

MASTER'S THESIS

Struggling against social disadvantages: the life stories of six "new immigrant families" in Hong Kong in the 1990's

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Date of Award:
1999

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**Struggling Against Social Disadvantages:
The Life Stories of Six "New Immigrant Families"
in Hong Kong in the 1990's**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

February 1999

Hong Kong Baptist University

Abstract

The "new immigrants" who came from the Mainland to Hong Kong in the 1980s and 90s are portrayed in the mass media and social surveys as welfare dependents and a social burden. The interest of the Hong Kong public have been aroused to the speed and the degree to which "new immigrants" can become assimilated. People care very much about the "social cost" caused by the "new immigrants" before they produce net "benefits" to Hong Kong.

The inflow of migrants from the Mainland into Hong Kong has occurred over a period of several decades. The immigrants of the 1980s and 1990s faced socioeconomic conditions that are very different from those faced by immigrants of the 1960s and 70s: less employment opportunities, a more developed social welfare system, emergence of a Hong Kong identity and intensification of discrimination against mainlanders. Hence, the "new immigrant families" face more hardship than their earlier cohorts in trying to start a life in Hong Kong.

Based on intensive studies of six new immigrant families in Hong Kong, this thesis examines the problems faced by family members, their struggles against social disadvantages and their attempts to secure a place for themselves in a new environment.

More specifically, this thesis focuses on parent-child relation and finds that for parents of the new immigrant families, assimilation into Hong Kong society is taken to mean moving upward from the lower to the middle class, and that parents are willing to bear with frustrations in order to project their own experiences and wishes onto the lives of the younger generation.

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