that, '[in 19th century Massachusetts] home ownership for parents was an alternative to intergenerational social mobility for the children since early work [on the part of the children] meant less schooling' (1987:521-522). This may or may not be true for modern Hong Kong.[13] But if true, census will have oversampled the immobile cases among the working class.

Consider also that resourceful parents are more capable than others of sending their children to higher education, either abroad or in Hong Kong. College students certainly enjoy better mobility prospects than others, and a substantial number of them spend several years away from home in their late teens and early twenties. Thus, census may also undersample the immobile cases at the top end of the class structure. The general point here is this: as intergenerational coresidence is probably systematically linked to the mobility process, it simply will not do, as Tsang does, to have the effects of coresidence controlled for and assumed away. Rather, these linkages themselves have to be examined empirically.[14]

My second misgiving concerns Tsang's substantive claims. In his 1992 paper, he seeks only to show that there is no such thing as perfect mobility in Hong Kong. As noted above, he fits a perfect mobility model and a quasi-perfect mobility model to his data. When it turns out that they do not fit the data satisfactorily, he concludes:

> Hong Kong, in an absolute sense, is not an open society. That is because within her social structure, there prevails a number of "lines of social cleavages" along which class inheritance and monopolization of social mobility opportunities are constituted and maintained. (Tsang 1992:84)

This is certainly true, but fails to be instructive. In fact, it would be very surprising were there perfect mobility in Hong Kong, or were class origin and other ascriptive factors no longer to play any role in the social allocation process. Of some interest is a more detailed description of the pattern of unequal mobility chances in Hong Kong. It is also important to ask (a) whether this pattern is changing over time, and (b) how does it differ from those of other countries.

Tsang (1994a, 1994b) undertakes the task of longitudinal comparison in two subsequent papers. Using the same strategy, he constructs from the 1976 and 1986 by-censuses two additional mobility tables for Hong Kong. Again, he fits a perfect mobility model and a quasi-perfect mobility model to these two tables, which as expected do not fit the data well. But by comparing the residuals of the diagonal cells (under the perfect mobility model) across the three tables, he concludes:

> [T]he relative mobility rates increase slightly from 1976 to 1981, but as Hong Kong entered the 1980s, the relative mobility rates have decreased substantially. (Tsang 1994b:114)

Is this true? Putting aside the problem of data quality, this claim can be tested by a very straightforward procedure. Panel A of Table 7 compares the 1976 and 1981 tables. Model 1 is the conditional independence model, which recognizes that the distributions of the respondents by class of origin and by class of destination have changed between 1976 and 1981. This model also assumes perfect mobility for both tables. As expected, it does not fit the data well, but it serves as a baseline against which other models can be compared.[15] Model 2 is the constant social fluidity (CnSF) model. Unlike Model 1, it recognizes that mobility chances

are unequally distributed in both 1976 and 1981. At the same time, it constrains the pattern of inequality to be exactly the same for the two tables. Judging from the p value, Model 2 is still unsatisfactory. But the null hypothesis of constant social fluidity cannot be safely rejected. This is because we are dealing with a table with 44,058 cases. With N as large as this, practically no model can fit the data satisfactorily by the 5% convention. To borrow an analogy from Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992:88), large tables are like powerful microscopes — they allow relatively minor sociological differences to show up as statistically significant deviations.[16] This seems to be the case here as other measures of goodness of fit show that the CnSF model is actually doing very well — accounting for 99% of the G^2 under Model 1, and misplacing less than 1% of the cases. Essentially the same result is obtained in Panel B where I test for changes in mobility pattern between 1981 and 1986. That is to say, there is no good evidence to suggest any substantial change in relative mobility rates between these two years.

In Panel C, I compare the three tables all at once. Models 5 and 6 tell the same story as the previous comparisons. Model 7, the uniform difference model, provides a further test for overall changes in mobility pattern. This model assumes that the same general pattern of association between origin and destination exists for the three tables, but it also allows the relative strength of this association to vary between tables in a uniform way towards greater or smaller inequality (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992:91-92). As this model does not represent any improvement at all to the CnSF model, the assumption of some overall, uniform change in mobility pattern between the three years is redundant.[17]

Table 7 Trend for social mobility in Hong Kong, 1976-1986, reanalyses of Tsang's 5 x 5 mobility tables

Model	G^2	df	p	rG^2	% misplaced cases
Panel A (1976-81 comparison) N=44,058					
1 Conditional Independence OY + DY	4,706	32	0	–	10.7
2 Constant Social Fluidity OY + DY + OD	39	16	0	99%	0.9
Panel B (1981-86 comparison) N=63,531					
3 Conditional Independence OY + DY	6,754	32	0	–	8.9
4 Constant Social Fluidity OY + DY + OD	182	16	0	97%	1.5
Panel C (1976-81-86 comparison) N=89,584					
5 Conditional Independence OY + DY	9,956	48	0	–	9.7
6 Constant Social Fluidity OY + DY + OD	476	32	0	95%	2.3
7 Uniform Difference OY + DY + b_kX_{ij}	476	30	0	95%	2.3

Notes: O = origin, D = destination, Y = year,
X_{ij} = general pattern of association between origin and destination,
b_k = relative strength of association specific to a table.

To sum up, there is no evidence at all for any substantial change in relative mobility rates between 1976, 1981 and 1986. This should not be surprising as, short of a genuine social revolution, it is highly unlikely for something as extensive and fundamental as a society's mobility pattern to undergo significant changes over intervals of five years. Indeed, even the strongest critics of the constant social fluidity hypothesis cannot detect

changes in societal openness over short periods of time. For instance, Ganzeboom, Luijkx and Treiman argue for a world-wide secular trend towards increased openness, but they concede that, 'the decrease in [off-diagonal] association is about one per cent per year ... this is a negligible amount in the short run and therefore difficult to estimate over short periods' (1989:45).

Tsang's own data do not support his claim on longitudinal changes in mobility pattern. What about the question of cross-national comparison? Here Tsang takes a theoretical decision to rule out such attempt. Much in line with Burawoy's (1976) criticism of the comparative status attainment research of Treiman and Terrel (1975), he argues that:

> [M]ost of the mobility studies in Western societies are neither culturally nor historically comparable to this study, which is based on the social structure of an oriental city under British colonial rule in the early 1980s. As for our neighbouring countries, such as the three other Newly Industrialized Economies in East Asia, namely Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea, we still find that their social structures are not comparable to the uniqueness of that of Hong Kong. On the one hand, the occupational structures of both Taiwan and South Korea in which a large proportion of their incumbents engages in agricultural production are apparently not comparable to that of Hong Kong whose incumbents are mainly employed in manufacturing and servicing industries. On the other hand, the major difference between the social structures of Hong Kong and Singapore is their ethnic compositions. Singapore is a multi-racial and multi-cultural society, while Hong Kong is inhabited by a population of which the majority is Chinese. Taken together, if we are to make any comparison of the social mobility processes among these societies, we must deal with the aforementioned structural differences sensibly and not to homogenize their heterogeneity. (1992:86)

This is an exceptionalist argument by fiat. Hong Kong is said to be unique, and thus non-comparable to, apparently all countries, East or West. I will not repeat Treiman's (1976) rejoinder to Burawoy here. Insofar as we can agree that Hong Kong shares

some generic features with Britain, Japan or Singapore (e.g. all being industrial societies), the question of whether Hong Kong is really so unique is a matter for empirical examination. Indeed, it would be interesting to see whether, and if so, how the small size of Hong Kong's primary sector or its ethnic homogeneity affects its mobility pattern. I have undertaken some cross-national comparison elsewhere (Chan, 1994; Chan, Lui and Wong, forthcoming), and will report my main findings towards the end of this paper. I now turn to the work of Wong and Lui.

Wong and Lui (1992) analyse the data of the 1989 Hong Kong Social Mobility Survey, and they report the following findings. First, the class structure of Hong Kong has undergone significant changes over time, including considerable expansion of the service class and a sharp contraction of the petty bourgeoisie (1992:42-47).[18] Secondly, Hong Kong's absolute mobility rates are quite high. In terms of inflow rates, 'about 60% of class I are upwardly mobile newcomers, with no hitherto non-manual background or experience ... [as for] the unskilled working class ... more than a third of its membership came from people with petty bourgeoisie background ... as for the inflow into petty bourgeoisie, nearly 40% was from the three blue-collar classes' (1992:50). On the whole, their judgement is:

> [T]here has been a remarkable increase of opportunities, if the expansion of the "room at the top" [i.e. the service class] is anything to go by. And the society is, based on the absolute mobility rates ... open and mobile. (1992:69)

However, in terms of relative mobility rates, their assessment is markedly different. Wong and Lui have fitted five loglinear models to their mobility tables, and they find that, 'the broadly white-collar classes tend to recruit among themselves' (1992:68), and 'the non-manual and manual boundary does not look like some semi-permeable barrier allowing for upward and downward mobility' (1992:69).

In short, their argument is this: changes in Hong Kong's class structure, especially the expansion of the service class, have

brought about more mobility chances. This shows up as high absolute mobility rates and, in particular, a service class which is heterogeneous in terms of social origin. However, not everyone is equally capable of taking advantage of these opportunities. Thus, alongside high absolute mobility rates, there is substantial inequality in relative mobility chances. Such findings are typical of mobility studies in general (e.g. Goldthorpe 1987). Together with Tsang, Wong and Lui pose a notable challenge to the general optimism about Hong Kong's openness. However, like Tsang's papers, their analyses are unsatisfactory.

First, although not mentioned above, Wong and Lui have employed, in the same paper, several dated and flawed measures, such as the Yasuda indices, the Boudon indices, and the indices of association, to support their argument of unequal mobility chances. These indices have produced results which are inconsistent with their subsequent loglinear analyses. Consider, for example, their observations about the petty bourgeoisie. From the Boudon indices they calculated for Hong Kong, Wong and Lui claim that, 'the upper service class, the petty bourgeoisie and the unskilled manual class have a lower mobility rate than the other classes' (1992:44). But their loglinear models show that the propensity for immobility of the petty bourgeoisie is among the weakest of all classes, while that of the service class is very strong (Wong and Lui 1992:66-67). Wong and Lui have not tried to resolve this inconsistency, though they admit at one point that the Yasuda and Boudon indices 'are not quite up to the task of ascertaining openness and opportunities' (Wong and Lui 1992:44). Given their knowledge of the problems of these flawed measures, it is puzzling that they should have used them at all.

More seriously, the loglinear modelling of Wong and Lui is problematic. As noted above, one of their central claims is that, 'the non-manual and manual boundary does not look like some semi-permeable barrier allowing for upward and downward mobility' (1992:69). This claim is apparently based on two observations: first, that a cross-boundary model, which specifies barriers against movement crossing the manual/non-manual boundary, fits the data better than other models which do not specify such barriers;[19] and secondly, that under the cross-boundary model, the parameter estimates for the two cells designating movement between class III (non-manual), on the one hand, and class V and VI (manual), on the other, are practically zero in magnitude.

Neither of these two observations supports Wong and Lui's conclusion. The cross-boundary model is not nested within the other models they test. Indeed, it is fitted to a different mobility table.[20] It is therefore inappropriate to compare this crucial model with the other models — one simply cannot say whether the cross-boundary model gives a better or a worse fit to the data than the other models.

Even if the cross-boundary model is to be evaluated on its own, the conclusion of a relatively impermeable manual/non-manual boundary does not follow from the evidence presented. To arrive at this conclusion, Wong and Lui need to show that cross-boundary movement is particularly unlikely or, formally speaking, that the interaction term for the two cells concerned is negative and statistically significant. They are, in fact, very close to zero (0.09 for cell IV+V-III, and -0.05 for cell III-IV+V, they are probably insignificant as well). This means that the two cells are effectively at the neutral fluidity level.[21] In my judgement, the inference to be drawn from this finding is that there is little barrier to short range mobility between the two classes concerned, apart from those that arise from changes in the marginal distributions. The most that one can say is that there is not a particularly strong tendency for people to be found in the two cells. But there is no tendency for people not to be found there either.

To test how well a nested cross-boundary model will fit the 'original' 7 x 7 table, I have repeated and extended the analyses of Wong and Lui. My findings are reported in Table 8. Models 1 to 4 are suggested by them (1992:63-70). Models 1 and 2 are the perfect mobility (PM) model and the quasi-perfect mobility (QPM) model, respectively. Models 3 and 4, the two QPM-corners models, incorporate the assumption of the QPM model, but they also

postulate that short-range movement between the social classes at the two ends of the class structure is particularly likely (i.e. the corner cells are above the neutral fluidity level). Hence, the parameter estimates for the corner cells (see Table 9) are expected to be positive and significant.[22] The two QPM-corners models achieve a satisfactory fit with the data (but note also that, in terms of G^2, Model 4 does not represent an improvement over Model 3). Turning to Table 9, readers can see that 8 of the 15 parameters of Model 3, and 10 of the 19 parameters of Model 4 are not significantly different from the baseline neutral fluidity level (i.e. level 1). These insignificant parameters are redundant, and Models 3 and 4 are clearly over-parametrized. So before fitting my cross-boundary model, let me first consider a more parsimonious QPM-corners model.

Table 8 Loglinear modelling of Wong and Lui's mobility table, based on the class schema of the Oxford Mobility Study

Model	G^2	df	p	Model comparison	rG^2	df	p
1 Perfect Mobility	101.2	36	0	–	–	–	–
2 Quasi-Perfect Mobility	54.2	29	0	–	–	–	–
3 QPM-Corners I	27.3	21	>.10	–	–	–	–
4 QPM-Corners II	20.0	17	>.20	M4-M3	7.3	4	>.10
5 QPM-Corners III	44.8	29	<.05	M5-M1	56.4	7	<.05
6 Cross-Boundary	30.2	23	>.10	M6-M5	14.6	6	<.05

Model 5 is a slight modification of the QPM model: apart from 'blocking out' the diagonal cells, it also postulates that cells I-II, II-I are at interaction level 3, while cells VI-VII, VII-VI are at interaction level 7. Using the same degrees of freedom as Model 2, it reduces G^2 by 9.4, and accounts for 56% of the total association between origin and destination. But it is still an unsatisfactory model. Model 6 is my cross-boundary model. It differs from

Model 5 in that 6 separate levels are specified for the cells that represent short-range mobility between classes III, IV and V (see Table 9). This model achieves a satisfactory fit with the data by the 5% convention. It uses 6 more degrees of freedom than Model 5, but G^2 comes down by 14.6, which is a significant change.

Table 9 Design matrices of models fitted in Table 8

Model 2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
	1	3	1	1	1	1	1
	1	1	4	1	1	1	1
	1	1	1	5	1	1	1
	1	1	1	1	6	1	1
	1	1	1	1	1	7	1
	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Model 3	2	3	1	1	1	1	1
	4	5	1	1	1	1	1
	1	1	6	1	1	1	1
	1	1	1	7	1	1	1
	1	1	1	1	8	9	10
	1	1	1	1	11	12	13
	1	1	1	1	14	15	16
Model 4	2	3	4	1	1	1	1
	5	6	7	1	1	1	1
	8	9	10	1	1	1	1
	1	1	1	11	1	1	1
	1	1	1	1	12	13	14
	1	1	1	1	15	16	17
	1	1	1	1	18	19	20

Table 9 (Continued)

Model 5	2	3	1	1	1	1	1
	3	3	1	1	1	1	1
	1	1	4	1	1	1	1
	1	1	1	5	1	1	1
	1	1	1	1	6	1	1
	1	1	1	1	1	7	7
	1	1	1	1	1	7	8
Model 6	2	3	1	1	1	1	1
	3	3	1	1	1	1	1
	1	1	4	9	10	1	1
	1	1	11	5	12	1	1
	1	1	13	14	6	1	1
	1	1	1	1	1	7	7
	1	1	1	1	1	7	8

Note: The neutral fluidity level refers to situations where only the effect of the marginal distributions apply to the cells concerned. Underlined levels are significantly different from the neutral fluidity level, i.e. level 1.

The parameter estimates of the models are reported in Table 10. It can be seen that, under Model 6, all of the six parameters that refer to cross-boundary mobility are negative, but only 3 of them are significant.[23] One can argue that the 3 cells with insignificant interaction parameters are really at the neutral fluidity level. In other words, there is no significant barrier against the mobility flow that these three cells refer to, namely from class III to class IV, and from class V to class III or class IV. Conversely put, there are indeed barriers against short range mobility that crosses the manual/non-manual boundary, but these barriers are found in several specific locations only. Model 6 can certainly be improved, and I do not claim that this is my preferred model for Hong Kong. But the above analysis should have demonstrated an irony: if we accept Wong and Lui's cross-boundary model, then we will have

Table 10 Parameter estimates of loglinear models of Table 7

Model 2	Quasi-Perfect Mobility																			
	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8													
	1.40*	1.03*	0.89*	0.37	-0.02	0.37	0.61*													
Model 3	QPM-Corners I																			
	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10	L11	L12	L13	L14	L15	L16					
	1.46*	0.49	0.75	1.09*	0.78*	0.19	0.05	0.55	-0.85	-0.07	0.75*	0.55	0.66*	0.70*	0.93*					
Model 4	QPM-Corners II																			
	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10	L11	L12	L13	L14	L15	L16	L17	L18	L19	L20	
	1.56*	0.66	0.09	0.86	1.28*	0.23	0.52	0.94*	1.07*	0.18	-0.05	0.46	-0.94*	-0.16	0.65*	0.45	0.56*	0.60*	0.83*	
Model 5	QPM-Corners III																			
	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8													
	1.61*	0.86*	0.83*	0.27	-0.09	0.52*	0.81*													
Model 6	Cross-Boundary																			
	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10	L11	L12	L13	L14							
	1.84*	1.09*	0.27	-0.24	-0.69	0.92*	1.22*	-0.58	-0.82*	-0.74*	-0.86*	0.54	-0.76							

Notes: Level 1 being the baseline neutral fluidity level, asterisked parameters are significant at the 5% level.

to conclude, on the basis of its parameter estimates, that the manual/non-manual boundary is relatively permeable; on the other hand, if we question the validity of that model and test for cross-boundary barriers in what I believe to be a more proper way, then cross-boundary barriers can be found in several specific locations. That is to say, Wong and Lui have made the right claim for the wrong reason. In any case, we need to move beyond the question of whether there are mobility barriers of one sort or another, and proceed to a more detailed description of Hong Kong's mobility regime. One useful way to do so is to compare Hong Kong's mobility pattern with those of other countries. I will now summarize the main findings of a comparative analysis that I have undertaken with the collaboration of Lui and Wong (Chan 1994; Chan, Lui and Wong, forthcoming). We hope that our work will also attract critical attention from our colleagues.

Hong Kong's Mobility Regime in Comparative Perspective

Chan and his associates fit Erikson and Goldthorpe's CASMIN (Comparative Analysis of Social Mobility in Industrial Nations) model of social fluidity to a Hong Kong mobility table.[24] Erikson and Goldthorpe hypothesize that all industrial nations share basically the same fluidity pattern (i.e. set of relative mobility rates), and their model is designed to capture the broad features of this cross-nationally common fluidity pattern. This is a very interesting and potentially important hypothesis because it goes against arguments which suggest that societal openness increases concomitantly with industrialization. It also contradicts those who argue that countries with lasting state socialist or social democratic government are more open than those with more free-wheeling market economies. Obviously, the primary objective of the CASMIN project is macro-sociological in nature — it tests how mobility regimes vary between different types of society. However, from the point of view of understanding the mobility pattern of individual nation, the CASMIN model is also very useful because it specifies social fluidity in four different dimensions, namely hierarchy, inheritance, sector and affinity (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992:121-140). This allows the researchers to test not only whether, but also in which of the four dimensions, is society A more (or less) open than society B.

By applying the CASMIN model to Hong Kong, the following findings are notable. First, the CASMIN model fits the Hong Kong table very well. It follows that the pattern of unequal mobility chances as described by that model can be found in Hong Kong. Having said that, it should also be noted that the inequality in mobility chance is, on the whole, less extreme in Hong Kong than in other countries. The relative openness of Hong Kong is manifested principally in a very weak (in a cross-nationally comparative sense) tendency towards inheritance. In particular, people from the two property-owning classes of Hong Kong (i.e. the service class and the petty bourgeoisie) are not significantly more inclined to inherit their father's class position than those from other classes. This is different from the patterns observed for other industrial nations.

Relative openness as described above is, however, only half of the story. Indeed, one of the most intriguing features of Hong Kong's fluidity pattern is that weak inheritance effects co-exist with strong hierarchy barriers (again, in a cross-nationally comparative sense), particularly those against long-range mobility. This means that while it is relatively easy for Hong Kong people to leave their class origin, those who are mobile in this minimal sense will find it difficult to travel very far up or down the class hierarchy.[25] People of agricultural origins are especially disadvantaged insofar as mobility into the service class is concerned.[26]

Why should Hong Kong exhibit such a fluidity pattern? We believe that the very strong barriers against mobility from farming to the service class can be attributed to the fact that a particularly high percentage of those respondents of agricultural origins are immigrants. It is true that because of geographical and cultural

relocation, poorer educational provision in rural areas, etc., mobility from farming to the service class is always difficult. In the case of Hong Kong, such difficulties are compounded by the extra disadvantages associated with immigrating from China. Chief among them is that, because China has a different education system, formal qualifications earned there are not recognized in Hong Kong.

As for the relatively weak tendency towards inheritance of Hong Kong's property-owning classes, we believe that it is partly related to one prominent feature of Hong Kong's industrial structure that has been mentioned above, namely the prevalence of small firms. Generally speaking, being small means that there are relatively few assets to pass on to one's successor, thus reducing the desirability of direct inheritance from the successor's point of view. Being small probably also means that the firm has a shorter life span because, compared with large corporations, small firms are more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the market. While it may be the case that small firms are constantly being set up in large number, many of them will go under within a short period of time. Casual observers and academic researchers alike have often reported some sort of enterpreneurialism in Hong Kong. This may well be true, but we would argue that a prevalent desire to become one's own boss, or indeed even a high birth rate of small businesses, should not be confused with their durability. Because of the relatively weak tendency towards inheritance of Hong Kong's property-owning classes, we would conjecture that the great majority of Hong Kong's small firms do not last long enough to reach the point of intergenerational succession. It follows that models of Chinese family firms, such as that proposed by Wong (1985), which postulate how their structure and dynamics change over generations are, at best, limited in their applicability to a very small number of large concerns.

Finally, we think that the strong hierarchical effects of Hong Kong should be understood against the following context. Hong Kong is a Chinese society: 99% of its population speak Chinese (in its various dialects, but mostly Cantonese) as their mother tongue.

However, Hong Kong is also a British colony, in which most business in the government above the street level was conducted, until recently, almost exclusively in English. Hong Kong also has an outward-looking economy. From its early days as an entrepôt, through its subsequent role as an exporter of manufactured goods, to its more recent role as a regional financier and trading centre, there has always been a strong presence of foreign firms and firms that deal primarily with the Western markets. In terms of the nature of their business, most of these firms are in banking, trading, insurance, and various business and financial services, rather than manufacturing. These firms form the 'core' of the economy, and their employees, who are mostly white collar, enjoy higher wages, more job security and better promotion prospects than manufacturing workers. To get a clerical position in the 'core' firms or the civil service, however, one needs to have some basic competence in English, which is normally certified by an upper-secondary school certificate. It follows that the completion of upper-secondary school makes a big difference for both intergenerational and worklife mobility in Hong Kong. It is true that, in almost all industrial nations, formal credentials are taken as signs of functional skills, and so the better qualified generally receive more rewards than the not-so-well qualified. However, this difference is, in the case of Hong Kong, buttressed by a linguistic gap, which is rooted in the larger political and economic setting of this society. Those who can operate effectively in the English-speaking white collar world of commerce and civil service enjoy better mobility chances than those who work in the Cantonese-speaking world of manufacturing and menial personal services. This makes the manual/non-manual gap of Hong Kong wider than it would otherwise be, and one manifestation of this gap is the strong hierarchical effects in our model.

Concluding Remarks

Let us return to the opening question of this paper: how open is Hong Kong society? What can we learn from the recent mobility studies with respect to this question, and what issues call for further investigation? To begin with, Tsang, Wong and Lui have alerted us to the inequality in relative mobility chances in Hong Kong. Their findings are of academic and practical relevance, as Hong Kong's general public as well as its professional sociologists often feel that they live in an open, meritocratic society. Chan and associates have provided a more detailed description of Hong Kong's mobility regime through a comparative exercise. They observe a weak tendency towards inheritance and strong hierarchical barriers, and they relate these observations to the larger social, political and industrial context of post-war Hong Kong. It must, however, be noted that their findings require confirmation from corroborative research.

There are also a few unsettled issues. First, we do not know how Hong Kong's mobility regime has changed over time. Tsang has addressed this question with respect to the ten years between 1976 and 1986. But, as shown above, his own data do not support his conclusion. I have argued that any changes in a society's mobility regime, if they exist, are likely to be slow, and so their effects can only be observed in the long run. Since we do not have comparable mobility data from the early post-war period, it is plainly impossible to test whether Hong Kong in the 1980s is a more open society than it was in the 1950s.[27]

In the absence of a genuine time series of mobility data, a second best option is to split the 1989 mobility table into two or three sub-tables according to the respondents' birth cohort, and then treat the sub-tables as if they were derived from different mobility surveys. While this practice is widely accepted, its applicability is limited in the present case — the small N (752) of the 1989 table implies that the sub-tables will be very sparse, and the results derived from these tables unreliable. One way to get around the sparsity problem is to collapse the 1989 table according to, say, the threefold distinction of manual, non-manual and farm. But the cost of doing so is a much lower resolution of the mobility pattern. In other words, there is a trade-off between the ability to study longitudinal change and that to describe mobility pattern in detail.

Finally, as mobility researchers are ultimately concerned with the broader question of class boundary and class formation, there are several neighbouring issues, such as assortative mating, pattern of friendship ties, and worklife mobility, which will complement our understanding of intergenerational social mobility. These issues remain largely unexplored in the context of Hong Kong.

We have seen that Tsang, Wong and Lui have made laudable attempts to study Hong Kong's mobility pattern. Although their analyses are flawed, the shortcomings of their papers should not be taken as indications of fundamental weakness in mobility research as such. It is true that the merits and explanatory power of mobility research and class analysis, as conceptual tools for understanding Hong Kong society, have yet to be established over a wide range of issues (e.g. class difference over access to various levels of education, health, political partisanship). This requires concerted and vigorous research effort from Hong Kong's sociologists. This review is a call for high quality research. Readers would have radically misunderstood me if they were dissuaded from mobility studies altogether.

Notes

1. See Chaney and Podmore (1973), Lau and Ho (1982). In a survey conducted in 1985, 88% of the respondents agreed that, 'Hong Kong [is] a place full of developmental opportunities. Hence it is individual efforts that count in one's success or failure' (Lau and Kuan 1988:63-64). Similarly, in a 1986 survey, 84% of the respondents agreed that, 'provided that a person had the ability and worked hard, he should have the

opportunity to improve his social and economic status' (Lau and Kuan 1988:64-67). In the same survey, 26% of the respondents considered themselves as belonging to the lower class, and 73% the middle class. At the same time, 44% of the respondents considered their fathers as belonging to the lower class and 49% the middle class. In other words, by their own judgement, more people felt that they had achieved upward mobility than suffered downward mobility.

2. This interpretation may explain the apparent contradiction that people were much less optimistic when they were asked in more concrete terms about their own mobility prospects (as opposed to the openness of Hong Kong as a whole). For example, over 70% of the respondents in the 1990 Hong Kong Social Indicators Survey said that they had little or no chance of getting a better job (Wong 1992:168).
3. Absolute mobility rates mean inflow, outflow and total mobility rates. Their magnitudes are influenced not only by the openness of a society, but also by the scale and speed of change in the class structure over time. So to obtain measures of the underlying openness of a society, the effect of the changes in the class structure needs to be taken into account. This is usually done in terms of odds ratios, and the measures are referred to as relative mobility rates. See Heath (1981) or Hout (1983) for an introduction to mobility table analysis.
4. Referring to a survey conducted by a welfare agency, Siu suggests that, '85% of the recent immigrants are between the ages of 15 and 30, predominantly male. *Seventy-nine percent are of rural origin*' (1986:2, emphasis added). On the other hand, a report on the wave of refugee-influx in 1962 claims that, '[there] are some grounds for thinking that *the Canton workers who were being sent back to the countryside* were so discontented that the authorities want them out of the city at any price, even that of letting them out of the country; in order to avoid an explosion in the city they were helped on their way to Hongkong' (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 June 1962, p. 498, emphasis added).

5. See Hout and Jackson (1986) for a discussion of the relationship between emigration, aggregated demand of the economy, and unemployment.
6. Although I have discussed Hong Kong's economic dynamism in terms of the overall shift from manufacturing to the service sector, the same argument also applies to shifts between individual branches of industry. Consider, for example, the short-lived wig and denim booms in the 1960s and 1970s, respectively.
7. It should be noted at the outset that Tsang's analysis pertains to occupational data in early worklife. If it is true that (a) most people achieve occupational maturity in their mid-thirties, and (b) that the general direction of career mobility is from less advantaged to more advantaged positions, then Tsang could have underestimated the extent of upward mobility. He could also have missed some counter-mobility to higher socio-economic positions in later career, and thus overestimated the degree of downward mobility.
8. These distinctions are: (a) employers and non-employers are separated for both the 'Professional, technical and related workers', and 'Administrative and managerial workers'; (b) 'supervisors and foremen' originally grouped in sales, service, and manufacturing sectors now form a group of their own; (c) 'Hawkers' and 'Domestic helpers' are separated from 'Sales workers' and 'Service workers', respectively; (d) manufacturing workers are divided, according to skill levels, into 'Operative workers', 'Technicians and craftsmen', and 'Manufacturing labourer'. See Tsang (1992:52-57) for elaboration of the recording.
9. In the case of the 5 x 5 table, Tsang also tests a Revised Quasi-Perfect Mobility Model in which not only the diagonal cells but also the cells representing exchanges between classes 1 and 2 (see the five class version of his schema in Table 6) are blocked out.
10. For those who are not familiar with the terminology of modelling fitting, let me just say that statistical models are ab-

stracted characterizations of the world which aim at capturing the essential features rather than the full details of the relationship between variables. Each model generates a set of fitted values which would deviate from the observed data to some extent. An unsatisfactory model is one such that the deviations associated with it, as measured by G^2 (see Note 15 below), are so large that they cannot be attributed to random sampling error alone. In other words, an unsatisfactory model cannot reproduce the observed data, and in that sense, it does not describe the world adequately. Accordingly, the assumptions associated with the model have to be revised.

11. This is a composite index Tsang constructs on the basis of education attainment and income.
12. However, since income and education are indeed the principal components of socio-economic indices, Tsang's argument stands stronger for the status attainment analysis that he undertakes in a separate paper (Tsang 1993). In that case, however, Tsang needs to compare the two samples across a whole range of measures of central tendency and variability rather than just the arithmetic means of income and education.
13. Note that Henretta's argument pertains to home ownership, but a comparable argument can easily be made in terms of intergenerational coresidence.
14. See Lieberson's (1985) discussion on selectivity and controls.
15. G^2 measures the deviation between the observed values and the fitted cell values under the specified loglinear model — the larger the G^2, the worse the fit is. 'The p values associated with a given model are to be interpreted as follows: If Model A is true in the population, then the probability of observing this result is p ... [conventionally] we require that the observed p value be .05 or greater in order not to reject the hypothesis associated with the model. Hence the higher the probability that the observed data could have been generated by a given model, the more plausible the model. Unlike standard hypothesis testing where support is provided for the alternative hypothesis by observing small p values, when you posit a nonnull model to which data are fit, support for that model is provided by observing high p values' (Knoke and Bohrnstedt 1994:377).
16. Consider the analogous and more familiar chi-square tests in which one can easily reject the null hypothesis of no association with tables of large N (Knoke and Bohrnstedt 1994:163).
17. Moreover, the parameter estimates for the change in the strength of association, b_ks, are extremely weak (0.0002 for 1976-81 and 0.001 for 1981-86) and insignificant.
18. Wong and Lui (1992) adopt the sevenfold class schema of the Oxford Mobility Study (see Goldthorpe 1987:40-43).
19. The G^2 for the cross-boundary model is 0.4, while those for other models are 20.0 or above.
20. Without explanation, Wong and Lui drop class IV (the petty bourgeoisie) from their table altogether, and then collapse the remaining 6 classes into 4, before fitting the cross-boundary model to the data.
21. Wong and Lui's cross-boundary model can be formally represented as follows:

$$\text{Log } F_{ij} = a_0 + O_i + D_j + b_{ij}Z$$

where F_{ij} is the fitted value of cell (i, j); a_0 is the grand mean; O_i, D_j are the two marginal effects; b_{ij} is the cell-specific interaction term; for cells on the main diagonal and the following cells: (1, 2), (2, 1), (2, 3) and (3, 2), Z=1; otherwise Z=0. They have shown that b_{ij} practically equals zero for cells (2, 3) and (3, 2). Thus, an alternative model which specifies Z=1 for the diagonal cells and for cells (1, 2) and (2, 1) only will probably fit the data just as well and save 2 degrees of freedom.
22. One can also postulate mobility barriers, i.e. that people are particularly unlikely to be found in certain cells. The parameter estimates would in such cases be negative.
23. It should however be noted that the insignificance of these three parameters may be an artefact of the relatively small N of the Hong Kong mobility table.
24. We also use mobility data from the 1989 Hong Kong Social Mobility Survey.

25. It is significant that strong hierarchical effects can be observed with respect to, not only intergenerational, but also career mobility in Hong Kong (see Chan 1994, forthcoming).
26. It should also be noted that Hong Kong's fluidity pattern is quite the opposite to the Japanese one, in which there is a strong tendency towards inheritance but weak hierarchical barriers. In other words, while it is relatively unlikely for Japanese men to leave their father's class, those who manage to do so are relatively unconstrained as to where they will end up.
27. A mobility table can be constructed from Mitchell's 1967 Urban Family Life Survey. But it is problematic to compare that table with, say, the 1989 table because of two reasons. First, Mitchell's data pertain to married men only. Secondly, the occupational classification used in Mitchell's survey is not detailed enough to warrant confidence for a high level of comparability. See Ganzeboom, Luijkx and Treiman (1989) for details.

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香港的社會流動狀況
一個回顧

陳德榮

（中文摘要）

本文回顧近年發表的幾篇關於香港社會流動狀況的論文。我將指出這些論文的主要論據的錯謬，並且論證它們所提出的理據並不支持它們的結論。但這些論文的缺點並不意味社會流動研究本身是沒有價值的。