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**Recent (Young) Taiwanese Movers to Hong Kong:  
Challenges and Opportunities in a Global City**

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## Recent (Young) Taiwanese Movers to Hong Kong: Challenges and Opportunities in a Global City

Lan-Hung Nora Chiang\* Zee Ken Christopher Wong\*\* Chia-Yuan Huang\*\*\*

### Abstract

Using Hong Kong as a case study, this research shares some findings regarding the transnational migration of highly educated young Taiwanese to global cities in recent years. Three issues are discussed in the paper: 1) Migration process and pattern, 2) Cultural adaptation and challenges, and 3) Returning. The data was obtained via face-to-face interviews with 35 young Taiwanese in Hong Kong and Taiwan from 2012-2015, utilizing a semi-structured questionnaire. Other than career development and financial incentives, our analysis took into account the challenges of dialect and unfamiliar culture, social adaptation, high cost of housing, crowded and polluted environment, and fast pace of life. Close to 70% of the young migrants expressed the desire to move back to Taiwan for a variety of reasons.

Although it is difficult to generate immediate economic incentives to attract emigrants back to Taiwan, the lower cost of living, less crowding, cleaner air, a comfortable pace of life, better medical care, education for children, and sense of belonging to Taiwan, are incentives to potentially lure the young people back to Taiwan. Upon returning, their cosmopolitan training in Hong Kong and abroad would help Taiwan's economic development in the short run and contribute to Taiwan identity in the long run. Private industries can take the lead in recharging its human power by providing reasonable salaries and bonuses to attract the best and brightest back. Most importantly, the Taiwan government needs to speed up the amendment of laws and re-invent strategies to compete for young highly skilled migrants from abroad.

**Keywords:** young skilled Taiwanese migrants, cultural adaptation, returning, global city

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## **I. Introduction**

Transnational migration has taken place in a South-North direction involving long distances, as observed by the International Organization of Migration (IOM, 2013), and has generated a plethora of literature in the last three decades. The pattern of emigration from Taiwan has changed over the years owing to political, economic and social factors. Research on international emigration started in Taiwan, when it became an open system demographically, with more emigrants than immigrants at one point in the late 1980s when citizens were seeking opportunities to move abroad for political stability, social security, western education for children, and better quality of life. Moving to “more developed countries” such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Chiang, 2011a, 2013), whether participants are middle class families, successful entrepreneurs, or former civil servants, similar consequences might be the result, such as permanent settlement, transnational families (Chiang, 2008) and return migration of the 1.5 generation (Chiang, 2011b; Chiang & Liao, 2008). Several compendiums have compared the three political entities of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, which share a Confucian tradition of patrilineal family formation (Fong, Chiang, & Denton, 2013; Ip, 2011; Ip, Hibbins, & Chiu, 2006; Sinn, 2000), to highlight the numerous challenges and familial responses at local and regional levels. The neoclassical economic approach to migration, though popular in the past, has not incorporated the impermanent dimension of international migration, and the complexities due to globalization. No single theory seems able to capture all of its nuances (Weeks, 2012: 284), such as the diversity of mobility occurring at different times, and in different continents.

With the on-set of the Asia-Pacific century, there have been more movements within the region, not depending on classical affinity factors such as kinship ties and friendship networks, but owing to the forces of globalization. For example, when information travels fast, recruiting practices become more aggressive, and interregional travels are more frequent. Youth migration appears on the scene, as different societies develop an ethos of daring to engage unknown areas.

A recent case is that of young people going abroad for working holidays, such as to Australia, which has accepted 30,000 young people from Taiwan in one year, many times greater than the number of Taiwanese students who were enrolled in universities in Australia.

Taiwan is facing shortage in population numbers, human power and talents (人口、人力和人才). Emigration to join the labor force of other countries, including 800,000 people to Mainland China, is an acute problem. Taiwan now faces the exodus of the highly educated and skilled, along with difficulties in attracting foreign white-collar workers, or people in multi-national corporations. A severe imbalance in recent years with regard to in- and out-migration of skilled population has resulted in a brain drain because of the movement of young skilled workers to more developed countries (人才危機，腦礦外流 臺灣競爭力空洞化). Entrepreneurs in Taiwan were the first to feel the impact of a shortage of skilled workers, and several tycoons in the IT industry expressed the difficulty in finding young workers. Young skilled migrants and on-ward migrants from developed countries are now attracted to new magnets of economic growth that have emerged in East Asia, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.

More research and policy studies are needed in this area in Taiwan. This study is therefore an attempt to engage the new turn of emigration, consisting of young migrants to global cities in Asia, using Hong Kong as an example. In an earlier attempt to explore non-permanent moves, we chose two vibrant city states, Hong Kong and Singapore, as the destinations of aspiring young Taiwanese migrants, in order to incorporate the globalization element which is the main driving force behind individual migration behavior (Chiang & Huang, 2014). We found that their decisions to move were based on job opportunities, a higher salary and a cosmopolitan environment for global pursuits, despite tradeoffs such as social and cultural differences, high cost of living, and general quality of life. Being well-educated in Taiwan and abroad for some, they have been able to contribute to the pool of the highly skilled work force in Hong Kong and Singapore. Other than career development and financial incentives, our present study took into

account the challenges of cultural and social adaptation in Hong Kong, and the prospect of returning to Taiwan.

## **II. Review of Pertinent Literature**

This section will review: 1) Young and skilled emigration, 2) Skilled migration to global cities, and 3) Hong Kong as a global city. It is believed that individual opportunities and desires to migrate (at the micro-level) are in response to the nature of structures and institutions of both the origin and the destination.

### ***Youth and Skilled Emigration***

As the theme of this research is recent (young) emigration to a global city, one needs to scrutinize the theoretical background of youth migration, and some of its consequences. Due to economic and cultural globalization, developed means of communication, and continuing drifts of societal individualization, living abroad temporarily during early adulthood is in part about developing one's life through geographical mobility, as well as the exploration of both personal and professional possibilities (Conradson & Latham, 2005; Simpson, 2005). Fränberg (2014) has stated that going abroad to live, work, or study for a period of time when one is young has long been part of the transition to adulthood among certain, privileged social groups. An important aspect of this development is the longer-term consequences for mobility at the individual and population levels, such as traveling back to the place of the temporary stay in the following years, mainly because of new social ties that have been formed. As an outcome of transnational migration, the "1.5 generation" constitutes a part of youth migration along with other family members. They earn the label of "1.5 generation" because they bring with them characteristics from the home country but continue their assimilation and socialization in the new country (Chiang, 2011a). They also constitute reverse migrants from developed countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand which have been popular destinations. Having finished their tertiary education abroad, they became skilled migrants or global talents that many countries seek to find. It has been observed that improved political, economic, social, and

educational circumstances in Asia are generating new opportunities for migrant talent, students, and labor. As a result, potential migrants from Asia are beginning to question the value of migrating outside of the region to more distant countries such as Canada. These new opportunities are also exerting a pull on members of Canada's Asian diaspora from countries such as China, India, and South Korea, especially those who are frustrated by the difficulty of breaking the "glass ceiling," those who feel their qualifications are under-appreciated or underutilized, and those who lack a sense of social belonging in Canada. The appeal is even extending to Canadians who do not have family connections to Asia, but whose skill sets are well matched to take advantage of professional opportunities there. Changing emigration circumstances are therefore not just the concern of Asian societies like Taiwan, but also of countries which were once the recipients of skilled migrants.

Apart from family reasons that influence decisions of the 1.5 generation in returning, economic restructuring in Canada, Australia and New Zealand has led to limited opportunities for young people to enter the job market. From these previous studies of young return migrants, one would expect this cohort to have an advantage when seeking jobs in Taiwan, because of their global education, multilingual ability, and adaptability. They have a noticeable advantage for being employed, as Taiwan's private sector and educational institutions are aware of the need to recruit global talents to increase competitiveness. For some, better employment opportunities in Taiwan, higher salary, and better future prospects, compared to the host countries, are the main reasons for returning to Taiwan.

### ***Skilled Migration to Global Cities***

Global mobility of skilled migrants is one of the major trends of globalization and has been in existence for decades as a means of circulating knowledge and enhancing economic and technological development. In recent decades, the number of global skilled migrants is increasing year by year, especially in technological and financial intensive sectors. Sassen (1991) has come up with the concept of "global city", which is a major node in the

interconnected systems of information and capital, with some specialized businesses such as financial institutions, consulting firms, accounting firms, law firms and media organizations, which facilitate the flows of information, money and individuals. Later, Sassen (1999) utilized Hong Kong and Shanghai as examples, by stating that active global networks help to bring in new actors and new ideas, and such networks have profoundly changed the global cities' urban and cultural landscapes. Many scholars have then used the idea to analyze the convergence of professional workers in a global city. Hong Kong serves as a useful case study in this instance.

Literature on skilled migration usually refers to individuals who choose to move to large cities for economic rationalities such as financial incentives and career development. Beaverstock (1991) and Findlay, Li et al. (1996) have investigated the complex relationship between skilled migration and global cities. Their studies discuss transient migration within transnational corporate headquarters in the financial districts of Singapore and New York City (Beaverstock, 2002), and expatriate communities in Hong Kong (Findlay et al., 1996). Yeoh and Huang (2011) noted that studies on talent migration have focused narrowly on the economic rationalities and corporate logic of transnational elites' mobility. Greater interest in these embodied bearers of culture, ethnicity, class and gender should be given more attention.

There are also a few studies which suggest that skilled migration depends on the high-level job market and lifestyle offered by global cities. Florida (2002) set forth the notion of "creative class" to describe a highly specialized group of individuals in successfully developed city-regions. He defined this creative class as people who are paid principally to do creative work for a living, including a super-creative core (e.g., scientists, engineers, computer programmers, researchers, artists, musicians, designers, and media workers), and creative professionals (i.e., knowledge-based professionals working in healthcare, business, finance, legal sector, and education). Place-specific characteristics, such as thick labor markets, lifestyle, social interaction, and diversity are emphasized here beyond economic considerations. The skilled migrants, as the creative class, will be attracted to cities with the right cultural and

aesthetic offerings. In the case of Hong Kong, it provides the “stage” for some of the young migrants who join the expat categories.

***Hong Kong, A Global City and A Capital of Overseas Chinese***

Hong Kong is a global city within which transnational migration takes many forms, including non-Chinese residents which constitute 4.5% of the population of 7 million (compared to 2% of 23 million in Taiwan). Although over 95 percent of the population is of Chinese origin, there are vast differences in culture among the sub-ethnic Chinese groups, even though they are assimilated to the dominant Cantonese culture in the “Hong Kong ethos”. During the 1950s, when the majority of Hong Kong’s population was comprised of immigrants, many from the diverse provinces in China spoke a variety of Chinese dialects. Social cleavage along ethno-linguistic lines was avoided as the immigrants’ children grew up speaking their own languages at home and Cantonese as a common tongue in school and in the streets (Luk, 2009). This is different from the outcome of a language policy which was imposed by the Nationalist government in Taiwan in the 1950s, leading to cleavage between post-war immigrants from China and the native Taiwanese.

At the same time, Hong Kong has long been an international city and a regional center for business, finance, information, tourism, entrepôt activities, and manufacturing. It has often been portrayed as one of the key players in the regional and global economies in Pacific Asia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Yeung, 2000). Since the 1990’s, Hong Kong, London, Tokyo and New York has been listed as global financial centers (McDonogh & Wong, 2005; Sassen, 1991), and Hong Kong has continued its primacy status successfully for twenty years. Only 0.2 points behind Hong Kong, Singapore ranks second out of 42 countries in the Asia Pacific region. Hong Kong and Singapore are therefore the targets of global investments and talent flow. Hong Kong is the leading city in a larger South China regional economy, and an international financial capital for China as a whole. It is a leading world city and the “capital of overseas Chinese” (Sinn, Wong, & Chan, 2009). Hong Kong is a highly mobile and culturally cosmopolitan society which is

different from Taiwan which has been only modernizing in the last thirty years. Hong Kong as a destination for Taiwanese migrants is still under-researched due to the recency of their arrival.

The numbers of Taiwanese immigrants are hard to estimate. The early migrants are women from marriage migration to Hong Kong men. The second category is the *Taishang* who include young adults who have established businesses in Taiwan, but have moved to Chinese cities like Guangzhou and Shanghai, and have settled in Hong Kong at the same time for business, or with their family. Especially in the period prior to 1985, the middleman role played by Hong Kong was critical in facilitating Taiwanese investment in China (Yeung, 2000). The third type consists of those who completed tertiary education in Taiwan and went to Hong Kong for work, including those who obtained a western education in Europe or North America. The fourth type is dispatched employees from Taiwan, some of them working in banks or companies. Most recently, there are quite a few students from Taiwan, recruited by leading Hong Kong universities and received scholarships for their study.

### **III. Research Methodology**

*“Without fieldwork, geography is secondhand reporting and armchair analysis, losing much of its involvement with the world, its original insight, its authority, its contributions for addressing local and global issues, and its reason for being.”* (Stevens 2001)

As the first author has undertaken research concerning overseas Taiwanese during the last fifteen years, it was a commitment on her part to learn about issues that would be meaningful for inquiry. This study continues to follow that research track. Between 2012 and 2015, the first author visited Hong Kong three times to conduct interviews for a total of two months. We consider this research to be a follow-up project to an earlier pilot study (Chiang and Huang 2014) by using an extended sample of 35 respondents in Hong Kong, with a larger diversity of occupations represented, and focusing on a new issue, namely, prospects of returning to Taiwan. We have also explored adaptation with an emphasis on the social and cultural dimensions. Thus,

the three sub-themes of this research are: 1) Migration process and pattern, 2) Cultural adaptation and challenges, and 3) Returning.

It is impossible to accurately assess how many Taiwanese are now in Hong Kong. Without a sampling frame, the snowball sampling method has been used throughout, beginning with introduction to graduates of Taiwan Universities working in Hong Kong. The google group of Taiwanese in Hong Kong and a bible study group also helped the first author with new contacts. Being in touch with Taiwanese organizations, such as Hong Kong Taiwan Ladies' Association (香港臺灣婦女協會) and Hong Kong and Macau Taiwanese Association (港澳臺灣同鄉會), the first author came across both early and recent Taiwanese migrants. For this study, we have only focused on recent migrants who lived in Hong Kong for not more than fifteen years. Apart from using a semi-structured questionnaire for our survey, face-to-face interviews constituted the main research instrument. Doing fieldwork requires familiarity with the Hong Kong environment and the local dialect, which the first author can engage well as a former resident and a frequent visitor. She also benefitted greatly from *ren qing wei* (人情味, human warmth, a cultural trait of Taiwanese), and the trust bestowed on her as a professor who holds a track record of studying Taiwanese overseas for the last 15 years. Several interviews were also conducted in Taiwan, as young Taiwanese frequently return for business trips or family visits.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1 provides the reader with the diversity of the respondent's backgrounds, year and reasons for moving to Hong Kong, and whether they are planning to return to Taiwan. A semi-structured questionnaire containing open-ended questions was designed for interviewing. Three trips in two years enabled the first author to capture great diversity in the employment patterns of migrants, and ensure high quality in the fieldwork, as she became more experienced during each trip, especially with regard to the techniques of in-depth interviews in a busy,

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<sup>1</sup> In sum, there are 35 valid samples of young Taiwanese who moved to Hong Kong from a total of 40 interviews. Even though Hong Kong is a city that attracts young expats from many countries/regions including Taiwan, we have not included them because it is less likely that they will stay permanently, nor would they consider themselves as migrants.

expensive and crowded city. All the 35 respondents sent back the questionnaires by e-mail, and face-to-face interviews were conducted at a second stage when possible.<sup>2</sup> At times the first author became a participant observer of activities such as morning tea, bible study, and get-together dinners. As a whole, the respondents were quite willing to share their points of view during interviews, and were not in a hurry to leave, even though time is a valuable commodity in Hong Kong.

Like other qualitative studies, we acknowledge the limitations of our sampling procedures and the size of the sample. However, we do not intend to generalize about young Taiwanese migrants in Hong Kong, but rather to acquire a nuanced understanding of immigrants and circumstances while presenting the complexities of their experiences. As one geographer has remarked, “The aim of an interview is not to be representative (a common but mistaken criticism of this technique) but to understand how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives” (Valentine, 2007: 111).

The qualitative research method in Human Geography was chosen because it not only enabled respondents to use their own words to tell us a great deal about their experiences and attitudes, but also allowed them to reveal key underlying social structures (Hay, 2010). We believe that qualitative research draws on methods that aim at deriving and interpreting the complexities, context, and significance of people’s understanding of their own lives (Eyles & Smith, 1988). Fieldwork enables us to discover complexities of movement patterns beyond the original conceptualization of the problem. For instance, the routes of “marriage migration” take different paths, and the terms “return” and “circulation” may mean different things depending on the context. “Sense of belonging” and “home” cannot not be expressed in quantitative terms. Likewise, returning home to fulfill obligations toward their families requires elaboration beyond answers such as “Yes,” “No”, or “Unsure”. This was overlooked in the midst of the

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<sup>2</sup> Each interview encompasses 1.5 to 2.5 hours in total. Follow up telephone calls were made if a face-to-face interview is not possible.

reporting on human resources data and large scale demographic shifts.

**Table 1 Socio-economic Profile of Recent (Young) Taiwanese Migrants in Hong Kong, 2013-2015**

<b>Case No./ Name (Pseudonym)</b>	<b>Sex/Age/ Marital Status</b>	<b>Education/ Occupation</b>	<b>Age/Year of departure to study abroad</b>	<b>Year of Migration to Hong Kong</b>	<b>Main Reason for moving to Hong Kong</b>	<b>Plannin g to Return to Taiwan?</b>
<b>HKY#1</b> (Vanessa)	F/50/ Married	BA (Canada)/ Housewife	8/1971	2011  (lived in US, Canada)	1-Marriage	NO
<b>HKY#2</b> (Albert)	M/35/ Married	BA (Canada), MA (US)/ Research Analyst	18/1994	2007  (lived in US, Canada, Singapore)	2- Employment	YES
<b>HKY#3</b> (Clarissa)	F/34/ Married	BA (TW), MBA (UK)/ Equity research analyst	26/2004	2006  (lived in UK)	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#4</b> Susanna	F/34/ Single	BA (TW), MA (US)/ Finance manager	25/2004	2007  (lived in US, Singapore)	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#5</b> (Johnny)	M/35/ Single	BA (TW), PhD (the Netherlands)/ Assist. Professor	26/2004	2009  (lived in the Netherlands)	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#6</b> (Miriam)	F/36/ Single	BSc (TW)/ Sales Manager	28/2005	2006	2-Employment	NO
<b>HKY#7</b> (Sean)	M/36/ Single	BA (TW), MA (US), PhD (US)/	24/2001	2008  (lived in US)	2-Employment	YES

		Assist. Professor				
<b>HKY#8</b> (Cara)	F/38/ Married	BA (TW), MA (TW), PhD (US)/ Assist. Professor	23/1998	2008 (lived in US)	2-Employment	Not sure
<b>HKY#9</b> (Samuel)	M/40/ Married	BA (TW), MA (TW), PhD and post-doc (UK)/Research Assist. Professor	34/2007	2011 (lived in UK)	2-Employment	Returnee
<b>HKY#10</b> (Michelle)	F/33/ Single	BA (TW), MA (UK), PhD (UK)/ Post-doc Researcher	25/2005	2011 (lived in UK)	2-Employment	Returnee
<b>HKY#11</b> (Sebastian)	M/21/ Single	BA (HK)/ Finance	18/2010	2010	3-Student	NO
<b>HKY#12</b> (Olive)	F/22/ Single	BA (HK)/ Accountant	18/2010	2010	3-Student	NO
<b>HKY#13</b> (Stuart)	M/38/ Single	BA (TW), MSc (US)/ Finance	22/1997	2013 (lived in US, Singapore)	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#14</b> (Antonia)	F/35/ Single	BA (TW), MA (TW), PhD (HK)/ Consultant	27/2006	2006	3-Student	Returnee
<b>HKY#15</b> (Leo)	M/39/ Married	BA (TW), MA (US)/ Finance	26/1999	2001 (lived in US)	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#16</b>	F/36/	BA (TW), MA	29/2007	2011	1-Marriage	Returnee

(Jo)	Married	(UK), PhD candidate (HK)		(lived in UK)		
<b>HKY#17</b> (Kathleen)	F/36/ Married	BA (TW), MA(TW), MA (US)/ Finance	25/2003	2008 (lived in US)	2-Employment	Returnee
<b>HKY#18</b> (Yolanda)	F/32/ Single	BA (TW)/ Finance	24/2006	2009 (lived in China)	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#19</b> (Winston)	M/21/ Single	Senior student (HK)	14/2006	2011 (lived in China)	3-Student	YES
<b>HKY#20</b> (Pat)	F/19/ Single	Senior student (HK)	14/2006	2011 (lived in China)	3-Student	NO
<b>HKY#21</b> (Alison)	F/34/ Married	BA (TW)/ Management	N/A	2012	1-Marriage	YES
<b>HKY#22</b> (Constance)	F/33/ Married	BA (CN), MD (CN), PhD (HK)/ Anesthesiologist	18/1998	2006 (lived in China)	3-Student	Returnee
<b>HKY#23</b> (Cynthia)	F/44/ Married	BA (TW), MA (HK)/ Housewife	N/A	2000	1-Marriage	NO
<b>HKY#24</b> (Mary)	F/33/ Married	BA (TW)/ Missionary	N/A	2007	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#25</b> (Joshua)	M/35/ Married	BA (TW)/ Missionary	N/A	2007	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#26</b> (Mathew)	M/33/ Married	BA (Canada), MA (US), PhD (HK) Therapist	25/2001	2008 (lived in US and Canada)	3-Student	NO

<b>HKY#27</b> (Ann)	F/34/ Married	BA (TW), MBA (HK)/ Marketing	27/2007	2007	3-Student	YES
<b>HKY#28</b> (Craig)	M/34/ Married	BA (TW)/ Communication	N/A	2014	1-Marriage	YES
<b>HKY#29</b> (Jeanne)	F/34/ Married	BA (TW), MA (UK), MA (the Netherlands) Business	25/1996	2005 (lived in the Netherlands)	1-Marriage	NO
<b>HKY#30</b> (Ken)	M/22/ Single	Senior student (HK)	19/2011	2011	3-Student	YES
<b>HKY#31</b> (Susan)	F/34/ Married	BA (TW)/ Housewife	N/A	2005	2-Employment	NO
<b>HKY#32</b> (Rose)	F/32/ Married	BA (TW), MBA (HK)/ Manager	29/2011	2011	3-Student	NO
<b>HKY#33</b> (Kristina)	F/33/ Single	BSc (TW), MBA (HK)/ Finance	26/2007	2007	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#34</b> (Tammy)	M/29/ Married	BSc (TW)/ Missionary	N/A	2010	2-Employment	YES
<b>HKY#35</b> (Sue)	F/29/ Married	BA (TW)/ Missionary	N/A	2008	2-Employment	YES

A socio-economic profile of the 35 interviewees has been summarized in Table 1. The sample includes 13 males and 22 females<sup>3</sup>. Twenty-one of them are married, and 14 are single. Respondents had moved to Hong Kong between 2000 and 2014, with 37% (13 out of 35) in the last five years (2010-2014). They ranged between 19-50 years of age at the time that they were interviewed.

Among the 35 interviewees, more than half (19 out of 35) of them had studied or worked in another country/region before moving to Hong Kong for work, including the United States,

<sup>3</sup> This imbalance may be due to dominance of women in marriage migration, or employment in the finance sector.

Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Singapore, the Netherlands, and Mainland China. Some of them had lived in at least two countries (HKY#1, HKY#2, HKY#4, HKY#13, HKY#26 and HKY#29). A diversity of occupations is represented, including medicine, finance, accounting, commerce, business, research and teaching, religion, sales, student, housewife, and others. Most of them (29 out of 35) had working experiences before moving to Hong Kong, either as intern or in formal employment. All of them attained high levels of education (8 Ph.D.s, 1 Ph.D. candidate, 10 with Masters and 13 with Bachelors degrees respectively, and 3 undergraduates).

We divided our respondents into three categories based on their main reasons for moving to Hong Kong for the first time, although reasons may overlap in a few cases. The **marriage** category includes four women and two men. **Employment** forms the largest category, with 12 women and seven men. Among 10 who went as **students**, seven finished their tertiary or graduate education in Hong Kong and stayed on to work after graduation, while three were undergraduate seniors. Among our sample of 35, six have returned (HKY#9, HKY#10, HKY#14, HKY#16, HKY#17, HKY#22). Eighteen interviewees said that they intend to return to Taiwan, and 10 said that they do not. This implies that 68% (24 out of 35) of them are “returnees” now and possibly in the future. We will discuss the situations of “Returning” below in the last part of our findings.

#### **IV. Research Findings**

##### **A. Decision to move to Hong Kong**

A United Nations’ annual report (2014) stated that personal considerations, socio-economic circumstances, and the political situation in the country of origin may be the main factors behind youth migration. The decision to migrate is often related to important life transitions, such as pursuing higher education, securing employment or getting married (United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2014). In the following section, we will demonstrate these three reasons for immigration to Hong Kong according to our research

findings.

***Education Opportunities (10)***

Taiwanese students used to go to the United States for graduate studies in the past with fellowships, and less frequently for tertiary education. We found that the paths taken by our respondents who went to study in Hong Kong varied according to school levels. Winston, Pat and Ken (HKY#19, HKY#20 and HKY#30) attended the same university, but with different trajectories. Their parents worked in Mainland China where they attended international schools before entering a university in Hong Kong. As the Taiwan government does not recognize Mainland Chinese credentials, Winston came to study in a university in Hong Kong where he found that the cost of schooling is reasonable. Ken, on the other hand, chose to study in the same university to pursue his field of interest, as the entrance requirements for good Taiwan Universities are more stringent. The frequency of academic exchanges between Hong Kong and Taiwan universities enabled him to be admitted with adequate recommendations from Taiwan.

Antonia (HKY#14) finished her Bachelor's and Master's degree in Taiwan before launching into a PhD program at a Hong Kong university, while Constance (HKY#22) went to study for her undergraduate and Master's degree in medicine in Mainland China, and a PhD in Hong Kong. Born in Taiwan and growing up in Canada after immigration, Mathew (HKY#26) received his Master's degree in the United States and went to Hong Kong for a PhD, after marrying a Hong Kong woman. Ann (HKY#27) and Rose (HKY#32) went to Hong Kong to study for their Master's degrees in 2009 and 2011, respectively. More recently, two young Taiwanese (HKY#11, age 21 and HKY#12, age 22) completed their tertiary education in finance and accounting, and stayed behind for work. These cases demonstrate the varieties of ways in which young Taiwanese took up education recently in Hong Kong. Increasing numbers of Taiwanese go to study in Hong Kong because of the extension of undergraduate education from three to four years, and receiving scholarships.

***Employment (19)***

Usually the main driving force for youth migration for employment is the inequality in labor market opportunities and income, the availability of faster and cheaper means of transportation, and the development of information and communications technology that has improved human mobility (United Nation Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2014). This applies to young Taiwanese who obtained degrees and/or have worked abroad. Employment was the main reason for 19 movers to Hong Kong, and several of them were recruited by headhunters.

The financial sector has employed a significant number of graduates from Taiwan. Having graduated from universities in Taiwan and the U.K., Clarissa (HKY#3) was employed in a bank which is located in the International Financial Centre. Having working experiences in Taiwan and London, she got her job in Hong Kong through recruitment by head hunters, and was recently promoted. She spoke with a sense of pride about her training as an undergraduate in Taiwan:

*“When we (girls) graduate from the university, we can easily find remunerative jobs in Taiwan. Some of us went abroad to get international experiences by going for further studies. Our training in the business school was really solid and better than that of Australia and Canada.”*

Similar views were shared by Susanna (#4, age 34) who graduated from the same university. Before moving to Hong Kong in 2007 due to company relocation, she had completed two master’s degrees from Taiwan and the US respectively, and working experience in New York and Singapore. In a telephone interview, she explained why she went to Hong Kong:

*“Not only does Hong Kong pay better, but also provide more employment opportunities, with some financial industries found only in Hong Kong. Young Taiwanese who used to come to Hong Kong for work, are now moving to Shanghai instead. Taiwan no longer*

*has any edge to compete for global talents...too much paper work to deal with.”*

Johnny (HKY#5, age 35), Sean (HKY#7, age 36) and Cara (HKY#8, age 38) have been employed as assistant professors after obtaining their Ph.Ds. from abroad. Approached by headhunters three years ago, Johnny accepted his job because of the higher pay and the cosmopolitan environment in Hong Kong. Sean missed the opportunity of coming back to teach in Taiwan, simply because his job offer from Hong Kong came much earlier than Taiwan's. Cara who was educated in the leading universities in Taiwan and the US, found a good teaching job in Hong Kong where her husband, who is not Chinese, also found employment.<sup>4</sup>

Formerly a sales manager in Taiwan, Miriam (HKY#6, age 36) went to Hong Kong in 2005, as her office in Taiwan need to merge with the one in Hong Kong to save operation costs. She spoke succinctly about the discrepancy in income:

*“Hong Kong pays four times of what one earns as a fresh university graduate in Taiwan, while the Taiwan employee only offers NTD 22,000 a month. (臺灣老闆很摳，才給出22K的薪水). An assistant professor here earns up to HKD 30,000, in addition to housing and health care. People who work in finance, banks and laws receive very good salaries in Hong Kong. Some Taiwanese choose to be ‘weekend parents’ who work in Hong Kong, and commute to Taiwan to visit their children over the weekend.”*

As told by Kathleen (HKY#17, age 36):

*“After paying for my rent and living expenses in Hong Kong, I can still save a lot. I was using my savings from Hong Kong for down payment of my apartment in Taiwan.”*

### **Marriage (6)**

Those who moved to Hong Kong because of marriage include five women and one man. Although the term “trailing spouse” in general refers to associate movers like wives, none of them are full-time homemakers. Most of them in our sample engaged in full or part time work/study, or participated in volunteer activities. Three of them have obtained their university

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<sup>4</sup> Johnny's, Sean's, and Cara's cases were presented earlier in Chiang and Huang (2014: 93-95).

degrees abroad (HKY#1, HKY#16, HKY#29). Alison (HKY#21, age 34) who met her husband in Taiwan, got married after seven years, and entered Hong Kong with a dependent visa (受養人簽證). As a university graduate, she worked full-time in Taiwan in the IC industry and joined her husband's business in Hong Kong. Cynthia (HKY#23, age 44) who graduated in library and information science in Taiwan, took up a variety of jobs in Taiwan, and pursued a Master's Degree after moving to Hong Kong. She worked in Hong Kong for six years, before her daughter was born. The labor participation rate of women in Hong Kong (51%) is higher compared to Taiwan's (47%), because many educated women are employed after marriage.

In the last ten years, there have been more cross-border marriages between Hong Kong and Taiwan. It was common for Taiwan women to marry Hong Kongers in the 1970s, and rare in the opposite direction.<sup>5</sup> Nowadays, Hong Kong men move to Taiwan, while Taiwan men also move to Hong Kong because of marriage. An example is Mathew (HKY#26, age 33) who immigrated with his parents to Canada from Taiwan in 1996, and worked in the US before immigrating with his wife to Hong Kong in 2008, where he received his Ph.D in the medical field, and now works full-time. The example of Jeanne (HKY#29) shows that employment was just as critical as marriage in her decision to move to Hong Kong. Before marrying a Hong Konger whom she met while traveling abroad, Jeanne received two master's degrees in Europe. She now has two young children in primary school, and works in her husband's company.

As observed by Susanna (HKY#4, age 34) who worked in Singapore previously: "*Hong Kong is suitable for single people, while Singapore is more suitable for establishing a family. It is not easy for a woman to meet someone here, because there are more women than men who come here to work.*"

## **B. Adaptation**

*"Ren qing wei is rare in Hong Kong, and time is always calculated."*

Miriam (HKY#6, age 36)

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<sup>5</sup> According to on-going research on early Taiwanese immigrants by the first author.

Our study has indicated that it has taken three to six months for most of our respondents to adapt to Hong Kong. Despite this, they need to cope with a different dialect and culture, small and expensive living space, crowding, and culture shock of various kinds.

### *Learning to Speak Cantonese*

Learning to speak Cantonese was an issue most frequently brought up by respondents. Hong Kong has been an immigrant city since the 1950s, with a majority of the people from the Pearl River delta, and others from diverse provinces in China. Cantonese became the *lingua franca* with the emergence of a common culture in the late 1960s (Luk, 2009). Watching television, taking Cantonese classes, and speaking with local people or friends in Cantonese have all helped the new arrivals from Taiwan. As a result, most of them speak Cantonese well. Those who use Cantonese in their occupation such as missionaries learn fast, but those who work in finance, international organizations, or at the university, have less urgency to acquire a new dialect. As more and more Hong Kong people speak *Putonghua* these days because of increasing Mainland Chinese in Hong Kong, Mandarin is used frequently in conducting business.

The two languages and three dialects policy (二文三語) has been adopted in the Hong Kong education system.<sup>6</sup> At the university level, students have been required to take Cantonese as a required course. Pat (HKY#20, age 19) has mastered Mandarin, English and Cantonese well. Knowing about the culture, she has adapted well in Hong Kong.

One example is the story she told the first author:

*“My telephone bill once shot up to HKD 2,000 because my boy friend forgot to turn off his cell phone. I called the telephone company, speaking up loud and firm in Cantonese, and they agreed to deduct the fees. I discover that Hong Kongers are afraid of people who speak up loud.” (我發現香港人很怕兇的人)*

According to Kathleen (HKY#17, age 36), not speaking Cantonese does not constitute any

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<sup>6</sup> The Chinese University of Hong Kong uses all three languages as the medium of teaching.

communication problem in the bank, where everyone speaks English. Those who are below 40 can speak *Putonghua*, or like to practice it with her. However, as observed by Antonia (HKY#14, age 35):

*“Most young Taiwanese do not assimilate in Hong Kong, but just stayed to earn money. Most of them do not speak Cantonese, as they speak English only at the university, or in the banks/firms that they work. Seventy to eighty percent do not socialize with Hong Kongers as a result.”*

Ken (HKY#30, age 22) learned to speak Cantonese in one year, and his English greatly improved in the university: *“As there are less than 10 Taiwanese in the whole campus, most of my friends are Hong Kongers.”* Ken found Hong Kong to be a Mandarin-unfriendly environment:

*“In Hong Kong, if you don't know Cantonese, it would be a little bit inconvenient in some places such as restaurants. When I speak mandarin in Hong Kong, most people think I'm from China, and may give me an unfriendly look.”*

Taiwanese found that Hong Kong people as a whole are not friendly to Mainland Chinese, as noticed by Ann and Craig (HKY#27 and HKY#28), and they also were quite astonished about the small living space given to Filipino maids. Clarissa noticed the cultural difference between Hong Kongers and Mainland Chinese: *“Hong Kongers are the most serious workers, while Mainland Chinese are the most aggressive of all -- they may quit work when they find a slightly better pay somewhere else.”* Mainland Chinese are regarded by Hong Kongers as *nouveau riche* Chinese. They are given the nickname of “people from the strong nation” (強國人) by Hong Kongers due to their increasing frustration with the governance under the PRC. As observed by Ann (HKY#27, age 34) *“There is serious discrimination toward people who speaks putonghua.”* Working as missionaries, Joseph and Mary have blended in quite well with local Hong Kongers and Mainland Chinese: *“They are from the same neighborhood with good schools, and their children speak fluent Cantonese, and attend international schools.”*

***Ren Qing Wei***

Ken reported that he misses the cuisine (especially vegetables) and the *ren qing wei* of Taiwan, as many other Taiwanese do. Indeed, *ren qing wei* seemed to be missing among colleagues, as told by Ann (HKY#27, age 34) who has attended graduate school and worked in Hong Kong for the last seven years: “*Relations at work is cold (冷漠), especially between employers and employees.*”

Apart from this “cultural difference”, some found that the Hong Kongers are less altruistic and less courteous when compared with people in Taiwan. The way that urban service is provided shows up quite well: “*The waiter would take your plate away before you finish eating*”; “*They do not say thank you when you pay*”; “*Mini-bus drivers and taxi-drivers are rude, with few exceptions*”; “*You only expect good urban service in high-end shops.*”

Johnny (HKY #5, age 35) explained that the behavior of taxi drivers is due to the high cost of the license plate, and the pressure to earn money during their 12 hour shift. Their salary is therefore modest in an expensive city, and they are not as organized as the large Taiwan taxi companies, which successfully promote their business with information technology. Clarissa (HKY#3, age 34) explained that these people had anger in their hearts due to the pressure of living in a competitive environment with a high cost of living, and that the high rent of restaurants resulted in the need to generate a quick turn-over rate. The emphasis on efficiency has given away *ren qing wei* in an unfamiliar environment to the newcomers. Being in Hong Kong since 2004, Clarissa pointed out that “... *Hong Kong people are cold, busy, and do not trust others easily. When you visit someone, you make an appointment first.*”

Sussman (2011) has written that “*the survival of Hong Kong’s residents is due to their persistence, hard work, shrewdness, and cooperation.*” Wong (1999, cited in Sussman 2011) defined the emerging Hong Kongese identity as characterized by people being mobile, pluralistic, flexible, situational, and pragmatic. These traits are quite unfamiliar to Taiwanese who have not been in Hong Kong for long.

### ***Crowding, Noise, and High Cost of Living***

Inevitably, the fast pace of Hong Kong is readily felt in daily life. Trains and elevators move fast in a crowded city, people speak fast and more directly, and have no time to waste. The Hong Kong ethos includes other aspects too, as observed by Michelle (HKY#10, age 33): *“Friends come and go; I feel that I am living in a big airport...there are so many high end goods, name brands for upper class spenders...There is a lack of imagination and creativity in their culture.”* *“They are so busy, full of desires, and do not have any place to sit down and think quietly about their lives,”* according to Olive (HKY#12, age 22), a student who attended undergraduate school in Hong Kong and stayed behind to work in a law firm. Michelle summarized her views of Hong Kong, where she lived for two years as a post-doctoral researcher: *“Hong Kong is simply too crowded, loud, and life pace being too fast. Friends come and go. There is little sense of settlement in the city. For that I constantly feel like living in a giant airport terminal...Hong Kong is highly efficient and rule-abiding...for working environment, I will opt for HK, but for living standard, UK and Taiwan offer better options.”*

In addition to noise, crowding, and air-pollution, the perceived exorbitant cost of housing (香港格外高昂的房租) is an example of the big difference in cost of living expenses between Taiwan and Hong Kong. Samuel (HKY#9, age 40) and Jo (HKY#16, age 36) who lived in Hong Kong for two years found the high monthly rent hard to believe: *“HKD is 15,300 for 600 sq. ft. (equivalent to NTD 60,000 for 17 ping<sup>7</sup>), which is very small for a family by the Taiwan standard.”* Kathleen (HKY#17, age 36) who worked in Central and rented a flat several stops away on the MRT line, elaborated: *“In Tin hau (Hong Kong), I pay HKD 12,000 (NTD 48,000) for a flat of 12 ping (426 sq. ft.) In Zhonghe (New Taipei City), one pays only NTD 25,000 (HKD 6,250) for a flat of 35 ping (1,360 sq. ft.).”*

### **C. Returning**

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<sup>7</sup> 1 ping (坪)=35.58 sq. ft. In Taiwan, it is quite common for a family of four to live in an apartment of 30 ping (1,067 sq. ft.).

*“Taiwan is (still) my first home. I want to go back. I am in Hong Kong because of work; but my root is in Taiwan.”* Clarissa (HKY#3, age 34)

Despite some similarities in the Chinese culture such as family relationships and kinship ties, our respondents find that Hong Kong is very different from Taiwan. In this section, we will discuss the third sub-theme, whether the Taiwanese immigrants intend to return to Taiwan or not?

### **“YES” (18)**

We found a variety of responses to the question: *“Do you expect to return permanently to Taiwan?”* Among them, 19 answered “Yes”, 10 answered “No”, and one said “Not sure”. Most answers fall into the “Yes” category, such as: *“My parents and friends are in Taiwan”*; *“It is better to have my children educated in Taiwan”*; *“Taiwan has good healthcare and living environment”*; *“Taiwan is my home”*; and *“I would like to return for retirement”*.

Winston (HKY#19, age 21) expressed interest in going back to Taiwan after finishing his tertiary education: *“I would go back to fulfill military service first, and then look for work.”* So is Ken, (HKY#30) who is ready to begin military service and learn to be a cadet pilot in Taiwan. Some Taiwanese parents living in Hong Kong think that military training is a good way to discipline their children, and therefore encourage their children to attend universities in Taiwan. Mary (HKY#24, age 33) and Joshua (HKY#25, age 33) both want to return to take care of their parents in the future. Married to a Hong Konger, Cynthia (HKY#23) misses her brother and sisters in Taiwan where she grew up, but the salary is too low to go back to work there. She visits Taiwan occasionally to see the doctor, as she is still entitled to health care insurance in Taiwan. Alison (HKY#21, age 34) who migrated to Hong Kong because of marriage, speaks fluent Cantonese and is involved in her family business. However, she would like to return to Taiwan, if her husband, a Hong Konger, can find a good job. She visits Taiwan two to three times a year, taking four hours for each trip door to door (from Hong Kong to Taichung), and using the express budget fare.

Having finished her graduate education in Hong Kong, and working in an international marketing firm, Ann (HKY#27, age 34) assured us that she and her husband will return to Taiwan, provided that there is a work opportunity and reasonable salary. They think that the educational environment in Taiwan is better, because a child's future should not be decided as early as kindergarten, as it happens in Hong Kong. The health care system, more relaxed lifestyle, and less tension in human relationships in Taiwan suit them better. She also hopes that her employer would give her a long leave in order to give birth to her first child in Taiwan.

**“NO” (10)**

The reasons for not returning include *“To be together with spouse”*; *“Prefer to live in an international city”*; *“Enjoy more job opportunities and a much higher salary in Hong Kong than in Taiwan”*. Pat does not think that she will return to Taiwan after finishing her undergraduate education: *“My boyfriend is from Mainland China...I think either Hong Kong or China is more competitive than Taiwan, and therefore more promising for development. I can start a supplementary school for people to learn English.”*

Johnny elaborated his sentiments about not returning by saying:

*“If I return, it is because the quality of life in Taiwan is better – the food, the air, and ren qing wei (吃的較好，空氣較好，人情味豐富). I return to visit my parents six times a year every two months. It would be just like working in Taipei, while living in Taichung. I can take the Hong Kong express budget airfare and go back on the weekends...Even though it is lonesome to live here as a Taiwanese, I will not return.”*

Being in Hong Kong for nine years, Jeanne (HKY#29, age 34) is still adapting to the fast pace of life there. Half of her friends are from Taiwan, and the other half from Hong Kong. She is not returning to live in Taiwan, as her husband is in Hong Kong. She finds Hong Kong more international, and a better place for her kids.

**Back to Base (6)**

Five female and one male respondents (HKY#9, HKY#10, HKY#14, HKY#16, HKY#17, HKY#22) have recently returned, including a couple who returned for work, two females who work in a bank and trading futures respectively, and two who circulates between Mainland China and Taiwan.

Despite the lower pay and longer working hours, Kathleen is quite happy to be back to base, and enjoys a better quality of life. After getting two master's degrees in Taiwan and the US, she worked in New York, but was transferred to Hong Kong due to the financial crisis. In 2008, she went to Hong Kong to work in an international firm for four years, came back to Taiwan in 2012 to get married, and found work in a branch office of a leading bank from Hong Kong. Having been back to Taiwan for over one year, she was able to point out the difference between Hong Kong and Taiwan, as follows:

*“The pay is much higher in Hong Kong, about 2 to 3 times of what one would earn in Taiwan. There are many job opportunities, and the headhunter may approach you. If I remained in Hong Kong, I would be paid HKD 60,000 per month (about NTD 240,000), and enjoy a low tax rate. If you return, you would expect to make less money in Taiwan. Hong Kong is very international and very convenient.”*

However, she realizes that if she stayed to work in Hong Kong, it would just mean working for an employer for as long as she is needed, but not knowing how long that would be. Kathleen summarized her observations: *“The quality of life is poor and living space much smaller in Hong Kong than in Taiwan. There is no opportunity to be with one's family, and this is the reason for many of us to consider moving back. It is also difficult to put our children in school. Even entering a play group requires advance application, with a lot of applicants lining up.”* Samuel and Jo who gave birth to their two children in Taiwan moved back for their children's education. To them, having a cosmopolitan education would mean sacrificing their Taiwanese identity (Chiang and Huang 2014).

Antonia (HKY#14, age 35) went to Hong Kong for the first time in 2006. After earning a

Master's degree, she took up studies for a Ph.D. degree in Hong Kong. She has returned to Taiwan two years ago, while keeping her consulting job in Guangzhou. She is prepared to commute between Taiwan and Mainland China several times a year. Leaving Taiwan at the age of 18, Constance (HKY#22, Age 33) studied medicine in China, and spent seven years to achieve a Bachelors and a Master's degree in Clinical Medicine. Being a junior with a Taiwanese background, she could not find a job in China, nor were her degrees recognized. She therefore went to complete a Ph.D. in Hong Kong in four years, including 2.5 years at the university and 1.5 years in the US. In order to become employed in Hong Kong, she needs to take another examination, with additional practice. She was accepted as resident doctor in a hospital of a leading university in Guangzhou in 2010. She is back in Taiwan to give birth to her first child, while her husband works in a city in China. Her parents are happy to see her back, while helping her with the baby when it was born, and before she returns to her full-time work in China. After receiving a questionnaire in 2013, Michelle (HKY#10, age 33) kept the first author posted "in the job transitional period" by e-mails. Before this, she was accepted as a post-doctorate researcher for two years in Hong Kong. She writes and speaks English well and calls herself an international person, not keen in settling down, such as getting married.

This section addresses the three sub-themes of our research: reasons and process of migration, adaptation and returning. In this study, among the 19 employed, 18 finished their tertiary education in Taiwan, and 11 went abroad for further education and training, before embarking on their careers in Hong Kong. Mostly employed in prestigious banks and universities, they have enjoyed higher salary and lower tax than in Taiwan, opportunities to apply their expertise, and chances of promotion. Most have adapted quickly in the competitive world of work and city life, even picking up the Cantonese language within a year. They enjoy the friendship and weekend activities (e.g., hiking, dining) with one another, and fly back to visit their parents and friends in Taiwan. The idea of coming back to Taiwan to live in an environment with better *ren qing wei*, lead a relaxed life style, meet friends often and caring for

parents has been frequently brought up. However, the reality of not being able to earn a satisfactory income back home comes foremost in making a decision to stay in Hong Kong.

Singapore as well as Shanghai and Hong Kong are getting the best and the brightest young migrants from Taiwan. Starting from tertiary education in Taiwan, or even earlier in high school, they are the cream of the crop, competent in English, and adapt quickly to the new competitive environment. Living in the cosmopolitan environment of Hong Kong, the young migrants' outlook in life are gradually transformed, and they differentiate themselves from local young people in Taiwan. Several studies of returning 1.5 generations emigrants from Canada, Australia and New Zealand, show that they met various challenges in their adaptation upon return. Some find the work culture a big challenge, expressed in terms of "*faster pace of life*," "*frequent overtime work*," "*lack of work-life balance*," "*emphasis on seniority*," "*importance of Guanxi (關係, human relations)*," and "*authoritative behavior of the boss*" (Chiang, 2011a). Sussman's research (2011) on Hong Kong re-migrants' re-incorporation into Hong Kong society after repatriation shows the tensions of adapting to the host country, reintegrating to the home country, and how they grapple with their multiple place attachments.

Many of our respondents indicated that they believe that Hong Kong is not a suitable place for young migrants to form families or plant new roots (不利年輕人生根成家). Staying in Hong Kong would be a tradeoff, when compared to the list of benefits gained by living in Taiwan, namely, the lower cost of living, less crowding and a comfortable pace of life, cleaner air, better medical care, familiar culture, and family needs. Hence for many who want to settle down with smaller children, they prefer to come back to Taiwan. On top of all this is a strong sense of home and belonging toward their homeland.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

This paper shows that Taiwanese recent (young) skilled migrants are well educated and have accomplished economic success in Hong Kong. They have earned a better salary than in Taiwan, have been exposed to a cosmopolitan environment, and established a niche in a

competitive environment in their early careers. Despite cultural differences and social distances from Hong Kongers, they fit into the labor force quite well. Being serious, well-qualified and loyal (認真、素質佳、忠誠度高), they have become successful immigrants in Hong Kong. Flying back to Taiwan frequently provides them with the “cushion” for a break from the hustle and bustle of Hong Kong city life, as well as keeping in contact with their folks, and being knowledgeable regarding information about “back home”.

This paper shows that close to 70% of those who took part in this study have the intention of returning to Taiwan, or have returned. As most of our respondents have indicated, re-uniting with family members and caring for parents at old age is the major reason for returning in the future. Setting aside the lure of high pay, job opportunities, and the cosmopolitan environment in Hong Kong, the potential of attracting some of the young Taiwanese back as reverse migrants is tenable. Getting a better Chinese education for their children, avoiding competition to get admitted to schools with a good reputation, obtaining satisfying medical services, getting childcare support from parents, and being back in the comfort zone, i.e., a hospitable environment with a better quality of life and *ren qing wei* (人情味), have all been factors in their decision to contemplate returning. We have pointed out that in spite of being provided with adequate employment and a comfortable standard of living, individuals may still be attracted back to their home country for some of the social and cultural elements they are missing in the host country.

It has been estimated that one-fifth of Hong Kong immigrants who left Hong Kong in 1987 and 1992 have returned. This is due to recruitment teams from the private sector and the government traveling throughout North America, Australia, and New Zealand to lure immigrant back to work with job offers (Sussman 2011). Australian expatriates who return at the peak of the career cycle, in their late 30s and 40s, do so for family or for lifestyle reasons (Hugo 2009). In both cases, the intensity of connections maintained with their homeland has enabled them to be aware of opportunities and developments. Fong (2011), Salaff, Wong, and

Greve (2011) who studied returnees from Hong Kong have suggested that transnational linkages with their parents and relatives in Hong Kong over the years have strongly affected their desire to return.

By using qualitative methodology, we have identified key issues in an unexplored area of research, and captured both the depth and diversity of youthful migration. As most studies of Taiwanese migration follow a “south-north” pattern involving longer distances, the shorter trans-border moves explored in this study that involves closer ethnic affinity than between Taiwan and a western country provide a fresh look at experiences of emigrants. Our study is meant to dispel myths and address critical issues, and to serve as the basis for developing a theoretical framework for scrutinizing them in future, as well as providing practical information on young settlers in Hong Kong.

The policy implications for Taiwan that emerge within this study are two-fold. First, Taiwan has a long way to go to compete for talents with global cities such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. Needless to say, Taiwan urgently needs an agenda to amend its laws and re-invent strategies to compete for skilled migrants from abroad, apart from improving the environment to attract foreign professionals. In practice, Taiwan can devise better strategies to lure the young migrants back, such as increasing the salary base by private industries, and recognizing foreign measures of certification. Providing scholarships to foreign students and recruiting them after graduation for jobs is one quick way to attract well-qualified young people, as has occurred in Hong Kong.

Second, Taiwan is facing a critical point within the categories of population growth, human power and talents. Not only has fertility declined in Taiwan, but labor participation rate has dropped in the last 30 years (from 78% to 67%), with a concomitant loss of talents to various countries. This is due to the expansion of the population involved in higher education, delaying the age of entry into the labor force. Taiwan may well be aware of the increasing demand of global talents by countries such as India and China, which are experiencing rapid

industrial growth and facing a “talent crunch” (人才短缺), resulting in keener competition and possible talent loss from other countries including Taiwan. As the Taiwan government and private industries are aware of the negative economic effects on Taiwan by losing its best and brightest citizens to other countries, attempts should be made to lure them back home by offering them high-paying jobs and providing special housing subsidies.

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