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## **Doing Research About Hong Kong: Petty Capitalists Doing Business in China**

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### *Abstract*

Cooperation across boundaries creates difficulties. In Chinese societies, overcoming difficulties is often accomplished through *guanxi*: the mobilization or creation of personal connections. In this chapter, we reflect on our own involvement in webs of *guanxi* while conducting ethnographic research on Hong Kong entrepreneurs doing business in China. Our research has demonstrated that effective economic cooperation is enhanced through skilled management of interpersonal relationships, and emphasized the particular centrality of *guanxi* in cross-border business practices. We examine the practices of cooperation used by ourselves in this research with those used by our informants, and argue that tact is a crucial and insufficiently understood dimension of the practice of *guanxi*. The operation of tact in cooperation is explored through several extended vignettes that illustrate how identities, obligations and relationships are managed in doing business across the Chinese border and in conducting research among these investors.