Back to base: Adaptation and Self-identity of Young Taiwanese Transnationals

Nora Chiang* Sunny Liao**

Abstract

Since the early 1980’s, one of the most popular migration destinations for the Taiwanese middle-class has been Australia. One of the main reasons for this migration has been to obtain perceived better educational environments for their children, particularly to avoid the military service required of young men in Taiwan. In recent years, an increasing number of these young Taiwanese migrants have returned from Australia. The major reason for this reverse migration is to join the job market and to establish careers in Taiwan. This study discusses the motivations of the young transnationals who emigrated at young ages with their parents, but who have returned as grown-ups, as well as their levels of adaptation and their self-identities as they move between the two societies. The research was conducted by using a semi-structured questionnaire in interview format with 22 young Taiwanese migrants (between the ages of 24 to 36) who have returned from Australia. The data were analysed and interpreted using conventional qualitative research methods.

The study found that these young transnationals who return to Taiwan simply look for better career opportunities. Before their return, most of them evaluated both the advantages and disadvantages of the job markets in Taiwan and Australia. However, the chance of reunions with their families in Taiwan, the search for potential spouses and their affection towards Taiwan are also important factors affecting their decisions.

The young returnee’s different experiences in the two cultures/societies of Taiwan and Australia means that they have had to adapt to various aspects of their environments. The circulatory mobility influence their self identity. Frequently, due to their constant need to adapt to both Taiwanese and Australian environments, they have developed a dual/flexible identity that encompasses Taiwanese and Australian cultures through which they strive to make the best use of their backgrounds in the global community.

Key words: Reverse migration, young transnationals, adaptation, dual identity, Australia.

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Background

Taiwanese emigration has reached a considerable level in the last two decades, with major destinations including the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. Among the various reasons accounting for the increase in out-migration, emergence of the middle-class in Taiwan’s population since the early eighties, tense cross-strait relations, and the relaxation of travel restrictions in 1989 are foremost (Chiang and Hsu 2000, Beal and Sos 1999). On the other hand, the introduction of entrepreneurial and skill migration programs to attract well educated and affluent migrants from East Asia played an important role. Contemporary Chinese migrants, originating from the rapidly industrializing countries of Asia, therefore differ from the migrants in the early part of the century in their adaptations and impacts at the destinations. They enter the host countries mainly for life-style, children’s education and political security, as in the case of immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan. The mobility patterns of the households have created transnational families, which pose a challenge to conventional paradigms and theories on migration research. The migration policies of both home and host countries also need to be re-examined in view of the dynamics of diaspora mobility.

The youthful structure of the Taiwan-born has been noted by the Australian demographers (Hugo and Maher 1995, Walmsley, Roley and Hugo 1998) who for the first time included the Taiwan-born as a separate national group because of its significant increase since the mid-eighties. Behind the phenomenon of youthfulness of the Taiwan-born population is Taiwanese parents’ motivation to maximize the educational opportunity of the younger generation. As shown in Figure 1, the largest concentration of population falls in the age group of 15-19 and 20-24 respectively. They may include the young first generation of Taiwan-born who immigrated with their parents, or young
unaccompanied sojourners who stayed in Australia on their own.² In spite of their significant proportions in the population, existing literature on Taiwanese immigrants in Australia has largely overlooked the younger generation who are either Taiwan-born or Australian-born.


**Fig. 1** Age-Sex Profiles for Taiwan-born, 2001

It is not clear how many Taiwanese migrants have returned to Taiwan, or have gone elsewhere, but statistics show that permanent departures of Taiwanese immigrants are on the rise (Figure 2). Moreover, it is indicated by a recent survey (Chiang and Hsu 2004) that the Taiwan-born in the age groups of 15-24 and 25-44 are more keen than other age groups to return to Taiwan. The main reason for them to return to Taiwan is to establish their careers, especially after have completed their tertiary education (Table 1).
Fig. 2  Trend of Permanent Departures of Taiwanese Immigrants from Australia

Table 1  Relation between age and reasons for wanting to return to Taiwan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for returning to Taiwan</th>
<th>15-24</th>
<th>25-44</th>
<th>45-64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start new business</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for spouse</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot adapt in Australia</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to home country</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for staying in Australia</th>
<th>15-24</th>
<th>25-44</th>
<th>45-64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting used to Australia</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already have work</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married in Australia</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives in Australia</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chiang and Hsu (2004: 84)
Note: Based on multiple answers, not including those below 15, and have not replied

In this study, the authors look at a small group of young first generation who emigrated at young ages with their parents but have returned as grown-ups, to study their adaptation through social and economic incorporations in Australia, their motivations to return to Taiwan instead of staying in Australia, and their self-identity in both Australia
and Taiwan as they move between the two societies.\textsuperscript{3}

\textbf{Review of pertinent literature}

\textbf{Adjustment of Taiwan-born Migrants in Australia}

Previous studies on the Taiwan-born population in Australia have covered distribution and residential mobility, employment, and female headship of immigrant households. As noted earlier (Chiang and Kuo 2000), there is an undercount of Taiwanese in the Australian Census, as only Taiwan-born are represented since many Taiwanese immigrants were born in Mainland China. A survey of 319 Taiwanese households which was carried out in 2003 (Hsu and Chiang 2004) mainly to assess their needs of services provided by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission in Australia. The survey also covers their reasons for migration, living conditions, adaptations and intentions to return to Taiwan.

Among the problems faced by Taiwanese immigrants, it was found that language barrier tops the list, followed by separation of family members, and employment (Table 1). Despite being well educated and fairly affluent, Taiwan-born business and skilled migrants have high rates of unemployment. Research indicates that lack of proficiency in English is the main factor that prevented them in finding suitable employment (Chiang and Kuo, 2000, Chiang 2004a). However, as indicated by the Australian Census, the percentage of Taiwan-born who answered the question “How well does the person speak English?” as “speaking English very well/well” has increased significantly from (53.7\% in 1991, 65.4\% in 1996, and 70.9\% in 2001. 

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Table 2  The Most Serious Adaptation Problems of Taiwanese Immigrants in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language barrier</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members living separately</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling for children</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing up children</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding marriage partners</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification of education</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life adjustment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining citizenship</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chiang and Hsu 2004: 78.

Note: There are 1,028 persons from 319 households in the sample. The respondents do not include young persons below 15, and those who did not state any problems nor have responded to this question.

Chiang and Kuo (2000) suggested that racial discrimination is a possible factor that explains the relatively poor labor force participation by recent Taiwanese migrants. One of the major difficulties many Taiwanese immigrants face is the lengthy and tedious re-certification process. This had led some immigrants to believe that this is an intentional strategy on the part of both the government and private agencies in order to protect the interest of the Australia-born while discriminating against the migrants. Subsequently, many Taiwanese immigrants experienced downward social mobility after arriving in Australia, and as a result the male head of household who is the major bread-earner flies back to make a living in Taiwan in order to support his family in Australia, similar to the case of Hong Kong immigrants (Pe-pua, Mitchell, Iredale and Castles 1996). Further ethnographic analysis (Chiang and Song 2001, Chiang 2004a) shows that in spite of their high educational levels, Taiwanese migrants face various difficulties with finding employment. Having been successful businessmen who have capital and expertise in manufacturing, export and international marketing, they find it hard to take up work that is not commensurate with their educational and economic
background. It is therefore unlikely that they engage themselves as wage/salary earners.

As the Taiwanese immigrant community is relatively new, it is difficult for them to start profitable businesses or adapt well right away. The major difficulties of the Taiwanese are: An unfamiliarity with Australian business culture and labor relations, complex rules and regulations, the small size of the market and high tax. Many go for technical and further education (TAFE) or university degrees, or engage in various types of self-employment, apart from the small number who have succeeded in trade investments and created employment.

Similarly, Taiwanese in New Zealand also experience status dislocation (Ho 1999). Ip (2004) analysed that lacking in ‘cultural capital’, when compared with the Hong Kong, Malaysian and Singaporean Chinese, the Taiwanese are hampered by their comparative weakness in English (especially oral skill), and their unfamiliarly with British social and cultural systems. Immigrants from these other places lived in former British colonies, and thereby accumulated appropriate socio-cultural capital which they could use in New Zealand, which remains an Anglocentric society. Their ignorance of employment relations practices and council by-laws, and an unfamiliar business environment, are major hurdles to their establishing business in New Zealand.

As the Taiwanese experienced difficult social and economic incorporation into Australia society (Ip, Wu & Inglis 1998), transnationalism was experienced by many families through their “flying trapeze” practices back and forth to Taiwan, thus leading Ip et al. to suggest that the term “diaspora” is better suited than the term “migrant” to describe the Taiwanese in Australia. Little is known of astronaut families to this day as it has not been well studied, except a small sample of “dan qi ma ma” who heads these households in Australasia (Chiang 2004b).

Inglis and Wu (1994) noted that the establishment of friendship and social networks
is important both as a source of information and as a social support for new arrivals. We find that the Taiwanese are active in various Taiwanese social organizations, such as Tzu-chi Buddhist Compassion Relief Association, Australian Taiwanese Friendship Association, Friends of Australasian Youth Association, Taiwan Chamber of Commerce, Women’s Association, and Hakka Association. The ease of communication within their own subethnic community, the availability of information through cable TV, and church services offered in their own ethnic languages, have slowed down their acculturation process in the host society. It is assumed in this study that the younger generation who has less problems with English and the Australian culture would adapt better economically to the mainstream society than their parents.

**Transnationalism, Return Migration, and Self-identity**

An earlier study by Hsiao et al. (1994) noted that return migration is due to global economic recession on one hand, and the continuing rapid economic growth of East Asia which offered many job opportunities and have attracted high-tech personnel to return to sending countries. Also, some entrepreneurs who encountered a “glass ceiling” that hindered their upward mobility in American companies feel discouraged and opted to come back to establish their businesses in Asia, while some young returnees who identify themselves with Chinese culture return to their home country. Guo and Iredale (2003) found that economic factors, especially better opportunities for employment and business, and social support networks were strong motivating factors for all potential Taiwanese returnees (p. 35). However, “many saw returning (to Australia) as yet another temporary move and anticipated returning or returning regularly to Australia” (Guo and Iredale 2003: 35). A recent study of Hong Kong immigrants in Vancouver by Ley and Kobayashi found “retirement” the *raison d’être* for “ending up in Canada” and enjoying the benefits that retired people get after making money in Hong Kong (p. 123).
Earlier, Virtanen’s idea of circulation is expounded in Figure 3 where four stages are represented: life in the country of origin, emigration, life in the country, and return.

![Diagram of the Phases of Overseas Migration Phenomenon as a Continuous Circle](image)

**Figure 3  The Phases of Overseas Migration Phenomenon as a Continuous Circle**  
Source: Adapted from Virtanen (1981): 183-201.

Return migrants most likely would experience reverse cultural shock, followed by readjustment. Cerase (1974) concluded that the type of return and the post–return impact of Italian migrants depend largely on the stage in the process of acculturation that the migrants had reached in America at the moment of return. In the case of Irish return migrants, Gmelch (1986) tried to predict the extent of readjustment of returnees and found that the variable most strongly related to adjustment was satisfaction with social life, especially in developing friendship. A moderate relationship was found between readjustment and both housing and job satisfaction, while an inverse relationship was
hypothesized between the length of time spent abroad and adjustment. A large majority felt they had been so changed by the overseas experience that they now had more in common with citizens of the host country than with their own countrymen. Likewise, they believed that they were ‘broader in their outlook than those who had never left Ireland, after exposing themselves to many different ethnic groups and life-styles. Some even felt that the attitudes and world view of local people had been the single most difficult aspect of their return. Local people were described as ‘narrow-minded’ and ‘backward’, as inflexible and inward-looking.

Most early research in migration assumed that migrants would sever their homeland ties and attachments as they began to settle and integrate themselves into their newly adopted countries. In the last decade, however, scholars began to acknowledge that international migration could no longer be seen as a one-way process. Some, for example, observed that spatial shifts in production processes had created new opportunities for economic migration particularly for highly skilled migrants associated with activities of transnational corporations (Findlay 1996). Others also saw that migrants were increasingly likely to maintain, rather than severing their contacts across border, particularly with their place of origin, forming ‘transnational social fields’ (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Such transnational practices prompted further an increasing number of researchers to investigate a set of activities grouped loosely together under the rubric of “transnationalism” (Levitt and Water 2002). Vertovec (1999) argued that it was through remittances and business transactions as well as other daily activities that migrants were frequently shuttling between two or more societies. The interview conducted of Hong Kong middle-class returnees from Canada shows that that transnational practice consists of strategic switching between an economic pole in Hong Kong and quality-of-life pole in Canada (Ley and Kobayashi 2005).

The disadvantages of transnationalism are also supported by Foner (2002) who
found that those who move back and forth between the United States and their parents’ country of origin may feel that they do not completely belong to either place. Levitt contended that some of the highly educated respondents saw their transnational connections as a “Plan B” that could be put into action to circumvent blocked mobility or as a way to diversify risk and produce additional income. An early study of Taiwanese immigrants by Lee (1992) noted that some parents encourage children to speak English at home so that their English would improve. However, most parents do not wish their children to marry non-Chinese, and most children in school do not speak English at home. It was found that some children tend to follow parents’ value in perceiving Australians, and therefore showed low level of assimilation. Though growing up in Australia, they may be highly influenced by their parents’ who experience reflect a low level of assimilation by the feeling: “I think I am less likely to marry a non-Chinese, because the culture and languages are different. I need to learn more Chinese. Chinese is my mother tongue, and I believe it would be useful on the future”.

**Young Asian Migrants’ Adjustment**

Existing literature on young Taiwanese immigrants has largely overlooked the younger generation. Systematic knowledge of the younger generation is lacking partly because of the recent arrival of Taiwanese in Australia, in spite of the rapid growth. Wong (1997) noted that migration as a means of providing for the children’s future has been particularly emphasized by the recent Hong Kong immigrants. She investigated the Hong Kong Chinese adolescent immigrants’ mental health status, their experience of daily hassles, their perceptions of stress associated with hassles and social support from friends and family, and the effects on mental health. It is evident that teenagers with little English on arrival have great difficulties with their studies in school, as well as with establishing peer relationships, particularly in schools where Chinese enrolments are low.
Even for those who have a good command of English, the stress arises from attempts to fulfill high educational expectations (p.12). Immigrant parents’ expectations do not just relate to academic performance: they often uphold the Chinese traditional value of filial piety, and expect their children to accept their advice on various aspects of life, including management of time, leisure activities, retaining the Chinese culture through speaking Chinese at home, dating and preparation for future career, etc. The generation gap widened between the parents and children and they experience feelings of bitter confusion in relation to conflicting expectations of parents and peers. Apart from the cultural and value conflicts, many of the recent Hong Kong adolescent immigrants experience considerably increased responsibilities at home, including household chores, gardening, shopping, doing minor repair work, contacting overseas family members and relatives, and in some families acting as interpreter for parents and relative who are weak in English, and taking care of younger siblings while both of the “astronaut” parents are not in Australia. Some children become more mature and independent as a result of handling all the changes and challenges, but some may experience tremendous stress and exhibit symptoms of maladjustment. Earlier, Kee and Skeldon (1994) noted that the adjustment problem was aggravated considerably if the parents spoke little English/Young children had, on occasion, to handle external matters for the parents, and there were role reversals between men and women and between children and parents.

In our view, one should not generalize about the younger generation, as the living arrangements may affect the outcome of migration. Pe-Pua, Iredale and Castles (1996) used the term “parachute kids” for children living with one parent or with both parents back in Hong Kong. In a different context, Kuo and Roysircar. (2004) studied unaccompanied sojourners attending secondary schools in a large Canadian city. A significant number of these students reported feeling ill-prepared and poorly-oriented upon their arrival in Canada, as well as suffering from a lack of information about their
host country and their purpose for sojourning.

**Research method and research framework**

Having reviewed the literature above, we feel that it is imperative to get to know the young Taiwanese in the context of transnational and social field, which are the new methodological jargons for studying diasporas. We hope to probe into the key issues of the lives of the young first generation who returned from Australia, through a qualitative analysis to obtain an in-depth understanding of their life experiences. Our analysis is based on ethnographic research that investigated experiences of migrants from an *emic* perspective that gave voice to the immigrants and focused on self-assessment of their social and economic integration and identity both in Taiwan and Australia. Although an earlier survey in Australia (Chiang & Hsu 2004) has helped to impact policy implication for the Taiwan government, it has presented an incomplete view of the immigrant stories, since the questions were structured, and have not been answered individually by members of the household. Neither the census, nor the survey reveals process of migration, explain problems of adaptation and answer questions of identity. Nevertheless, the advantages of conducting transnational research at two sites, in Taiwan and Australia were evident in this research, since the researchers can understand the totality of the social field which engaged our interviewees.

Since the 1970s, geographers who are disenchanted with the dehumanizing aspects of positivist-based enquiry have developed a humanistic approach, by not referring to people merely as aggregate groups, but which sought to portray human experience and expression (Robinson 1998). Borrowing from anthropology and sociology, this research use an interpretive technique in generating information from the young first generation of return migrants living in Taipei. To gain access to the experiences and insights of our
subjects, the formality of structured questionnaires has largely been rejected in favour of less informal approaches, generating predominantly qualitative materials for analysis (Robinson 1998).

Using snowball sampling technique, 22 young return migrants were interviewed in 2003. The questions asked are summarized in the conceptual framework (Figure 4) that includes decisions to leave Taiwan, adaptation at the destination, adjustment problems upon return to Taiwan, self-identify and future plans. On the left of the diagram, the socio-political reasons that motivated the family to leave Taiwan are probed into. Those who have assessed the situation and have decided to stay are the non-movers who remained in the sending community. On the right of the diagram, encounters with cultural shock and problems of adaptation were met with in Australia. While completing their education, the young migrants either stay in Australia to work or return to Taiwan to do so, after a process of assessment. Various reasons are considered in making this decision to return. Most likely, they enter a new process of adaptation in Taiwan, which affected their self-identity and their long-term career planning.
Profile of young return migrants and reasons for return

Profile of Young Return Migrants

Among the 22 interviewees, there are 13 females and 9 males, ranging from 24 to 36 years of age. Most of them (17) are single, while ranging from 8 to 24 years old at the time of migration. Most of the males migrated between 13 to 15 years of age before they reach the age when they cannot leave before fulfillment of military services, while age of migration for females varies. While moving with their parents between 1986 and 1992, 18 have lived in Australia from 5 to 12 years, while 4 have lived for more than 13 years. The years they spent in Taiwan varies from less than one year (6), 2-3 years (5), 3 t 4-5 years (3), and 6-8 years (8). Only 5 people immigrated to Australia when they were in
primary school, while the largest number (13) immigrated when they were in junior and senior high schools. According to some parents whom the second author interviewed earlier in Australia, they hope that their children are basically Chinese in culture and can master the language if they did not leave before primary school. Among the 8 people who completed Bachelor’s degree and 14 who completed Master’s, they are mostly trained in Commerce and Information science. Only half lived with both of their parents after migrating to Australia. Among the other half, 5 live in “astronaut” families, 2 with brothers and sisters, and 4 are unaccompanied sojourners. Among the 22 interviewees, 6 have returned with the whole family. Their occupations are diverse, but mainly in Computer Science, Finance and International Trade.

**Reasons for Returning to Taiwan**

As indicated by the first author’s earlier studies (Chiang and Kuo 2000, Chiang 2004) it was found that even with extensive work experiences, substantial entrepreneurial skills, and financial capital brought from Taiwan, the Taiwanese migrants do lack the social and cultural capital needed to attain early economic integration. The prospect of finding work is presumably easier for the younger generation. Interestingly, their reasons for returning are quite complex and different from their parents. The chief considerations are: better career opportunities in Taiwan, the chance of reunions with their families, to participate in family business, the search for potential spouses and their affection towards Taiwan. Still, the main reasons for their return is to pursue careers in Taiwan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Age of migration</th>
<th>Years of residence</th>
<th>Highest degree earned</th>
<th>Industry/occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>B-1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>M.A. (Information Science)</td>
<td>Computer/engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B-2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>B.A. (International Trade)</td>
<td>Computer related/manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>B-3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>M.S. (Accounting)</td>
<td>Accounting firm/manager of international tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>B-4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>M.A. (Finance)</td>
<td>Computer design/business manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>B-5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>B.A. (Mass media)</td>
<td>Electronics/information manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>B-6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M.A. (Digital products design)</td>
<td>Electronics/product design engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>B-7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>M.A. (Commerce)</td>
<td>Asset Management/finance manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>B-8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Master’s (Economics and finance)</td>
<td>Children’s English school/manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>B-9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>B.A. (Architect)</td>
<td>Government contracted firm/urban development planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>B-10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>B.A. (Law)</td>
<td>Accounting firm/lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>B-11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>M.A. (Bio-technology and tourism management)</td>
<td>Australia Affairs/researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>B-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>B.A. (Commerce and sales)</td>
<td>Trading company/assistant to manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>S-1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>M.A. (International)</td>
<td>Family enterprise/consultant on import/export</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>S-2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>M.A. (Mass media and accounting)</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>S-3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
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Employment Related Reasons

The three main factors influencing one’s choice of occupation are education background, bilingual ability and prospects of promotion. Apparently, those who major in commerce and computer science are more likely to return to Taiwan to find work, simply because job offers in such areas are readily found in Taiwan. On the other hand, those who major in medicine, agriculture, arts and law choose to look for work in Australia because the professional practices between Australia and Taiwan are different. In some instances, the pay in fields such as medicine and law are higher in Australia.

Their choice to come back to Taiwan also depends on their ability to master both languages. Faced with the English-speaking learning environment, they shy away from subjects such as literature, and tend to do better in mathematics and science. They also follow their parents’ path in business by taking up international trade and business administration in school, hence influencing their choice of careers later in their lives.

Coming from Taiwan where the Chinese language is the media for teaching, the younger migrants have retained their mother tongue as their assets, particularly if their parents require them to attend Chinese language schools in the weekends, or come back to Taiwan during the semester breaks to learn Chinese, in order to master two languages well. They fill in the void of bilingual manpower greatly needed by Taiwan at this time as international trade now flourishes in Taiwan. Being familiar with the western culture through their ability to master the English language is a big plus factor, as one of our respondents Mr. Yen (B-5) commented on the industries of Australia:

“Australia lags behind in commerce, and heavy industries are non-existing because the country is into the protection of its natural environment. Since I have a degree in information science, it is much harder for me to find work in Australia. I can easily find work in an electronic company in Taiwan, or work in an internet company…From early on, I realized that I will go to the United States or return to Taiwan to look for work. I would do much
better here than in the United States, because I can speak Minnan, Mandarin, Cantonese, and English, whereas I would only use English in my work in the U.S….If I stay back in Australia, my English would not be as good as the local born Australians…”

A similar view on mastering the English languages is given by Ms. Pan (B-9) from Brisbane:

“I get by easily in Chinese here, while I have the advantage of speaking better English than the local Taiwanese. If I were in a foreign country, I am still at a disadvantage in my English when I look for work in Australia…”

The lack of employment opportunity and relative difficulty of being promoted in Australia is a factor often mentioned. In the first part of the 1990’s, Australia’s unemployment rate is at 8-10%. The small population ratio is a disadvantage of Australia’s growth in employment and commercial activities, compared to Taiwan’s.  

As Ms. Han (B-7) who came back to Taiwan remarked on the common phenomenon of unemployment in Australia:

“Taiwan’s unemployment rate is 5-6% at the most; but 8% is the norm for Australia. I don’t think you should ask if we can find work, since even the local Australians cannot find work. I have accompanied a friend who went to the unemployment center to apply for benefits. We saw a long, long line there.”

Along the same line of thinking, Mr. B-1 said that he received close to thirty responses to his C.V. posted on the internet in Taiwan, some of them ask him to go to work immediately. Whereas if he did the same in Australia, he might just get a handful of letters asking him for interviews. Even though Taiwan’s economy is not booming like in the late eighties, and employment rate is declining nowadays, the unemployment rate is still lower than Australia’s (4.44% in Taiwan compared to 8% in Australia in 2004.)

Like their parents who fail to find work in Australia, lacking in cultural capital is a liability of the younger generation as well, even though they speak English fluently.
This is supported by Ms Wan’s (M-1) remarks:

“Although we don’t have major difficulties in adapting to Australia, we are aware of the subtle differences in culture. Because of different backgrounds, sometimes it is hard to understand their jokes, and to be one of them. Likewise, they won’t be able to understand the jokes or slang we Asians use, and the distance grows between us…it is something to overcome in our peer relationship.”

Following this logic, it is easier to understand why job opportunities for Taiwanese young immigrants are fewer than local-born Australians. A distinct drawback in procuring employment is their lower proficiency in English and the lower ability to communicate culturally. In the same token, chances for promotion is bleak and the “glass ceiling” effect is there. Mr. Tung (B-3) who worked in an accounting office for five years told his story:

“Basically my colleagues and I got along well. Having known my background, they have always been helpful. However the “glass ceiling”, or invisible handicap is there when it comes to promotion. I know why – it would be much easier for my boss to hire a white man if the customers are white. Likewise, if the customers are Chinese, a Chinese employee would be more helpful…I would not call this discrimination from the point of view of the company.”

Ms Chang (S-6) who returned from Sydney shared a similar view through her experiences of working for six years in Australia in different accounting offices:

“No matter how well you speak, you can never complete the white people or the Australian-born Chinese. No matter how hard you work, you would only be promoted to a certain position. It always worries me that I would be the next one to be fired…”

Several other respondents said that they returned to Taiwan to work because of the difficulty of getting promoted. They realize that if they seek out better opportunities in Australia, and more equal treatment, they would have to work extra hard.
Reunion With One’s Family in Taiwan

In our sample of 22 respondents, there are different living arrangements among their families, such as women-headed families, families of siblings living together while both parents live in Taiwan to earn a living, or the young sojourner living by him or herself. Usually, the parents who keep their business in Taiwan stay with the young migrants until they became sixteen years of age, and fly back to Taiwan, while visiting the children several times a year.

“I go back to Taiwan to join my family back there” is the commonly given reason for returning to Taiwan. Quite commonly, the young migrant did not even try to look for work, as they knew from the very start that they were going to take over their family businesses, be they in Taiwan, or in East Asia. There seemed to be gender differences among the immigrants as to the extent of demand by their parents (especially the father) in making decisions regarding marriage or career. The traditional family values toward women in Taiwan is reflected by what Ms Han (B-7) said:

“My father said that I should hurry back to Taiwan to get married. He thinks that it is difficult for me to find a husband in Australia. He thinks that I take life too easy, and I should come back quickly to work in Taiwan, as the working environment is better here…”; “You can find better work, he always says, and you can find work easily in big corporations.”

Ms Song (B-12) who immigrated in grade 2 finds herself well-assimilated in Australia, where one’s personal choice is more valued. However, she came back at the command of her father, as she said:

“If I have a choice, I would stay back in Australia. I came back not because of work, but due to obedience of my parents. I feel like an Australian since I lived in Australia for so long, and I have no problem in finding work there. My dad wants me to come back early, even though I might find better work in Australia…I have an Australian boyfriend, but my parents cannot accept him. My dad finds it hard to have an Australian son-in-law in the family”

Similar experiences among our female respondents shows the impact of tradition on
personal decisions even though Taiwan is a fairly liberal society where personal freedom is respected.

**Looking For Spouse**

Finding a spouse and affection toward Taiwan constitute the third and four factors for them to return to Taiwan. Many young migrants feel that the chances of marrying Taiwanese would be higher when they live in Taiwan. Presumably, it would be easier for the parents and the son or daughter in law to communicate with the same language and a similar culture. Moreover the young Taiwanese return migrants hopes to marry someone who has similar background or experiences, such as having lived abroad, immigrant, or traveled. Seemingly, the common bond among young immigrants started in schools later, even though as children they were not aware of any racial or cultural differences such as sports, food, and recreational activities. An early research by Lee (1992) shows that the young first generation are highly influenced by their parents. Their low level of assimilation is revealed by the following re-iterative statement among our respondents: “I think I am less likely to marry a non-Chinese because the culture and languages are different. I need to learn more Chinese. Chinese is my mother tongue, and I believe it would be useful in the future.” During our informal conversations with parents, we find that their flexibility can go as far as having their children marry the same race, regardless of nationality.

**Affection toward Taiwan**

Some of the young immigrants express the need to come back to Taiwan where their “roots” are. As expressed by Ms. Li (B-6):

“Being in Taiwan give me a sense of belonging…I missed Taiwan the first year I arrived in Australia (at the age of 10). I always think that Taiwan is my home. I return to Taiwan every Christmas, to keep up with what is going on here and experience the sense of fulfillment. Memory of my childhood stays back in Taiwan. Right from the beginning, I said that I will come back after graduation, I just cannot find my sense of belonging in Australia.”
For those who immigrated at older ages to pursue postgraduate degrees, once they have fulfilled their goals, they return to Taiwan. They are the least acculturated of the young migrants.

In sum, the decision to come back to Taiwan is a complex process, involving careful considerations, although getting a job comes foremost in their considerations.

**Adaptation of young Taiwanese in Australia**

**Language and Schooling**

Although one of the major reasons to immigrate is for children’s education, children are still passive movers in the family decision to move. We found that the first problem encountered by the young immigrant is language which affects their school work and relation to peers. The age of migration affects their ease of adaptation, since it is not only easier to pick up a new language. When the teenager immigrates later in junior and high schools, they face both problems of language for communication and schooling. As the grades for the last two years of high schools are important to acquire overall position (OP) qualifications in order to enter good universities, parents sometimes hire private tutors to coach their homework. This is no different from what they would have practiced in Taiwan.

On the other hand, parents want their children to retain their bilingual ability with as much Chinese as they can. Apart from going to weekend Mandarin classes, they are often sent back to Taiwan to learn Mandarin in the winter and summer vacation. They often bring over Chinese books from Taiwan, magazines, and videotapes for learning Chinese. As a result, the cultural values of children are greatly influenced by their Chinese cultural background.
Peer Relationship

The second problem arises from peer network. Faced with an unfamiliar environment and a different language, it is easy to be misunderstood and get into conflict with their classmates. This is especially true at the junior high school level. There are cases of fighting with white Australians, and experiences of being discriminated. Later on, the situation becomes better with increase of communication. Taiwanese students at the senior high level face a situation of a different kind. They put their energy in school work and do not care whether their schoolmates are friendly or not. They tend to mix with other Taiwanese immigrant students. The immigrants at university entry level have the least interaction with their classmates because of the larger workload. Nonetheless, their good friends are Taiwanese.

Usually, upon their first arrival, they tend to mix with other Chinese either from Hong Kong or the Mainland. Those who live in neighborhood where there are less Chinese tend to have friends from other nationalities. The personality of the young migrants also matters as to how easy they can find friends. A few introverted young migrants have unhappy experiences of encounters with local Australians.

We were informed that similar cultural background and language draw the young migrants together into small groups. Often the grouping is based on length of time spent in Australia. Mr. Hung, (B-10) who went to Australia at the age of 9 explained why his friends were Australian-born (ABC) or grew up in Australia like him:

“The main reason is language. Even though you are Chinese, you need to speak to each other in English when you are abroad. I find it hard to communicate with someone who speaks poor English. Also, birds of the same feather get together. I don’t mix well with those who came to Australia at an older age.”

Likewise, Mr. Lo (M-2) who immigrated when he was junior high school mix with either people from Hong Kong or Taiwan: As a result, their values and identities are
affected by those with whom they mix as friends.

“We share similar thoughts and become good friends easily. Strangely, we find it easier to mix with those who migrated when they are in junior or senior high schools. We don’t get along with the ABC’s and they tend to mix with their own kinds, and not with the white Australians (lau wai, or foreigners) The ABC’s are different from both Australians and the adolescent immigrants.”

Overtime, their social circles expanded, and got acquainted with other racial groups. Mr. Yen (B-5) who engage himself in sports have many Caucasian friends and acquaintances from South Asia. Ms. Peng (B-9) thinks that she can avoid the gossips in the Taiwanese circles by having friends from other nationalities. As a whole their social circles therefore expanded to include other ethnic groups as their English reach a higher proficiency level. Thus from their Taiwanese core, their circle of friends expanded to include other Chinese, Asians, and other immigrants, with increasing comfort levels at different stages of migration.

Family Relations and Generation Gap

As part of their adaptation and identity, we probe into the issue of generation gap which they enjoy telling us. As most young immigrants grew up in transnational families with one parent present, usually the mother, the effect of closer parental relationship can be discerned.

Lee (1992) found that the self-identity and values of the young first generation are deeply influenced by their parents. When we were doing fieldwork in Australia, we found that children and parents often go to the same church but attend different sessions. During Chinese schools, parents stayed around to wait for their children to finish their classes, and one can easily see family members attending Chinese festivals together. I remember that Mr. Fan whose interest is in giving sermons in the church is supported by his two daughters leading the singing and playing the piano. Katty, one of his lovely daughters told me: “The subjects that I choose is decided by my Dad, and he wants to attend W
University because it is closer to home.”

Inevitably, when the young children get exposure to the Australian culture, they develop different views which are in conflict with their parents. As in the case of Hong Kong students (Wong 1997) they started to wonder why their parents were different from the Australian parents who would not require children to come back early in the day, nor expect them to take up certain subjects as majors. The major generation gap stems from differences in values and the parents insistence on traditional behavior and authority over them children.

Mr. Yen (B-5) had a major conflict with his father, and he could not compromise:

“The main reason why I could not agree with him is because of the different cultural and educational environment of Australia. He still thinks that he will follow the Taiwanese way of telling me what to study. To me, western culture is a new experiment; but when my dad did not like it, he thinks he can tell me because he doesn’t believe in it. I know what I wanted since I was in junior high.”

Ms. Han (B-7) also recalled the effort she made to be independent under the influence of her peers:

“My classmates asked me why I was still living with my parents when I was already eighteen, and they persuaded me to move out. When I told my parents that I want to move out, my dad thought I was crazy. I quarreled with my parents over the issue of taking up part-time work. My parents said that I should only care about studying well, and there is no point earning any money. The Australian kids were independent when they were very young, but the Chinese live with their parents basically.”

Conflicts with their parents occurred when they reached adolescence, but when they get older and more mature, they tend to disagree less. In the above discussion, we focus on language, peer relations and parental relationship. Coming from a busy part of Asia, other things which are hard to adjust to include: ‘Australia’s slow pace of life’, ‘tasteless food’, ‘vast space’, ‘quiet and unfamiliar environment’, ‘not being able to get
anywhere without a car’, ‘shops close too early and no night life’, ‘cannot buy what they want, and the ‘don’t care and take-life-easy attitude of Australians’. The unaccompanied sojourners felt lonesome and miss their home in Taiwan. They not only had to adapt to their outside world, but also adapt to their family as well, and these combine to affect their identity.

Overtime, they gradually adjust to Australian culture and life-style. But they chose to return to Taiwan because of better jobs and development. Like the middle-class returnees from Canada, their return trip to Taiwan typically occurs for economic reasons at the early stage of their careers. Since they have lived in Australia from 5 to 15 years before returning to Taiwan, it would mean that they return to a changed environment, particularly when Taiwan went through significant cultural, political and economic changes. A return to one’s home also means new challenges to face.

**Base to base: Adaptation and self-identity of young Taiwanese immigrants**

Adaptation to the workplace is the first challenge faced by the returning young migrant, apart from other aspects of social and cultural adaptation. We want to know their perception of differences in their work culture and how their education in Australia have influenced their values, and how their adaptation in Taiwan influence their career goals.

Most of the respondents chose occupations which are related to their field of study (Table 2), while looking for work that specify a need for English proficiency. Apparently, this is an asset when looking for work, even in local businesses which may have English-speaking clients. They indicate to us that Australian education has broadened their horizons, enhanced their problem-solving abilities and greater engagement in communication and open discussion. Their world view includes a
multi-cultural dimension.

Due to their education in Australia, they are not accustomed to the work culture of Taiwan. They are aware of the extended working hours, need for over-time work, workaholic style, and the emphasis of differences between people in terms of rank. They don’t believe that the boss is always right, that *kuangxi* (or connections) plays such an important role, while a lack of openness in communication is common. They are not used to combining work and leisure activities and working on weekends in Taiwan, since this is not what they did back in Australian. Leaving behind the social networks they have once developed in Australia, they are short of primary group or informal associations of various kinds like school alums, or sports teammates. They are differentiated from their colleagues as a different group because they speak a different type of language using both Chinese and English. If they don’t speak *Minnan* with the local, nor write or speak proper Mandarin Chinese, they face problems of communication with their colleagues.

Back to a different environment which was once their home as a visitor or return migrants, they find it hard to adapt to both physical and social environments. Their major complaints include:

“The air is polluted.”
“Too many cars. I am scared to cross the road, and even more so to drive.”
“Living space is too small. Too many people”
“Pace of life in Taiwan is much faster than Australia’s.”
“No friends when I come back.”
“No sense of belonging here”
“Taiwanese are crazy about politics here.”
“The media does a poor job in reporting about people”.
“I cannot keep up with the vogue terms here.”
“It is hard to get along with people.”

We also find that female returnees have a different experience than males. Ms. Han (B-7), among others is expected to live with her parents and report on her activities in the
day. Unless she is married, or works far away from home, she is expected to live with her parents. She felt that she has lost her privacy, and found her home is too crowded. She found that her parents are controlling:

“When I was in Australia, I could do whatever I wanted, and go wherever I want, as I hung out with friends frequently. In Taiwan, I had to tell my parents where I go, and have to tell my husband wherever I go once I got married. Human relationship are closer in Taiwan than in Australia, where one can let go and be oneself more easily. I wanted to move out…but have to consider my parent’s feelings. If I work in Taipei, I am expected to live at home.”

As children, the young migrants were used to living by themselves when their parents returned to Taiwan once they got their driver’s license. Now, they find it hard to act up to their parents’ wishes.

While emotional reintegration is difficult for some, others can accept the Taiwan culture quite well. Those who migrate to Taiwan when they became teenagers in high school or undergraduates, or those who return to Taiwan occasionally and catch up with what is happening can tolerate the traditional values better and have no problem of adaptation.

**Self-identity of young immigrants**

This section analyses how the young first generation migrants traverse the two cultures completely or otherwise, trying to get out of their “marginal” situations in two different cultures. The complexity of the situation is born out of a “blended social field” as they live across two territories.

In our sample, the young return Taiwanese migrants identify themselves as Taiwanese, Australians and both. We try to further differentiate the four types by looking at their backgrounds. Those who said that they are Taiwanese amount to more
than half of the 22 interviewees. The ability to write and read Chinese to fulfill the expectation of their parents, and their familiarity with the Taiwanese culture characterize this group, while being conditioned by their parents while growing up in Australia. Most of their friends are from Taiwan, and they went back to Taiwan every year for vacation or to visit their relatives. Also, they tend to have completed their high school education before immigrating to Australia and therefore had longer exposure to Taiwan culture before they migrated.

Only one sample in the group (B-12) claims that she is an Australian, after living for 15 years after completing grade 2 when she migrated with her parents. When both of her parents left when she was 14, her only brother joined her. She emphasized again and again that her Australian friends are like her family members. Among her friends, most are second generation migrants from other national groups, followed by white Australians and Asians. To her:

“I don’t feel comfortable among Taiwanese here...we talk about different things...Perhaps I really love Australia...I even dream in Australian language. Although I know that I look Taiwanese and my root is here, but what I have learned as A child is Australian in essence-- what I eat, drink, and the air I breathed. I even have an Australian personality since I spent my formative years there. When I was with Australians, I did not feel that I am Taiwanese (anymore), because they treated me as one of them. Once I was strolling down the road with them, and found myself looking at a mirror. Only at that moment did I realize that I was Chinese...with black hair, and I look different from my Australian friends.

We also found those who think that they are ‘half Australian’ and ‘half Taiwanese’. Their social circles in Australia consist of both Taiwanese and other ethnic groups, while at home, they are expected to uphold the Chinese traditional value of filial piety, respect towards elders and importance of the family.

Interestingly, their identity is also situational, and varied according to whether they are in Australia or Taiwan. “I am Australian when I live there; and Taiwanese when I live
here”, “We have no pre-disposition of who we are…race is not a problem.” In an earlier study by Hsiao et al. (1994), they found that the returnees from the United States think that they are Americans and Chinese at the same time.

Lastly, three of our respondents consider themselves as ‘global citizens’ or “world citizens”. They accept the different culture and adopt new values almost right away, not limiting to the territory they live, be it Taiwan, Australia, or another country. Their friends are from a wide selection that includes different racial groups.

To summarize, we find that the factors affecting the self-identity of return migrants are: age of migration, family values, peer group identity, early experience of discrimination in Australia, and intensity of relations with Taiwan. It would appear that the Chinese culture that prevails in one’s family or friendship group has the largest impact on the younger generation. The ease of information transmission and communication with Taiwan through electronic devices forge the link between Australia and Taiwan after their migration.

Self-identity is closely related to one’s cultural background. One finds it easier to adapt to and become part of the Australian society, when one migrates at a younger age, or have stayed longer. On the contrary, it would be hard to change one’s values and customs if the age of migration is higher, particularly with the influence of Chinese culture at home. As most of the young migrants live at home with their parents, they are easily influenced by the values of the older generation.

The transnational experience grows out of the blending of two cultural values, and sometimes result in a paradox (矛盾) in their identities. Ms. Peng (B-9) expressed her ‘confused’ feelings in a forthright way:

“I have spoken with many friends who are of similar ages – their feelings are similar to mine – we are neither Australian nor Taiwanese, and we are perturbed by our social distance (疏離感) with either. Ms. Chang (S-6) expressed a common feeling of her
peers: ‘When we are in Australia, we felt like aliens. When we are back in Taiwan, we are regarded as different because we are from overseas.’ Mr. Hung (B-10) told us: “We are in between the Australian and the Taiwanese. We can be friends of both; but we cannot be real friends since we do not know either of them well enough.” While the young return migrants have the advantage of having a different exposure abroad, they have the disadvantage of being at a distance from both. In the first authors’ earlier interview of Taiwanese migrants, the parents felt that Australians were ‘simple-minded’ and slower compared to Taiwanese, and was worried that their children would missed out on the vibrancy of the Asian society.

**Conclusion**

As previous research on migration focus on the household as a decision making unit, this paper stresses the importance of the younger generation who has followed their parents to move to Australia, and have returned to Taiwan for various reasons. Existing literature on international migration has largely overlooked this younger generation. It supports the notion of the circular mobility of diaspora Chinese in contemporary immigration and reveals the decision-making process of reverse migration. Return of young transnational do not imply success or failure of one’s migration experience, as in the conventional definition of migration. With bi-local/multi-local residence, they tried to adapt in both sending and receiving societies, and have developed adjustment skills over time. Where they will settle eventually depend on future opportunities. Many of them indicated a desire to return to Australia in future and even at their young age, they anticipate retiring there eventually.

As education for children came foremost in the parents’ decision to immigrate to Australia, the younger generations are the outcome of reproduction of Taiwanese middle-class values abroad. They not only come back to work, but follow suit on
family business and largely support traditional values of their families. They come back not because of poor adjustment in Australia, but because of better employment opportunities at the time of return. Compared to the returning overseas students to Taiwan in the early 1970s, they are more cosmopolitan in outlook, equipped with bilingual ability since they migrated young, and have adopted western modern values while sojourning abroad. They are a different kind of Taiwanese as they don’t necessarily stay in Taiwan for the rest of their lives, but are flexible citizens who can adapt to two cultures/societies of Taiwan and Australia. While on one hand, they face many problems in Australia, including language and school, social relationship, changes in the family, and generation gap, they also need to adapt to the workplace in Taiwan, to their homeland society and culture, and face challenges of identity and life goals. Frequently, due to their constant need to adapt to both Taiwanese and Australian environments, they have developed a dual identity that encompasses Taiwanese and Australian cultures through which they strive to make the best use of their backgrounds in the global community.

This paper also tries to probe into identity issues and found that they are influenced by their experiences of living in Australia vis a vis living in Taiwan. Their identity is influenced by factors of age, family education, peer identity, experience of initial immigration and frequency of contacts with Taiwan. Faced with discrimination, some easily turned to the Taiwanese community and could not identify themselves with Australian culture. For some, their identity is layered by their experiences upon return to Taiwan if they adapt well in their home society. Some even claim to be global citizens if they can adapt well in both. Doubtlessly, they fit the description of Portes (1997: 812) as being “often bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interest that require their presence in both” As defined by Basch and her collaborators (1994: 6),
“Transnationalism” is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic, and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement…many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.

Knowledge of the young migrants is limited due to the lack of systematic studies. It is hoped that the findings of this research would be helpful to the Taiwan government in formulating its migration policies which needs to be revised with regard to the growing numbers of return migrants from Australia and Canada, and devise means of incorporating them in the Taiwan work force, particularly the young first generation migrants who are more bilingual and cosmopolitan in outlook than their cohorts in Taiwan. A government program to recruit young transnationals should be implemented.

Based on existing social organizations of Taiwanese in Australia, a network among young transnationals both in the sending and receiving countries with the help of OCAC. Since Mandarin Chinese constitute an important aspect of cultural capital for the second generation when they return for work in Taiwan or China, it is recommended that Chinese text books, teachers and schools teaching Mandarin Chinese, services to recruit returnees to the job market in Taiwan, trade and investment information are provided by the home country for the young transnationals. This would help to build a strong Taiwanese identity among the young transnationals in the long run.

Endnotes

1. In my early study, over 90% of first generation migrants have not obtained any degrees from overseas.
2. They are usually young first generations who were born in Taiwan. They were referred to as “parachute kids” (Pe-pua et al. 1996). In Taiwanese, they are called “Hsiao liu hsueh sheng”, or” little overseas students”.
3. This research comes out of a project to study the young first generation in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth; as well as young return migrants in Taipei by the first author and her graduate students. The issues addressed are: Social adaptation to Australian society, adaptation and economic incorporation of young Taiwanese
migrants in Australia, gender roles, and return migrants in Taiwan. The study was funded by a grant from the National Science Council, Taiwan, R.O.C.

4. According to Hugo (1999: i), “Australia is the fourth least densely settled country (2.3 persons per sq. km.) in the world. Moreover, it has a highly concentrated pattern of settlement with 83 per cent of the population living within 50 km of the coast and 62.7 per cent living in cities with 100,000 or more residents.” On the other hand Taiwan is one of the most densely populated nation/economy with 627 persons per sq. km. in the world, lining up only next to Bangladesh in its population density. The population is 78% urban, and over 80 %lives in 20 % of its total area.


6. This term was used by Ley and Kobayashi (2005).

7. This term was used by Ley and Kobayashi (2005: 123) to describe Hong Kong returnees from Canada.

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