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'Away' at 'Home'? The role of anchors in identity formation of transnationally mobile children of Taiwanese entrepreneurs and expatriates

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ABSTRACT

Assimilation and acculturation theories have been used to explain the experiences and struggles of Third Culture Kids (TCKs), expatriate children, and other globally mobile youth. However, concepts of assimilation and acculturation are not able to fully explain the essence of or the variances in experiences of globally mobile children whose families oftentimes do not settle down in any of their host countries. This study presents an alternate framework for understanding globally mobile children's experiences and notions of self-identity. I extend the transnationalist framework of boundaries and flows to include the concept of anchors, which function to create and maintain the lines of boundaries and flows. I analyse a case of Global-South-to-South migration and highlight different possibilities of intergroup dynamics and modes of integration. Through a qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews with the children of Taiwanese entrepreneurs and expatriates who grew up in Malaysia and participant observation in Taiwan and Malaysia, I examine the roles of various anchoring mechanisms and their effects on identity formation. The findings of this study add nuance to existing theories on transnationalism and have implications for a better understanding of privileged youth migration.

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Introduction

The size and scale of youth return migration to the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century sparked renewed interest in questions about migration, identity formation, and integration (Bell 1997; Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017). Conflicts and political uncertainties in the 1960s and 1970s led to the repatriation of many US citizens and their families who were residing or serving overseas, and the (re-)integration experience of return youth and child migrants drew public and scholarly interest (Bell 1997; Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017; R. H. Useem and Cottrell 1996). Empirical studies focused on Third Culture Kids (TCKs) and expatriate children revealed

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commonalities in the living arrangements of expatriate communities overseas, particularly the emergence of an expatriate ‘bubble’ or enclave (Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017; J. Useem, Useem, and Donoghue 1963). These studies were also concerned about the plight of globally mobile children after repatriation, many of whom reported a sense of rootlessness and difficulty adjusting to life in their passport countries. The concepts of assimilation and acculturation have been used to explain globally mobile children’s connections with host countries and their struggles of reverse cultural shock and reintegration into passport countries (Smith 1996). However, assimilation and acculturation theories are based on intergroup interactions and group boundary change between a host, dominant group and an immigrant, susceptible-to-influence group (Alba and Nee 2003; Waldinger 2017). As a result, assimilation and acculturation are not able to fully explain the core essence nor the variances in experiences of globally mobile children whose families oftentimes do not settle down in any of their host countries.

I turn to insights from literature on transnationalism and offer an alternate framework for understanding globally mobile children’s experiences and notions of self-identity. Building on Fechter’s (2007) argument about the conceptual interdependence of boundaries and flows in transnationalism, and extending Gryzmala-Kaslovska’s (2018) work on the process of anchoring, I highlight the role of anchors, or anchoring mechanisms, that function to create those lines of boundaries and flows. The concept of boundaries highlights the existence and maintenance of group differences while the concept of flows emphasises linkages and mobility of international migration (Barth 1969; Fechter 2007; Geschiere and Meyer 1998; Hall 1991). A singular focus on either boundaries or flows runs the risk of misconceiving international migration as full of restraints or completely free of constraints, but discussions about both boundaries and flows risk lacking in analysis and becoming solely descriptive. The concept of anchors serves as an explanatory mechanism through which we can better grasp how flows and boundaries are created, sustained, and attenuate. Gryzmala-Kaslovska (2018) developed the concept of anchoring and defined it as ‘the process of establishing footholds and points of reference which allow individuals to acquire relative stability and security’ (632). Rather than putting down ‘roots’, ‘anchoring’ captures migrants’ endeavours to establish footholds for achieving a state of stability. I extend the use of anchors or anchoring mechanisms in a case of children of transnational migrants to highlight the utility of this concept in mobile contexts.

Metaphors enable us to grasp abstract and complex concepts using aspects of our physical and social lives and see social phenomenon from a different perspective (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The metaphor of anchors is then useful to understand the experience of TCKs and other globally mobile children as their migration trajectories and experiences do not fit neatly within existing frameworks of ‘traditional’ migration and settlement. I specifically focus on two types of anchors: connective or enabling anchors that create flows, and constraining or inhibiting anchors that create boundaries. Anchors are contextually contingent, and anchors can function as connective anchors in one context but as constraining anchors in another context. By focusing on anchoring mechanisms, we can better understand how globally mobile youth cultivate transnational connections, from which anchors or points do these youth draw and negotiate boundaries, and why some youth retain transnational mobility as adults while others do not.

Moreover, most existing studies analysed the role of boundaries in contexts of Global-North-to-South migration where remnants of colonialism still permeate relations between Global North passport countries and Global South host countries, but social¹ hierarchies and the resultant boundaries are more elusive in cases of Global-South-to-South migration between countries without histories of direct colonisation, dominance, or exploitation. This elusiveness creates additional ambiguity in inter-group interactions between Global South expatriates and Global South host countries and indicates the need for closer examination of how boundaries and flows are produced, maintained, and dissolved. I draw on participant observation and semi-structured interviews with children of Taiwanese entrepreneurs and expatriates who have lived in Malaysia for a significant portion of their lives before eighteen years of age to understand how they made sense of their transnational migration and repatriation to Taiwan. By focusing on the experiences of globally mobile children who have anchors in both Taiwan and Malaysia, I show that the concept of anchors is able to explain these globally mobile families' cross-border strategies and their effects on the children's sense of identity. The status of Overseas Compatriot Student, which can be claimed by most individuals of Taiwanese descent who resided abroad but study in Taiwan, is notably unique in this Taiwan-Malaysia case, highlighting not only a means of bolstering identification with Taiwanese heritage but also simultaneously affixing anchors in both Taiwan and abroad. The resultant boundaries and flows in this Global-South-to-South case adds nuance to existing theories about transnationalism and makes a contribution towards our understanding of privileged youth migration.

The rest of this article is organised as follows. First, I provide a brief overview of how privileged globally mobile children and their migration experiences have been considered in the literature on TCKs and expatriate children. Next, I turn to studies on expatriate families in the literature on transnationalism to highlight the theoretical potentials of analysing a Global-South-to-South case from a transnationalist perspective. I then outline my methods of data collection and analysis, summarise respondents' characteristics, and present the findings of this study. Finally, in the conclusion, I argue for systematic investigation of privileged globally mobile children's experiences that pays attention to anchoring mechanisms to better grasp the elusive processes of identity formation.

Globally mobile children

Third Culture Kids (TCKs) and expatriate children

In the second half of the twentieth century, in wake of the recalling of overseas personnel in the face of warfare and instability, a large number of children of diplomats, missionaries, military personnel, and other mobile occupations returned to the United States (Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017). Their challenges with adjustment and belonging – notably feelings of rootlessness and restlessness – led to scholarly attention and renewed interest in issues of integration, identity, and migration (Bell 1997; Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017; J. Useem, Useem, and Donoghue 1963; R. H. Useem and Cottrell 1996). Building on anthropologists' concept of binational third culture (J. Useem, Useem, and Donoghue 1963), David Pollock presented an influential working

definition to encompass this category of children and set them apart from immigrant children. He called them ‘Third Culture Kids’ (TCK), individuals who have formed connections with each culture they have previously resided in, ‘assimilated’ various elements of each host culture into their own life, and do not feel that they fully belong in either the first culture (home or passport country culture) or the second culture (host country culture) (Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017).

The authors also list four characteristics that distinguish the third culture experience from other forms of youth migration: distinct difference (the TCK was usually ‘a clear foreigner’ by looks, language, or both), expected repatriation (not expected to settle permanently in the host country), privileged lifestyle (perks offered by organisations to expatriate employees), and a system identity (TCKs usually strongly identified with the organisations that sponsored their parents’ work abroad) (Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017, 28–29). The four characteristics stem from certain commonalities of the TCK lived experiences overseas, namely living in a ‘bubble’ characterised by residing in expatriate communities and attending international schools (Bell 1997; Fechter 2007; Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017; J. Useem, Useem, and Donoghue 1963). Subsequent studies, mainly in the fields of education and human resources or business management, also drew on these factors to explain TCKs’ level of integration into their host societies, self-identity, and experiences of reverse cultural shock upon repatriation (Fail, Thompson, and Walker 2004; Grimshaw and Sears 2008).

Increasing globalisation of the world economy and development of regional economies has led to a rise in globally mobile families who migrate due to entrepreneurship, offshoring, employment in multinational corporations, and high-skilled work-related travel (Fechter 2007; Lam and Selmer 2004; Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017; Wilkins 2013). The multifaceted dimensions of these families and their children means that original conceptualizations of TCKs, as well as the theories and perspectives born from studies based on Euro-American families, no longer suffice. Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock (2017) highlighted the work of numerous scholars to emphasise the need to supplement the discourse around TCKs with empirical findings from non-Western societies.

Indeed, a comparison of the American and Japanese cases revealed that passport countries’ receiving contexts had significant impact on returnee children’s experience (Kano Podolsky 2004).

In the 1960s, around the same time American scholars developed their discourse on TCKs, Japan saw the creation of the *kikokushijo* (returnee children) debate. Public sympathy for ‘educational orphans’ (Kano Podolsky 2004) spurred the establishment of overseas Japanese schools with curricula guided by the Japanese Ministry of Education and policies that granted *kikokushijo* special accommodations in the educational system upon repatriation (Eyal 2005; Goodman et al. 2005). In the 1970s, however, Japanese public discourse shifted to frame the challenges of *kikokushijo* to be both educational and cultural. That is, the experience of going abroad ‘Westernized’ Japanese children, so *kikokushijo* ought to assimilate to Japanese culture and become ‘fully Japanese again’ (Goodman 2005, 181).

A review of literature on American TCKs and expatriate children and Japanese *kikokushijo* unveiled several common threads. In both cases, these globally mobile children typically lived in ‘bubbles’ in their host countries: residing in expatriate communities

or enclaves as opposed to mixed or local neighbourhoods, and attending international schools instead of local schools. These factors were used to explain why globally mobile children developed a sense of belonging in more than one country or a sense of belonging nowhere. In addition, Japan's public discourse around *kikokushijo*'s need to become reintegrated into Japanese culture indicated an interesting assumption that living overseas led to children's acculturation to host societies and 'loss' of grasp on Japanese culture. However, upon closer inspection, these narratives also unveil several paradoxical questions. If expatriate children mainly lived in enclaves or 'bubbles', how would they acculturate to or take on elements of their host societies? Particularly in the case of *kikokushijo*, if they attended Japanese international schools while abroad, why would the public assume that they cannot speak Japanese well or are not fully Japanese culturally?

Furthermore, the absence or scarcity of empirical studies on non-Western and Global South societies created a theoretical gap in our knowledge of the contours of globally mobile children and sizeable migration patterns in East and Southeast Asia (Fong and Shibuya 2020). Most existing literature on TCKs and expatriate children is limited in scope. These empirical findings were based on children from the Global North or developed countries, and few studies actually sought the views of current students or children themselves (Nette and Hayden 2007). Not only is it unclear why or how expatriate children develop connections to host countries, we also do not know who experiences more or less difficulty reintegrating upon repatriation, the reason behind varying degrees of difficulty, who develops a sense of belonging to multiple places or not belonging to any-place, and so forth.

I argue that assimilation and acculturation theories previously employed in existing studies are not able to fully parse out the reasoning for these distinctions. Assimilation is defined as a decline of ethnic distinctions where ethnic categories become less salient in intergroup interactions (Alba and Nee 2003). Unlike most immigrant families, expatriate families usually lack the intention to settle permanently in their host countries and instead expect to repatriate to their home or passport country; this is one of the characteristics that distinguish TCKs from other youth migrants (Pollock, Van Reken, and Pollock 2017). Instead of trying to acculturate, i.e. adopt the cultural patterns of (Alba and Nee 2003) host countries' cultures, expatriates actively tried to maintain their original way of life, creating and defending boundaries between themselves and their host societies (Fechter 2007). Given these different group dynamics between the host group and expatriate group, we can expect that modes of integration must also vary across distinct historical, cultural, and spatial contexts (Statham and Foner 2024). Why or how do expatriate children develop connections to their host countries when their parents actively create and defend group boundaries? How are these linkages created and maintained? How do expatriate children themselves make sense of these linkages? I turn to insights from transnationalism to advance our grasp of globally mobile children's migration experiences and identity formation.

Insights from literature on transnational migrants

Transnationalism is the body of literature that studies cross-state ties and spillovers (Waldinger 2013). Transnationalist scholars seek to answer questions such as: 'Why might [cross-state] linkages persist, attenuate, or simply fade away?' (Waldinger 2013,

757). This perspective emerged as an alternative to assimilation theory (Waldinger 2017), but despite the distance this concept has travelled, transnationalism still lacks an explanatory framework and needs to identify ‘the mechanisms generating *and* attenuating cross-border connections’ (Waldinger 2013, 762, *italics* Waldinger’s). This study aspires to answer this call by proposing a conceptual framework that incorporates anchors or anchoring mechanisms to explain the flows and boundaries in transnational migration. I propose using concepts of (1) connective or enabling anchors that create flows and (2) constraining or inhibitory anchors that create boundaries to explain how cross-state linkages persist or attenuate. Anchors can also nuance our understanding of the paradox of transnational migrants creating cross-state linkages while simultaneously experiencing a process of ‘dissimilation’ (Waldinger 2017).

Since expatriate families retain linkages to their passport countries during their temporary migration and lives overseas, the transnationalist perspective holds great potential for analysing the experiences of expatriate children. However, empirical studies employing a transnational perspective on the lived experiences of expatriate children are curiously few. Although Fechter’s (2007) pivotal study on expatriate communities focused on adult expatriates, the theoretical contributions of her study are significant and provide a foundation for future studies on transnational adult *and* youth migrants.

Fechter (2007) challenged the tendency of transnational literature to focus on flows and instead argued that boundaries play a key role in structuring and shaping the lived experiences of transnational migrants such as expatriates. Constraints shape the lives of individuals just as much as agency. Boundaries are defined by what they include and exclude, so flows and boundaries are conceptually complementary, not oppositional.

In the same way, identity is a narrative, discursive process, as ‘it is always told from the position of the Other’ (Hall 1991, 70). Individuals narrate self-identities by drawing on distinctions in relation to other social groups or categories available at a given time and space. ‘Othering’ is hence a process through which certain social groups are categorised as different and marginalised in relation to a more dominant group (Hall 1997; Okolie 2003). In the case of expatriates, they form an identity of an expatriate and ‘representative’ of one’s passport country by situating themselves among the social categories of their host countries, articulating the difference and superiority between their own category of expatriates and the other social categories in that society, and enacting practices to support these distinctions.

Studies on adult expatriates and families demonstrate this process of ‘Othering’. Scuzarello (2020) found that Western retirees in Thailand drew on a romanticised portrayal of Thailand, depicting Thailand as rural and fundamentally different from their ‘modern’ passport countries in order to enact and justify their privileged lifestyles (1615). Fechter (2007) found that Euro-American expatriates in Indonesia were preoccupied with making, defending, and maintaining boundaries that produced and articulated their identities as Western, white expatriates (60). Many of these boundaries were associated with bodily practices such as food consumption and clothing. Expatriates were hesitant to consume food from street vendors, hesitant to dress in local styles of clothing but only incorporated ‘ethnic’ accessories or tokens, and shopped ‘safe’ items at Western-style supermarkets. These practices marked the differences between ‘us’ and ‘the Other’, and likely also influenced how their children understood their self-identities.

Migrants are also ‘Othered’ by states and institutions. Favell (2003) noted that both ‘ethnic’ and ‘elite’ migrants are bounded by boundaries imposed by the states and institutions in which they move through. Instead of observing solid evidence for ultra-mobility and transnational social power among Eurostars, Favell (2003) found that affluent foreigners in the European Union were expected to adapt to the institutional constraints they encountered. Gryzmala-Kaslovska’s (2018) work on Polish migrants in the UK revealed that migrants established anchors to gain stability in face of legal and political constraints. Anchoring is a process of establishing footholds which allow migrants to acquire relative socio-psychological stability and function in a new environment (Gryzmala-Kaslovska 2018). The concept of anchors emerged as a response to critiques of the integration approach (Gryzmala-Kaslovska 2015, 2018) and was previously used to analyse a state in between permanent settlement and continual mobility (Gryzmala-Kaslovska and Ryan 2022). I extend the concept of anchors to the framework of transnationalism, another dynamic and complex process of movement and settlement involving multidimensional cross-state linkages.

If we incorporated the concept of anchors, which emphasises the processes through which migrants gain or are unable to secure footholds (Gryzmala-Kaslovska 2015, 2018), these cases above illustrate how anchoring mechanisms such as physical proximity, living arrangements, and government policy helped produce boundaries. Euro-American expatriates in Indonesia who lived in enclaves had a strong anchor through which they maintained boundaries between themselves and their host culture. This anchor also informed them about which and how many of the elements of the local culture to integrate into their lives. Eurostars struggled to resist exclusionary policies and assimilatory norms that constrained their ‘free’ or ‘borderless’ transnational lifestyle. Rather than facilitate easy back-and-forth migration, these anchors encouraged longer-term settlement and cross-border linkages hence weakened.

These studies also make a case for insights to be gained from studying privileged migration (Favell 2003; Fechter 2007). Theories born from studying power and affluence (‘studying up’) will differ from those drawn from studies of the powerless and poverty (‘studying down’). Moreover, power relations between expatriates’ countries of origin and host countries as well as their respective social locations within the global hierarchy can similarly influence their everyday interactions and result in different theoretical possibilities.

More specifically, perspectives derived from studying Global-South-to-South migration will be different from those gained from studies of Global-North-to-South migration. This is largely due to the effects of power relations and structures of hierarchy in contemporary, post-colonial contexts that create more salient power imbalances and symbolic boundaries between Euro-American migrants and host countries that are developing countries. Such group dynamics also call into question the basis of assimilation and acculturation theories, which developed from studies between a host, dominant group and an immigrant, new, susceptible-to-influence group. In the case of Global North expatriates to Global South societies, the expatriates are the new but socially dominant group while the host societies occupy lower strata in the global hierarchy. Fechter (2007) noted the striking similarities between historical accounts of colonial expatriates and the lived experiences of contemporary Euro-American expatriates. Scuzzarello (2020) observed that older Western migrants in Thailand were aware of a parallel to

colonialism but nonetheless continued to benefit from global racialized hierarchies which sustain their superiority and privilege over local people. Statham et al. (2020) highlighted macro-contextual forces that drove Thailand's globalisation, facilitating gendered 'both-ways' migration and various forms of 'transnational living' for Thai women and Western men.

However, such boundaries and imbalances are more elusive in cases of migrants from developing countries who expatriate to other developing countries because of no direct colonisation between these countries' histories. Global-South-to-South expatriate families may find themselves sharing cultural elements with their host society and be less preoccupied with maintaining physical and symbolic boundaries. The physical proximity anchoring mechanism may then operate very differently from the case of Western expatriate families who resided in enclaves in their host societies. Not only may anchors operate in different ways, altogether different anchors may play a decisive role in the migration experiences of globally mobile children. These variations will result in different types of cross-border connections and different modes of integration that expand beyond assimilation and acculturation theories.

Based on the above-mentioned current state of existing literature and theories, I position this study to address these empirical and theoretical gaps. This study not only 'studied up' but also focused on the voices of child and youth migrants caught in their parents' transnational migration. This study also examined the boundaries and flows that characterise transnational Global-South-to-South migration and extended a transnationalist framework of boundaries and flows to include anchors, thus offering a framework that 'connects the dots' and is applicable for a variety of different cases in future studies.

The current study

In this study, I focus on anchors and linkages in a case of Global-South-to-South migration to highlight different possibilities of integration and intergroup dynamics. I expand the concept developed by Gryzmala-Kaslowska (2015, 2018) and argue that anchors create linkages between origin and host countries, and boundaries and flows are fuelled by anchoring mechanisms. Rather than distinguishing between anchors that link migrants to host countries versus anchors that contribute to continued identification with countries of origin, I instead focus on connective/enabling anchors and constraining/inhibiting anchors. Connective/enabling anchors (such as family) can generate flows, whereas constraining/inhibiting anchors (such as government policy) can produce boundaries. Some anchors can be both connective and constraining, depending on context. It is through this transnationalist perspective that I analysed the migration experiences of children of Taiwanese entrepreneurs and expatriates who grew up in Malaysia.

Since the 1980s, Taiwan has been an active participant in the global economy and seen a rise in globally mobile families who migrate due to entrepreneurship plans and offshoring (Lin 2012). Taiwanese businesses began to invest abroad, with Southeast Asia being the main recipient of Taiwan's foreign direct investment, and Malaysia was the initial destination of the majority of Taiwanese enterprises and investment (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Department of Investment Services 2019). Arguably the most influential

phase of offshoring during that period was initiated by computer manufacturing company Inventec, whose relocation of main production bases to Penang spurred the migration of dozens of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that made up its supply chain. Just as the educational needs of expatriate children resulted in the founding of international schools in most countries (Wilkins 2013), the educational needs of these overseas Taiwanese children led to the establishment of the first Overseas Taiwan School in Penang in 1991, and a second Overseas Taiwan School was founded in Shah Alam (near Kuala Lumpur) soon thereafter (Ministry of Education 2019). These schools and the Taiwanese families they served offered a rich site for analysing how these transnationally mobile children made sense of their experiences.

Data and methods

This study was conducted from 2017 to 2018 in Taiwan and Malaysia. Between October 2017 and December 2018, I conducted nineteen semi-structured in-depth interviews with young adults in Taiwan. All interviewees held Taiwanese citizenship and had at least one parent who also held Taiwanese citizenship. Due to their 'hidden immigrant' (Bell 1997) characteristics, the targeted population is a hard-to-reach population. I hence used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit respondents. I looked up Overseas Taiwan Schools' Taiwanese universities' admit lists and sent recruitment flyers to each department that had admitted a returnee student, asking programme coordinators to circulate my calls for interviews with returnees. I also asked my personal networks to distribute recruitment information to friends or acquaintances who may know returnees. All recruitment documents were written in Mandarin Chinese and all interviews were also conducted in Mandarin Chinese.

As for terminology used in my recruitment flyers and interview outline, I opted to emphasise parents' occupation being the reason for migration. In the context of international human resource management, 'an expatriate is someone who takes up an international assignment for their current employer' (Fechter 2007, 2) and 'intends to return to their home country at some point in the future' (Wilkins 2013, 33), while in media representation, 'expatriates' also include retirement or leisure migrants. In this study, I used the more narrow or conventional corporate understanding of the term and sought out respondents who had at least one parent who either owned and operated a business in Malaysia, was given this overseas assignment by his/her employer in Taiwan, or was directly² hired by a branch of a Taiwanese enterprise operating in Malaysia.

I also conducted two phases of participant observation in Taiwan and one session of participant observation in Malaysia in May 2018 to triangulate data collected through interviews. Beginning in Taiwan in 2017, I became friends with a key informant who moved in adjacent social circles, and I participated in recreational activities with their friendship network. After the initial interview, I continued to shadow this key informant and gained additional insight into social network composition, migration experiences, and self-identity through informal follow-up conversations. In Malaysia in May 2018, I gained entry to two Overseas Taiwan Schools (one has since shuttered due to dwindling student numbers) as a graduate student researcher. I had a seat in teachers' offices, ate with teachers or administrators each day, recorded field observations of teachers'

interactions with students and each other, and obtained permission to observe classes in progress. At one of the Taiwan schools (not specified to ensure anonymity), I lived with a few Taiwanese teachers, shadowed them from morning activities, to work at the Taiwan School, and weekday evening and weekend activities, which included visits to the local markets, malls, usual leisure spots, and grocery shopping. I also conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with current students, teachers, and administrators of Taiwan Schools in Malaysia to supplement data gathered through participant and field observation.

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to the start of interviewing. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. Interview transcriptions were analysed using Atlas.ti 5.5, where I identified repeated terms or phrases and synthesised common themes.

As mentioned above, nineteen interviews were conducted in Taiwan with eleven young men and eight young women who, as children of Taiwanese entrepreneurs or expatriates, had grown up in Malaysia and had since repatriated or 'returned' to Taiwan for either tertiary education or work. Most respondents obtained a bachelor's or master's degree in Taiwanese universities; two respondents who returned to Taiwan for work did not attend college or university in Taiwan. As for the age of migration to Malaysia, six respondents were born in Malaysia, nine respondents migrated before the age of six, and four respondents migrated between the ages of seven to twelve. Strategically, families made sure their children migrated and started attending school in Malaysia before middle school so that their children can qualify for Overseas Compatriot Student status. I will further discuss this aspect of transnational family life and its implications in the findings section. All respondents had attended Overseas Taiwan Schools; two respondents also briefly attended a local Malaysian Chinese independent high school before transferring back to a Taiwan School, and eight respondents had also attended American International Schools in addition to Taiwan Schools.

An overview of interview respondents' characteristics is presented in [Table 1](#) below.

Table 1. Interview respondents' characteristics.

	Sex category	Age at time of interview	Number of years in Malaysia	Number of years in Taiwan
M1	Male	18	8	10
M2	Female	27	16	11
M3	Female	24	17	7
M4	Male	23	18	5
M5	Female	31	17	7
M6	Female	27	13	14
M7	Male	32	13	19
M8	Male	21	10	11
M9	Female	34	13	16
M10	Female	34	8	26
M11	Female	22	19	3
M12	Male	23	19	4
M13	Male	33	11	22
M14	Female	17	17	0
M15	Male	18	8	10
M16	Male	28	12	16
M17	Male	28	9	19
M18	Male	26	19	7
M19	Male	29	20	9

I started the interviews with a short questionnaire to gather information about their birth year, place of birth, country of citizenship, migratory trajectory (when and where did they move), and place of residence for immediate family members. I then used their responses for the questionnaire as a starting point and asked them to further elaborate on their migration experiences to Malaysia, living in Malaysia, 'back' to Taiwan, and life in Taiwan so far. Instead of asking respondents about their identities, which may constrain responses to narrow categories of national identity, citizenship, and/or ethnicity, I asked how they usually introduced themselves in various settings in Malaysia and Taiwan. From there, I asked them to discuss their sense of belonging. I ended interviews with questions about their future plans for further education, career, and other considerations.

I disclosed my own positionality in recruitment flyers in an effort to build rapport and minimise alienation or distance between myself and the respondents. I revealed that I was born in Taiwan but did not grow up in Taiwan, and hence am interested in how people answered questions about who they were, where they were from, and experiences of adjusting to life 'back' in Taiwan. Many respondents were curious about whether I, too, had grown up in Malaysia; I later discovered that the Taiwanese community in Malaysia is relatively close, and those who attended Taiwan Schools together knew each other very well, to the point where they could identify another respondent solely by gender, age, and college major. Hence, since none of them nor their friends from Malaysia knew who I was, they were curious about whether I attended an American International School instead. When I disclosed that I had actually grown up in the United States, most respondents interestingly had similar reactions: 'Oh, that's better than us!' and 'So why didn't you stay? Isn't it different there? Not like us, there's only going back to Taiwan or going to the US or Australia'. One respondent stood out: instead of drawing a distinction between the two of us, they exclaimed, 'So you get it! And you're also not afraid of speaking English in public, like us'. These interactions underline the permeating influence of global hierarchies and one of its consequences – ethnic inequalities in Malaysia, which partly led to Taiwanese families' employment of several cross-border strategies to maintain links with Taiwan while living abroad.

Findings

Anchors in transnational family life

When respondents shared how they usually introduced themselves in college, a common theme was the emphasis on their Taiwanese nationality. Since it was common during these introductions to share information about majors and which high school one graduated from, respondents' status as returnees was often quickly unveiled. Most respondents said, 'But I would add that I graduated from a Taiwan School, my parents are Taiwanese so I'm Taiwanese'. Throughout their narratives about growing up in Malaysia and repatriation to Taiwan, this Taiwanese-ness was forefront and salient, in part due to anchoring mechanisms which influenced how they made sense of their experiences growing up in Malaysia and repatriation to Taiwan (to be addressed in this section), but also because of the need to defend and maintain their identity and avoid being viewed as an 'Other' (to be discussed in more detail in the next section).

Anchors that respondents' families used to their benefit in the duration of their transnational migration experience include: family or descent/heritage, educational institution, social networks, geographical location or physical proximity, and government policy. These connective anchors helped Taiwanese families create and maintain linkages to both Taiwan and Malaysia. Some anchors (descent, education system, and government policy) also simultaneously functioned as constraining anchors, which produced boundaries and inhibited connections.

In addition to emphasising Taiwanese descent or embracing Taiwanese heritage, respondents' families planned semi-frequent trips back to Taiwan to visit extended family. These trips usually happen during summer break, and sometimes also during week of Lunar New Year celebrations, strengthening their children's ties to their passport country and one of their cultural anchors. Respondents' families also sent their children to Overseas Taiwan Schools instead of local schools, and there were actually multiple, complex reasons underlying this decision. Though respondents reported that learning Traditional Chinese and the culture were their parents' main goal, motivation for maintaining this link to Taiwanese society was prompted by a combination of intangible and material considerations. Further discussion with older respondents as well as with administrators of Taiwan Schools in Malaysia revealed that Taiwanese parents were concerned about their children 'losing' their Taiwanese-ness and thus losing an important parent-child connection.

Moreover, comparing the various types of educational institutions available to Taiwanese families in Malaysia, the costs of American International Schools were the most expensive, the costs of Taiwan Schools were lower, and the costs of local Malaysian and Malaysian Chinese Schools the lowest. However, the language barrier and a different institutional structure kept most Taiwanese families from sending their children to local schools despite lower costs. Local schools in Malaysia followed the British system due to Malaysia's colonial history. Additionally, universities in Malaysia impose ethnic quotas on admittances, making it significantly more difficult for Malaysian Chinese and international students to gain admittance to university. A male respondent who received two years of schooling at a local Malaysian Chinese school shared that the high cost of sending him and his siblings to Taiwan School led to his father transferring them to a local school, but concerns about adjusting to the curriculum and limitations of continuing their education in the Malaysian system resulted in transferring back to Taiwan School (M19). This is especially true for expatriate families who planned to repatriate to Taiwan after working in Malaysia. A male administrator in one of the Taiwan Schools said, 'Our [most] important mission is to serve the children of Taiwanese expatriates. Sometimes they're only here temporarily, ... so they want their children to be able to continue their education in Taiwan, so they send their children to Taiwan Schools' (P6). Not only were the curricula and textbooks transplanted from Taiwan, the majority of teachers (with the exception of a few teachers employed to teach English and Malay) and all the administrators were Taiwanese.

However, Overseas Taiwan Schools are not 'pure' transplants of Taiwanese schools but are transnational in nature due to anchoring in both Taiwan and Malaysia. These educational institutions arose in response to the needs and demands of transnational families and became a familiar aspect of transnational family life that further accentuated cross-border linkages. The Overseas Taiwanese Schools adhere to Malaysian laws and

observe both Malaysian and Taiwanese national holidays. They also fly both national flags and hang portraits of both states' heads of government on their walls. While the curriculum, teachers, and peers all exuded Taiwanese-ness, Malaysian-ness also permeated the walls, creating a space where individuals could have their feet in both worlds, thus enabling them to maintain connections to both worlds (Figures 1–3).

Another anchoring mechanism that built and strengthened ties to Taiwanese society was the presence of what I call network enclaves, which are social networks comprised of other Taiwanese individuals. Similar to the concept of an 'environmental bubble' (Cohen 1977, from Eyal 2005, 125), these network enclaves shelter the children of Taiwanese entrepreneurs and expatriates from the host society. The people that most respondents interacted with on a regular basis at school, after-school playdates, and their parents' and family friends' gatherings were all Taiwanese. A male respondent who migrated to Malaysia when he was six years old, only attended Taiwan School, and 'returned' to Taiwan for university said, 'Actually, I'm not able to feel the tensions between ethnic Malays and ethnic Chinese in Malaysia, because I wasn't living in those local contexts. I was always in a Taiwanese society' (M7). Another male respondent who was born in Malaysia and thus lived in Malaysia for 18 years and only 5 years in Taiwan at the time of the interview even stated, 'I feel like I'm a Taiwanese kid who didn't grow up in Taiwan' (M4).

However, the Taiwanese 'bubble' differed significantly from the 'Western bubble' (Fechter 2007) in terms of its dimensions: it was an enclave of social networks, not of physical space and material boundaries. None of the respondents were neighbours with other Taiwanese; instead, they resided in mixed neighbourhoods among Malaysian locals of different ethnicities. Other Taiwanese lived in approximately the same region,



Figure 1. Flags flown in front of the Taiwan School in Penang. Third from the left is the ROC (Taiwan) flag; to its right is the Malaysian flag. The flag of Penang is second from the right, with the school's own flag at the far right.



Figure 2. Portraits of the heads of government in Malaysia (on the left) and Taiwan (on the right).

usually within commuting distance of a Taiwan School, but not within gated communities that were comprised exclusively of other expatriates.

Consequently, geographical location and physical proximity are anchors that create robust linkages to both Taiwan and Malaysia. In terms of anchoring them to Taiwan, as I have discussed previously, respondents visited Taiwan frequently, which familiarised them with the landscape, modes of transportation and convenience, foods, and sounds of Taiwan. In terms of anchoring them to Malaysian society, not only did respondents live in mixed neighbourhoods instead of an enclave community, their families also shopped in local markets and malls, dined out at local restaurants and vendors, and incorporated local food and produce into their diet and cuisine. Respondents reported easy acceptance



Figure 3. School canteen lunch at the Taiwan School in Shah Alam. The chicken (top right corner) was prepared similarly to Taiwanese cuisine, while stir-fried rice noodles (bottom) and spiced guava (top middle) had more distinctive Malaysian flavours and ways of preparing and cooking the ingredients.

of various types of Malaysian cuisine because of similarities with Taiwan's diverse cuisines, some of which were influenced by Cantonese and South Asian cultures; both these cultures also influence the foods consumed in Malaysia.

Other bodily practices include no avoidance or refraining from but instead a certain enthusiasm for dressing in Malaysian-style clothing (not ethnic 'costumes' but every-day, casual outfits). Due to the heat, UV levels, and humidity, it made more sense to dress in loose or baggy clothing made of cotton or linen; I learned this the hard way during participant observation at the two Taiwan Schools in Malaysia. I did not observe many people wearing slim-fit denim jeans like I was. Teachers at the Taiwan Schools also opted for clothing made of fabrics more suitable for the climate in Malaysia, while administrators typically still dressed in Western-style button shirts and dress pants. In passing conversation, one of the female teachers said that she dressed 'pretty much' the same way she did in Taiwan, 'just cooler'.

As a result of this connective anchoring mechanism, respondents reported feeling a sense of connection to Malaysian society and its physical environment. In their minds, there was no doubt that they are Taiwanese, but there was an emotional tug when thinking about the land where they grew up, referring to 'seeing the landscape and sights' and 'smelling the air, which smells different' with wry nostalgia in interviews. Although they also were not embedded in mainstream Malaysian society as existing studies on expatriate communities have found, the children of Taiwanese entrepreneurs and expatriates described a sense of belonging in Malaysia. This sentiment was not an automatic reaction of acculturation nor feeling a part of Malaysian society simply by living there, but through conscious, routine practices that created and deepened anchors in Malaysia.

Lastly, Taiwanese families in Malaysia seized the opportunity to alleviate competition for their children during college application processes by applying for Overseas Compatriot Student status on their children's behalf. According to the Overseas Community Affairs Council:

[An] "overseas compatriot student" refers to a student of Chinese/Taiwanese descent who has come to Taiwan to study, who was born and lived overseas until the present time, or who has been living overseas for six or more consecutive years in the immediate past and obtained permanent or long-term residency status overseas. (Overseas Community Affairs Council 2020a)

The regulations stipulated that this status is not granted automatically; applicants would need legal knowledge in this regard and plan in advance. The fact that most respondents said their families prepared them to apply for this status reflects not just the thoughtful strategizing of Taiwanese entrepreneurial and expatriate families but also the connectedness of the Taiwanese community in Malaysia (especially among those who attend Taiwan Schools) and flow of knowledge in these networks. A female respondent who graduated from medical school and was finishing her training at the time of the interview said her parents encouraged her to aim for medical school since she satisfied the eight-years overseas residency requirement for more competitive majors like medicine and dentistry (M6). Acquiring Overseas Compatriot Student status also entails less competition, because 'the admission quota for these students is in addition to and does not affect the admission quotas already approved for [each institution or department]' (Overseas Community Affairs Council 2020b). Overseas Compatriot Students do not need to compete against local Taiwanese students for admittance to popular and competitive majors like medicine, dentistry, and engineering. This anchoring mechanism strengthened respondents' ties to Taiwan institutionally by granting an official status recognising their descent or heritage, marked by a stamp on their passports. However, this status also became a source of confusion for respondents upon repatriation to Taiwan. I discuss this issue in more detail in the next section.

Repatriation marks another way that the family operates as a connective anchor. Whereas the entire nuclear family migrated to Malaysia together, these transnational Taiwanese children usually repatriate to Taiwan alone for tertiary education or for work. Almost all respondents reported that their parents still resided in Malaysia when they left Malaysia for Taiwan. While they had extended family in Taiwan, and some also had older siblings attending university in Taiwan, they could not shake the feeling that they were alone in a new setting. A male respondent who had just finished his mandatory conscript service at the time of the interview said,

It's pretty paradoxical, sometimes I wonder, 'Where is my home?' Because me and my sister are in Taiwan now, but my parents live in Malaysia. And my extended family, like grandpa and grandma and relatives, they all live in Taiwan. But we say our home is in Malaysia, ... the home where our parents are. (M16)

A female respondent who had repatriated to Taiwan to attend college also said that vacationing in Malaysia was also returning to someplace familiar, 'It's like traveling internationally, but when you get there, it feels like you're going home' (M2). Before repatriation, these transnational Taiwanese children 'go home to Taiwan', but after repatriation, they are now 'going home to Malaysia'. This reflects the reality of transnational

migrants who have family in different states, and hence hold cross-border, transnational links. The anchoring mechanisms discussed above continue to exert their influence on Taiwan's returnee children and affect their sense of identity.

The effects of cross-border anchors on identity

As I had mentioned at the beginning of the previous section, respondents emphasised their identification as Taiwanese and drew on combinations of different anchors to explain or justify their Taiwanese-ness. I also showed that connective anchoring mechanisms such as family and physical proximity had an effect on respondents' feeling of connectedness with Malaysia. Such anchors pulled these transnational migrants in both directions, while most of the individuals that respondents interacted with in Taiwan either tried to categorise them in one or the other or sought to unilaterally classify them as Malaysian, which led to the respondents needing to repeatedly explain themselves. This recurring process of questioning ultimately led to respondents' confusion and self-doubt about their identity and sense of belonging as well as the feeling of being 'Othered'.

In Malaysia, you weren't aware of the issue of identity. Back then, because you hung out with Taiwanese, you wouldn't feel that you were different from anybody else or that anyone looked at you differently. And I've believed that I'm Taiwanese ever since I was little, it's just that I went to Malaysia and lived there for a while ... Returning to Taiwan and going to college, you have to keep explaining yourself, [and] your identity, to others, and this leads to you becoming continually conflicted cognitively. (M7)

Peers' and other local Taiwanese individuals' repeated questioning of their identity led to self-doubt about their self-identification as Taiwanese and the authenticity of their Taiwanese-ness. This confusion and questioning stem from assumptions that individuals need to belong in one place, or 'be rooted' in *one* place to call their own. In contrast, transnational migrants such as my interview respondents reported a sense of belonging in both Malaysian and Taiwan, while seldom hesitating when asserting that their national identity is Taiwanese. Interactions with their Taiwan-born-and-bred peers led to feelings of being 'neither us nor them'. 'I'm a foreigner wherever I go [in Malaysia and in Taiwan]! Who am I then?' exclaimed a female respondent (M2) exasperatedly.

This 'Othering' was further magnified by the respondents' Overseas Compatriot Student status. Respondents who attended different universities in Taiwan consistently mentioned the same query as their peers' most frequently-asked question: 'How come you're a *qiao-shen* [Overseas Compatriot Student] but you have a home in Taiwan, your grandparents and relatives live in Taiwan, and you have a Taiwanese passport?' I argue that this additional confusion comes from a number of factors. First and foremost, there is public misunderstanding of the definition of Overseas Compatriots. Respondents report that their peers did not know that qualification for Overseas Compatriot Student status included 'or who has been living overseas for six or more consecutive years' (Overseas Community Affairs Council 2020a); the Taiwanese public seemed to equate Overseas Compatriot Students solely with students of Chinese or Taiwanese descent. Second, the sheer volume of ethnic Chinese or Taiwanese international students who also take advantage of Overseas Compatriot Student status contribute to an incomplete understanding of the definition of Overseas Compatriots. Because there are more

students of Chinese or Taiwanese descent than there are Taiwanese nationals who grew up overseas, these ethnic Chinese/Taiwanese students became the face of Overseas Compatriot Students. Third, there are forces – perhaps the same forces that advocate for nationalism, or forces locked in conflict remnant of the Cold War – that discourage the re-categorization and differentiation of Taiwanese citizens who have lived abroad versus foreign nationals of Chinese ethnicity. Overseas Compatriot Student status thus operated as a connective anchor that maintained respondents' links to Taiwan while living in Malaysia, but functioned as a constraining anchor in Taiwan by accentuating difference between respondents and 'local' Taiwanese.

The experience of being 'Othered' was not as evident while the respondents were living in Malaysia. Different from expatriates and migrants in Global-North-to-South cases, these transnational Taiwanese youth migrants did not stand out in Malaysia because there are Malaysian Chinese in Malaysia, and they could blend in with the locals to a certain degree. Even when their Taiwanese identity was disclosed, respondents reported that the locals liked Taiwanese popular culture, TV and entertainment, and even their accents. So, their foreign status was not a major source of discomfort or turmoil. Likewise, respondents also did not usually stand out in Taiwan because they are in fact Taiwanese; they are 'hidden immigrants' (Bell 1997) who look like locals and so they could blend in. The emergence of and need to negotiate or maintain boundaries did not occur by simply entering those physical spaces but during interactions. In other words, 'Othering' occurred during social interaction when respondents gave or gave off cues indicating they had overseas experience that marked them to be different. Otherwise, respondents were able to 'pass' (Goffman 1963) to a certain extent and avoid situations where they needed to defend and negotiate their identity.

Conclusion

The children of Taiwanese entrepreneurs and expatriates who grew up in Malaysia were transnational youth migrants caught up in their parents' globally mobile career paths. They identify as Taiwanese with a sense of belonging in both Taiwan and Malaysia. The footholds generated from connective/enabling anchors created linkages, whereas the same footholds or grounded points could operate as constraining/inhibiting anchors that produced boundaries and a sense of being out-of-place. Connective anchoring mechanisms such as family, educational institution, network enclaves, physical proximity, and government policy created ties in both Taiwan and Malaysia. Flows resulted from these anchors, such as frequent trips between Taiwan and Malaysia to visit family in both states. Boundaries were also drawn from anchors that functioned as constraining/inhibiting anchors, such as the Overseas Compatriot Student status that led to the possibility of being 'Othered' during social interaction. These transnational links gave rise to their sometimes-uncomfortable situations of having feet in both worlds or one foot in each world which pulled them in two different directions – choosing 'either Taiwan or Malaysia'. I argue that these situations can be eased if we recognise them as transnational migrants who embodied cross-state ties.

We can also better explain paradoxes and unanswered questions in existing studies by employing a transnationalist framework. To revisit to the questions raised from literature discussing the Japanese public's concern about *kikokushijo* having difficulties adjusting

upon repatriation, the concept of anchors can help clarify the puzzle. Just as Overseas Taiwan Schools are not 'pure' transplants of the origin country's culture and dynamics but a transnational space, Japanese international schools may also be transnational in nature and form a 'third culture' distinct from local Japanese schools. More importantly, a combination of anchors can cultivate linkages to both origin and host countries, which in turn create a sense of belonging in both worlds. Anchors such as enclaves strengthened TCKs' perceived ties to their passport country while maintaining boundaries between them and their host societies. After moving from a host society, anchoring mechanisms that previously connected these youth migrants to host societies also attenuated. The lack of anchors in particular societies (host or passport) can explain the feelings of rootlessness and a lack of sense of belonging reported by TCKs and other globally mobile youth, for without anchors, they have difficulty maintaining linkages with that society.

Furthermore, this study found that Overseas Compatriot status contributes to complexities in identity formation. This aspect of state governance not only provides another means of anchoring (fostering Taiwanese identity), but also a strategy undertaken by Taiwanese entrepreneurial and expatriate families to, on the one hand, maintain and foster Taiwanese heritage and, on the other hand, utilise to their children's advantage (less competition during college applications). Moreover, Overseas Compatriot Student status is, in essence, an acknowledgement and official recognition of embodying transnational links – having links to Taiwan, 'the homeland', *and* overseas. This draws a distinction between Taiwanese transnational migrants and other types of return migrants or 'pure' immigrants. Owning up to one's Overseas Compatriot status is therefore a personal acknowledgement and perhaps identification with embodying a social location that is not fully 'here' nor fully 'out there' but someplace dynamically in-between.

Based on experiences of respondents in their last years in university and those who have entered the work force, we can deduce that the possibility of being 'Othered' due to one's Overseas Compatriot Student status fades with time as its relevance diminishes over the life course and other markers of identity (such as college major and occupation) become more salient to take its place. Future studies can expand in sample size and temporal scope to further explore the salience of this particular anchoring mechanism and identify which other anchors and their corresponding linkages persist, diminish, or fade away.

Applying a transnational perspective, we see that respondents' 'return migration' to Taiwan is not 'return' but yet another stretch or a prolonged stay in one of their anchor societies. The concept of anchors can also explain why, as time passes, respondents feel more settled in Taiwan as the number and strength of anchors to Taiwan increase. Such connective anchors to Taiwan include forming their own families and pursuing careers in Taiwan. Some respondents, such as the medical school graduate, discussed their inability to work abroad like their parents did because their credentials were not recognised in another country. This echoed empirical findings about the differential portability of higher education credentials and convertibility of cultural capital (Collins et al. 2017), which can affect TCKs' transnationalism.

For respondents with more mobile career aspirations (6 of the 19 interview respondents), my study found that the children of migrants are able to utilise resources accumulated during their transnational migration in their developmental years, including social networks, language abilities, and tacit knowledge, to lay down connective

anchors that would rejuvenate their own transnational migration. For instance, soon after the initial interview, a female respondent graduated from university in Taiwan and began to work for a multinational corporation. A few years later, she began short-term overseas assignments that took her to China and (back) to Malaysia. Future studies can analyse the career choices of children of transnational migrants and make contributions towards further advancing theoretical frameworks that are capable of predicting outcomes in the life course of transnational migrants. Future studies can also further explore whether more mobile transnational migrants form a cosmopolitan identity, which was not observed in my data perhaps due to their current stage in the life course and states' nation-building projects. As states' policies shift between opening up or restricting their borders, whether and how 'brittle borders' (Bryceson 2019, 3043) affect transnational migrants and their sense of identity also remain to be seen.

Future studies also ought to note power dynamics. We need to continue to explore the experiences of privileged migrants and transnational migrants from the Global South to other Global South societies. Research on professional or skilled migrants is scarce, so studying privileged migration can offer new theoretical perspectives. Also, much of the literature in the social sciences was conducted in the context of power relations that favour the researcher. This raises an important issue: 'whether indeed such dominant-subordinate relationships may not be affecting the kinds of theories we are weaving. ... The consequences of not studying up as well as down are serious in terms of developing adequate theory and description' (Nader 2018, 16). Just as power differences between the researcher and 'objects' of investigation influence theories we develop, power relations between migrants' countries of origin and host countries (their respective social locations within the global hierarchy) can similarly influence migrants' everyday interactions and result in different theoretical possibilities. If power hierarchies are more ambiguous, as in the case of Global-South-to-South migration, not only may findings challenge existing perspectives, but we may need to weave new theories to explain phenomenon. As this study has shown, even the same type of anchor may operate in different ways and result in the formation of boundaries and exclusions instead of flows and integration. Accordingly, future studies can continue to answer the call by Statham and Foner (2024) by exploring the transferability of integration concepts across various social contexts and examining the applicability of assimilation and integration perspectives beyond wealthy Western contexts.

Notes

1. 'Social' is not used as a conceptual opposite of 'economic' but meant to include these different domains or spheres of social life including the social, cultural, symbolic, economic, and physical (geographical, environmental, and bodily/embodiment).
2. According to my informants, these cases were uncommon but may be on the rise. Employees were actually recruited in Taiwan by Taiwanese enterprises, but instead of working for the corporation in Taiwan first and then being sent overseas, these recruits were first screened by headquarters personnel in Taiwan then interviewed (virtually) by hiring departments' heads in Malaysia, and then signed on directly with branches operating in Malaysia. I infer that this practice is to cut down on human resource costs, because conventional expatriates usually receive generous wage and benefits packages for their overseas assignments, whereas being directly hired by the Malaysian branch would categorise the worker as a local hire, eliminating the corporation's need to provide costly financial packages as

incentives and compensation. I included all these forms of overseas employment in this study because the focus of the study is on the children who are caught up in their parents' transnational migration and have expectations for repatriation, and conventional expatriates and local hires share these characteristics.

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Data availability statement

The participants of this study did not give written consent for their data to be shared publicly, so due to the sensitive nature of the research supporting data is not available.

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