

# Middle-Class Migration and Problems of Adjustment: Taiwanese Business Migrants in Brisbane, Australia

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( ABSTRACT )

A prominent theme of migration literature is the problems of adjustment migrants have living and working in their destinations. Many of these problems are seen to result from migrants coming from less developed areas and being less skilled and educated than the destination population, thus being a result of their poverty. This paper looks at a very different group of migrants, Taiwanese business migrants to Brisbane, Australia. They have come from a country which, while not the most technologically advanced is nonetheless developed. Moreover, they are at least on a par in education level with the host population and in wealth they are far above them.

However, they still have problems of adjustment, not as threatening to physical and mental health as other migrant populations face but problems which nonetheless affect their general happiness and their ability to make a living in the host economy. These problems stem from three major factors: the work skills these migrants brought with them are often unsuitable to the Australian economy as presently structured; the culture and social organisation of Australia is quite different to that from Taiwan such that there are difficulties performing even very routine tasks; and the facility in English of most migrants prevents them from having more than the most superficial contact with locals. Their problems of adjustment and the reasons for them are shared with Taiwanese migrant communities studied in the other Western countries.

**Key words: migrants, Australia, adjustment, middle-class, Taiwanese businessmen**

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# 中產階級移民的生活適應問題： 澳洲布里斯班的台灣商業移民

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(中文摘要)

有關移民文獻的一個主要問題就是，移民到目的地去後所碰到的生活和工作方面的問題。一般學者認為這些問題的來源是因為世界各國大部分的移民是從比較落後的地方來的，並且在教育水準和工作技術方面都比較低，也就是說他們之所以碰到問題是因為他們比較窮。這篇論文的焦點是一些與眾不同的移民，即是從台灣到澳洲布里斯班來的商業移民。他們是由一個雖然在科技上不是最先進的，但是在經濟上還算是滿發達的國家來的。而且在教育水準方面他們也都與當地的人民並駕齊驅，而在財富方面更是遠富於他們。

不過他們在生活上還是有適應方面的困難，雖然並非與世界上其他各國的移民受到的人身及生命威脅一樣，但是還是會影響他們的精神生活和他們謀生的能力。這些困難有三個主要的來源：一、他們的專業技術不適合澳洲現代的經濟結構；二、澳洲和台灣的文化及社會構造有所不同，使他們會在一般日常生活當中碰到問題；三、他們的英文程度使他們與當地澳洲人只能在日常生活上有簡單的溝通。布里斯班的台灣商業移民的生活適應問題基本上與在美國的台灣移民相當。

關鍵字：移民、澳洲、適應、中等階級、台商

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# Middle-Class Migration and Problems of Adjustment: Taiwanese Business Migrants in Brisbane, Australia

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## Introduction

A frequently discussed topic in the literature on migration is the problems migrants have in adjusting to life in the host society. A major reason for these problems is that migrants are usually poorer than the host population and are also less skilled and educated and often unaccustomed to the ways of the city or the work regime under industrial capitalism. They thus suffer from unemployment or have to take marginal, low-productivity jobs, they live in crowded neighbourhoods with inferior quality housing and poor sanitary facilities and other services, and they lack access to professional medical care. Families suffer because of separation from kin left behind in the area of origin and because parental care is limited by the exigencies of earning a living. They may also face hostility from the host population.

This paper examines a very different set of migrants, business and skilled migrants from Taiwan living in Brisbane, Australia. They are different in that, selected on the basis of their export skills and experience and their ability to bring at least A\$ one million when they came, they generally compare quite favourably to the host population in education and in entrepreneurial skills; in wealth they are well above the host population average. However, they still have adjustment problems, by no means as health or life threatening as, e.g. rural-urban migrants in a Brazilian *favela* or international migrants in a turn of the century New York tenement, but serious enough to affect their psychological well-being and their ability to earn a livelihood in the host society.

The paper is based on interviews, beginning in the early 1990s, with twenty

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Taiwanese business migrants and numerous conversations with other members of the local Taiwanese community, including community leaders such as the executive officers of the Taiwanese Women's Association. The data are not statistically representative, but the main findings are consistent across the interviewees and also in accord with findings of other researchers (Lever-Tracy et al. 1991; Ip et al. 1998). The paper will describe the growth of the Brisbane Taiwanese community and explore the main problems emphasising the difficulties they have had in establishing businesses, which is the migration category under which the Australian government granted them entry. The paper will show that the problems confronting the members of this community can be traced to a number of factors. Prominent among them are culture shock, the accommodation to a different culture and the far from perfect meshing of the business and manufacturing skills the migrants brought with them with the Australian economy. Most important, however, is their difficulties in communicating in English, as it exacerbates other problems and creates some of its own.

The Taiwanese in Brisbane are not unique in being middle-class migrants. Castles and Miller note the movement overseas of managers and technically skilled persons as their companies set up foreign subsidiaries as well as the migration of highly skilled and educated from developing to developed countries (1993: 87-88). Managerial migrants come from countries in which transnational corporations originate. Although high-level personnel of those corporations certainly face culture shock and other difficulties, they often live and associate mainly with other foreigners, and their postings are generally temporary. The latter migrants are usually more permanent and more likely to take up residence in the local community. Thus their need to adjust and acculturate is higher.

Both these phenomena are of historically recent origin, as is that of middle class Chinese migrants. Prior to the end of World War II, most Chinese migrants were labourers. However, with the Communist takeover of mainland China in 1949 a large number of middle class and some very wealthy Chinese went to the United States, and the 1950s saw the beginning of a brain drain of students from Hong Kong and Taiwan, mostly to the United States. In the 1960s, the United States relaxed its immigration restrictions against Chinese and other non-whites, the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act repealing the

exclusions against them. In Australia, although the White Australia Policy was not formally rescinded until 1972, it was largely unenforced in the latter 1960s, and many Chinese who had come to study stayed on. In Australia, however, most of the Chinese were from Hong Kong or Southeast Asia, very few coming from Taiwan. In the United States there was little Taiwanese migration except by students who stayed on after their degrees and the small number who married US citizens. Taiwanese non-student migration began in the 1970s, and there have been studies of the Taiwanese communities in Flushing, New York (Chen 1992), Los Angeles County (Tseng 1994, 1995; Waldinger and Tseng 1992), and in Australia as a whole (Ip et al. 1998). However, the problems each face differ because there are differences between Taiwanese and other Chinese settlement in southern California and the rest of the United States, between that in the United States and Australia, and between that in Brisbane and other areas of Australia. The problems the Brisbane Taiwanese face have a slightly different focus.

Chinese first went to the United States as labourers, a characteristic that has been maintained in New York, where the Chinese population still tends to be proletarian. In Los Angeles, by contrast, the major growth in the Chinese migrant population has come since World War II. New York's proletarian Chinese have continued to sponsor their proletarian relatives, but Los Angeles' high tech industries, e.g. aerospace, attracted a much better educated migrant cohort. Tseng, using census data and from the US Immigration and Naturalization Services, shows that twice the percentage of Taiwanese (22%) indicate that they want to live in Los Angeles than Chinese from Hong Kong or from mainland China. She also states that the Taiwanese population in Los Angeles County is predominantly professional or executive, many of the latter having many years of experience running businesses in Taiwan before migrating (1995: 39-41; see also Waldinger and Tseng 1992). There are middle-class Taiwanese in New York, as Chen shows (1992), but there are not so many as in Los Angeles, and the sorts of high-tech business opportunities that exist in southern California are absent there (see Chen 1992: 3-26, 52).

There are several differences between the Taiwanese populations in the United States and in Australia. First, the migration of families began a decade or so later in Australia, made possible only by the Business Migration Program which began in 1981;

relatively large scale Taiwanese migration to the United States began in the 1970s (Tseng 1995: 38). Second, prior to this, many Taiwanese students had gone to the United States for postgraduate study, most of whom stayed. Thus, by the time family migration began in earnest, there was already a significant number of Taiwanese living there. By contrast, Ip et al. describe the number of Taiwanese in Australia prior to 1985 as 'insignificant' (1998: 81). Third, the result is that the majority of Taiwanese who have migrated to Australia, 61%, have a business rather than a technical background (Ip et al. 1998: 82). This is even more pronounced in Brisbane where 89.9% of Taiwanese migrants came under the business rather than the skilled migration category.

### The Brisbane Taiwanese Community

Taiwanese have had a presence in Brisbane only since the late 1980s. Before that, there were a small number of Taiwanese in Brisbane, most of whom were either professionals or spouses of Australians. Crissman and Crissman et al cite Price's figure of 206 persons from Taiwan in all of Australia in 1976, however, beginning in 1981, the Australian census recorded birthplace only, not racial or ethnic categories. It queried ancestry in 1986, but since Taiwan was counted as being part of China, no separate figures for Taiwan are available. Crissman estimates that there were 13,750 persons in Australia from China in 1981 but found that most Brisbane Chinese were either descendants of migrants from much earlier periods or came to Australia since 1960 from Papua New Guinea or Southeast Asia (1985, 1991)<sup>1</sup>.

Taiwanese students began appearing at Brisbane's universities in the mid-1980s and have increased rapidly in the 1990s. Table 1 gives figures from Griffith University. Their numbers from the other two major Brisbane universities would probably be larger in number but the growth trends would likely be similar; by 1990, the presence of Taiwanese at and in the vicinity of the Queensland University of Technology campus became quite noticeable. In addition there were many other Taiwanese students

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<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, the Taiwanese community would get together to eat *zongzi* (a rice dumpling) on Dragon Boat Festival, and based on my attendance I doubt that there were more than 200 Taiwanese in Brisbane in the early and middle 1980s.

attending Brisbane universities who were children of migrants, but roughly half of those I have met at Griffith came on their own from Taiwan.

As mentioned above, the largest and most visible group of Taiwanese in Brisbane are the business migrants. The sudden influx of these people is a result of the Business Migration Program begun by the Australian government in the early 1980s. Initially those taking advantage of it were mainly Chinese from Hong Kong and Southeast Asia; Taiwanese did not begin arriving in numbers until 1988. However, there was a very large influx of arrivals from Taiwan in the several years following, after which the numbers dropped off. Ip et al. give a total of 13,025 Taiwanese persons in Australia in 1991, 19,069 by 1996, distributed, according to Bureau of Immigration Research figures, about one-third each in Queensland and New South Wales, the rest in the other states and territories. These numbers seem too small. The Taiwan-Australia Business Association estimated the number of Taiwanese families in Brisbane at 3000 in 1995, 5000 in 1999. Since many of these were stem families, i.e. including grandparents, this would indicate significantly higher figures, perhaps as high as 20,000 in Brisbane alone. However, that number, too, is deceptive because many who have formally migrated have either returned to live in Taiwan and visit Australia only often enough to maintain permanent resident status, or they spend much of their time away tending to their businesses.

In contrast to the Sydney Taiwanese, who are scattered throughout the Sydney area, the Brisbane Taiwanese form a community of sorts, centred on the Sunnybank shopping area, an intersection with shopping complexes on three of the four corners (all owned, incidently, by a single Taiwanese migrant entrepreneur) with a Taiwanese disco/karaoke in the hotel on the other corner. There are several Chinese, Taiwanese, and other Asian restaurants in this area as well as shops selling Chinese foodstuffs, a Chinese butcher, at least two video rental shops featuring Chinese films, plus a Taiwanese bakery and pastry shop. There are also several real estate agencies and banks, all of which have signs and advertisements written in Chinese and both Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking employees. Although the businesses in this area cater to Chinese in general and to some Southeast Asian communities, it is known in Chinese as 'Little Taipei,' no doubt

reflecting the concentration of Taiwanese in Sunnybank and the surrounding suburbs<sup>2</sup>. This area has been 'Asianised' only in the 1990s; prior to that time, like other suburban shopping centres in Brisbane, it had no particular ethnic character and catered to the general Australian public.

There are a number of organisations in the Taiwanese community. Among the largest are the Taiwan-Australia Friendship Association and the Taiwan-Australia Business Association (TABA). There is also a women's association and several smaller groups. These indicate the presence of a Taiwanese community, but none could be said to represent it. Many regard these organisations as being vehicles for the personal ambitions of the founders or current presidents and thus avoid involvement. TABA is well-organised, having a headquarters, permanent staff, a mission, and links into the Australian business community, but it is a special-purpose organisation and cannot fulfill all the functions and needs of the migrant community. Moreover, few of its directors are actually in Australia at any particular time, instead being abroad tending their businesses.

Within the Brisbane metropolitan area there is a Fo Kuang Shan temple. Situated on a seventy-plus acre site, the temple complex itself is quite large. Aside from facilities for various worship and meditation activities, it contains a library with secular as well as sacred materials, a shop where worshippers can buy religious paraphernalia, and a dining area where temple workers and guests can partake of the vegetarian fare. There are also classrooms in which weekend schools teach Chinese, mental arithmetic and other subjects. Aside from Fo Kuang Shan, there is another large Chinese religious complex in the Brisbane area owned by the Amithaba group, though it is not physically a temple or other religious building but simply a very large house in which the monks live and the faithful come to worship and meditate. There are also a number of smaller sects and cults<sup>3</sup>.

As mentioned above, the Taiwanese are generally wealthy compared with the average or even middle and upper-middle class Australians, yet they did not choose to

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<sup>2</sup> Brisbane also has a Cantonese commercial community centred on Fortitude Valley and a Vietnamese one in West End.

<sup>3</sup> There is also a very old temple in the urban area of Brisbane built by the old Chinese immigrant community. It is now run by a European woman whose husband is from that community. In addition, on the north side of the Brisbane area is a Daoist temple funded by a Hong Kong group.



settle in the more established upper-middle class suburbs such as Kenmore, Indooroopilly or St. Lucia. The Sunnybank area is relatively newly developed and prosperous, but it is more middle class and not at all chic. Taiwanese chose to settle in the Sunnybank area for three reasons. First, the area had been semi-rural (orchards, nurseries, and market gardens) until development began in the late 1970s. When the Taiwanese arrived, there was much undeveloped land which gave them the opportunity to design their dream homes. It also meant that they did not have to live in a second-hand house, something to which many objected, first because others had lived in it previously, second because the Queenslander style of house is made of timber, and Taiwanese regard these as not sufficiently sturdy (earthquakes) or secure (burglars) and as potential fire hazards.

Second, as earlier arrivals bought and built there, they started a chain migration, partly because newcomers get more advice from already established compatriots<sup>4</sup>. Brisbane Taiwanese stereotype themselves as being from southern Taiwan, especially Gaoxiong. They contrast themselves with the Sydney Taiwanese, whom they say are from the Taibei area. They explain this on the basis of climatic similarities, saying that Taibei's climate is like Sydney's, Gaoxiong's like Brisbane's. Some also half jokingly note that the area codes for both Taibei and Sydney are 02 while those for Gaoxiong and business are 07. I cannot speak for the reliability of the demographics; I have met more Taiwanese in Brisbane who are from the south, but many I have met are friends of people I already know, thus they would tend to be from the same area. However, what they say about the climatic similarities can be regarded as accurate only in the most relative sense. Neither Sydney nor Brisbane are as hot as cities in Taiwan.

Third, informants noted that the already established, more fashionable suburbs are hilly and the streets crooked. This makes driving in these suburbs more difficult, 'especially for our wives'. The Sunnybank area, by contrast, is quite flat, and although there are curving roads in many of the developments the main roads are straight and the intersections perpendicular. An added attraction is that, aside from the Sunnybank

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<sup>4</sup> An actual example of this is the following (with names changed): Wang Er, an Overseas Chinese from Indonesia, is a major investor in companies owned by Zhang San and his brothers and by Li Si. Mr. Wang and the Zhang brothers are next door neighbours: Mr. Li, who has not migrated to Australia, nonetheless has a piece of land nearby.

shopping area, there is another, even larger shopping complex, Garden City, not far away. Shopping is a major form of recreation in the Taiwanese community.

The wealth of the Taiwanese community is apparent in their housing. While many live in developments aimed at the high end of the real estate market, some have built mansions. While not garish, these certainly stand out for their opulence and are local landmarks of sorts, admired by some, despised by others. These homes do not incorporate distinguishably Chinese features in their architecture, but they do differ in style and scale from those built by Australians. An architect acquaintance, himself a Hokkien<sup>5</sup> Chinese immigrant from Malaysia, told me that several Taiwanese clients who have wanted to sell have had difficulty finding buyers for such homes because of the combination of price demanded and style of the home.

### Why the Taiwanese Migrated

Prior to the 1980s, Chinese migration to Australia was very limited. Some Chinese came during the gold rushes, but well prior to Federation (1901), there was strong sentiment to exclude Asians from coming and to make it very difficult for Chinese women to come as brides. Chinese did not begin to come to Australia on a regular basis again until the 1960s when the Colombo Plan was implemented. The Colombo Plan, among other things, sponsored students from Southeast Asian countries to come to Australia for tertiary studies. Because of the hostility toward and discrimination against them in countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia at that time, which often meant that they were denied places in universities, Chinese were especially keen to come. Most of the scholarship recipients were, in fact, ethnic Chinese. Moreover, many overstayed their visas, staying beyond the time they were tertiary students, and efforts by immigration authorities to repatriate them often met with popular resistance, sometimes becoming legal *causes célèbres*. Following the demise of the infamous White Australia Policy in the 1970s saw increases in immigration by

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<sup>5</sup> Hokkien is the Chinese language spoken in southern Fujian Province, from which the ancestors of most of the Taiwanese came. There are also large Hokkien communities in Southeast Asia. Curiously, this fellow, who is married to a Japanese woman, said that his exposure to Hokkien was limited to his childhood and his command was very limited, 'though it comes back to me when Taiwanese clients speak to me for awhile.'

ethnic Chinese, though they were small in overall numbers.

It was in the 1980s that these increases became more manifest. The triggers were the Business and Skilled Migration Program and the strong commitment of the Hawke Labor government to link Australia into the Asian business community. However, as mentioned above, the ethnic Chinese who came in the early and mid-1980s were mainly from Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. There were very few students from Taiwan in Australian universities in the 1960-1985 period, as it was virtually impossible for Taiwanese male undergraduates to study abroad because of their military obligation, moreover, doing postgraduate study in the United States was already a very well-established pattern.

Most Taiwanese in Brisbane came as business migrants, only around ten percent coming as skilled migrants. Although they ostensibly came to establish businesses in Australia, their success rate (actually that of ethnic Chinese business migrants in general) was so low as to be the subject of a parliamentary enquiry in 1990 (JCPA). Why, indeed, did they come? In conversations with Taiwanese migrants, virtually all complained about the difficulty of establishing businesses in Australia, but none gave any impression at all that this was not at least part of their motive for coming.

However, aside from coming to do business, there were certainly other motives as well. Primary among these is education. Many spoke of the extremely competitive school system in Taiwan (cf Chen 1992). Even with the expansion of tertiary education in the past decade, fewer than half who want a tertiary place can get one. Moreover, the pressure on middle and even primary school students is very heavy, and many spend several hours outside of class time with private tutors or in commercial revision classes. This is in addition to several hours of homework each night. The rhythm of life of a middle school student is set by monthly examinations. Receiving an Australia education, it is thought, is much easier on the children. Moreover, it gives them a chance to learn English and learn about Australian life. Finally, university entrance is regarded as easier in Australia than in Taiwan.

Another education-related reason is the provision of special education in Australia. An acquaintance who is a native Chinese speech therapist, fluent in Cantonese, Mandarin and her local dialect as well as English, has had many clients from Taiwan,

some of whom have told her that Australia's provision of special education services was an important factor in deciding to migrate there, not just because it is free of charge but because it is provided at all. They said that in Taiwan such programs were very rare, and children with learning problems simply slipped through the cracks.

However, some Taiwanese have also expressed dissatisfaction with at least Australian public education in that it is too easy on the children and doesn't make them work hard enough. One informant, who named Taiwan's education system as a factor in their decision to migrate, said:

*[The Taiwan education system is] too hard on the kids. They have to work very hard and memorise a lot, but most of it is only useful for taking exams, not for anything else. My kids are going to St. Peters in Rochedale, a private school. Why a private school? They originally went to Robertson [a state or public school], but aside from their lunch, their book bags were empty. They had no homework. At St. Peter's there is lots of homework and tests every week. They are studying things there in grades three and four that they don't study until grade six in the public schools. Also, every holiday I send the kids back to Taiwan to the school where my father-in-law is principal so they can learn Chinese. When they get older, I'll send them to Churchie or Boys Grammar, then to university.*

He is among several who felt that Australian schools do not push students hard enough.

Another reason for migrating to Australia is the physical and social environment<sup>6</sup>. Many talked about the clean air, open space and very pleasant natural environment. Some were also attracted by the fishing and golf. In Australia one can fish in the ocean or in lakes or streams; one does not have to go to small commercial urban fishpond. As for golf, there are many courses available in the Brisbane area, and they are far less expensive than in Taiwan. Curiously, no one mentioned the difference in their living

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<sup>6</sup> There are several Taiwanese families in the Brisbane area who operate prawn farms on the coast. One said that the ocean waters off Taiwan are now too polluted with agricultural chemical runoff to engage in aquaculture.

space between Taiwan and Australia, even though their Australian homes were free-standing, on large plots of land, some including large swimming pools and tennis courts, and the homes themselves are much larger than the flats that Taiwanese live in.

Finally, some mentioned push factors. Most prominent among these is the threat from the People's Republic of China, which has periodically rattled its sabres and had refused to rule out the use of force in reuniting Taiwan with the 'motherland'. And although many had invested in China, many others had visited, and some were quite frightened by the sheer numbers of poor people and the gap in development between China and Taiwan. Another reason was a fear and dislike of the sort of society Taiwan was becoming. Social order has declined since the lifting of martial law, and violent crime is more brazen and is sensationally reported by the less restrained media. A third reason is the physical environment in Taiwan. Especially since the late 1960s, with the increase in motor vehicles, agricultural chemicals, and polluting industrial processes, Taiwan's environment has suffered enormous damage. The environmentalist social movements of the 1980s have probably helped to limit this damage, but they also brought it more into public consciousness.

## Problems Encountered

### Maternal Health

In research for her M.Phil. thesis, Hong Shi<sup>7</sup> looked at changes in maternal health practices among Taiwanese women giving birth in Brisbane and found three major sources of problems these women face. First, they are not confident enough about their English to communicate with health providers and to express their needs. Doctors and nurses she interviewed remarked that Taiwanese, and Asian women in general, are very quiet.

This is all the more important because of the great differences in basic practices and fundamental assumptions and concepts between the Taiwanese/Chinese and Western

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<sup>7</sup> I thank Dr. Shi (she has a medical degree from Shanghai and practised medicine there for several years before going to Australia) for providing me with this data. As of the revision of this paper, she had handed in a revised draft in anticipation of submission. Her thesis title is 'The Needs of Chinese Women during Childbirth and the Services of Maternity Health Care in Brisbane'.

medical systems, Shi's second analysed source of problems. Many things which Western health practitioners routinely do or prescribe are anathema to Chinese. For example, according to the *yin-yang* notions of the Chinese, one should avoid cold things in the immediate post-partum period, yet Brisbane hospitals provides cold water for mothers to drink soon after giving birth, and nurses ask them to shower and wash their hair. Taiwanese women also complain that the hospital wards are too cold.

The third source of problems is the absence in most cases of extended family members. Chinese have a custom of 'sitting the month' (*zuo yuezi*), similar to what was once practised as confinement in the West. The purpose of this custom is to allow the woman to regain her strength after the strains of pregnancy and childbirth. To this end, she is given a very nutritionally rich diet and a holiday from her regular chores for a month, after which the baby is presented in public and things return to normal. However, since those who prepare the special foods for the woman and relieve her of her workload are extended family members, unless they come to Brisbane to assist (some do), she is unable to follow the proper confinement practices.

Many of the traditional medical practices have a more direct effect on female and maternal health than they do with the everyday problems of men, but for the elderly or the chronically ill of either sex, they become relevant with their balancing of forces and notions of supplementation of deficiencies. Moreover, both males and females have the same potential problems with English in explaining their symptoms to practitioners and understanding their instructions and explanations.

## Family

Taiwanese family structure and organisation in Brisbane have been strongly affected by migration. The most noticeable phenomenon is the so-called 'flying trapeze' (*kongzhong feiren*), i.e. the husband who spends his time flying back and forth between Australia, Taiwan and China to take care of business interests abroad, which means he is absent from his family most of the time. This is common in Taiwan as well. However, families with a largely absent father-husband who remain in Taiwan are in familiar surrounds and have their support network intact, quite a different situation from those who have migrated to a new country.

Lee Shen-wei, in her Griffith University Honours thesis, found that many women were unhappy with their husbands being away on business so much of the time, leaving them alone without companionship and with the full responsibility of rearing the children. Many of these women, she states, were reluctant to come to Australia in the first place as for them it meant giving up their careers with no hope of picking up a new one (1992). Moreover, women whose husbands are often away on business also have the worry that their husbands will take up with another woman, all the more feared given the frequent entertaining among businessmen involving drinking and hostesses. While this is a well-publicised worry in Taiwan itself, again, for a wife who is living in a foreign society with a diminished support network, the problem is intensified.

Such disquiet affects women's states of mind. Lee (1992) says that it weakens any commitment to stay in Australia. Moreover, a prominent woman in the Brisbane Taiwanese community said she had been called several times, sometimes late at night, to see women who were in states of depression, even suicidal. Worry about husbands often played a role. She said there was another side to this coin, however. Women, in the prolonged absence of their husbands, take up with other men. Both of these issues are magnified by the level of gossip in the small Brisbane Taiwanese community.

There are also problems concerning children. One is the worry that older children, in their late teens to early twenties, have too much money and will develop bad habits. There is some evidence for this in the crowds of Taiwanese youth in the downtown area of Brisbane or in some of the more trendy coffee shops, complete with mobile phone, but one sees very similar things in Taiwanese cities. Whereas twenty years ago not many young people had the money and/or time to hang around various places, and they were probably more strongly disciplined and restricted by their parents, there is a strong youth culture in Taiwan today supported by a variety of commercial establishments. However, many informants do not know how to interpret this behaviour when it occurs in Australia, and the general adult attitude in Taiwan that young people are not as willing to work hard now as they had been a generation ago contributes to their worries.

Another problem is the dependence that develops in parents on their children. Many adults in the Taiwanese community have poor facility in English, and because they interact mainly with each other, it does not improve. Their children, however,

because they are younger and more adaptable and because they come into daily contact with English through school and television, improve very quickly. This leads to situations in which parents have to rely on their children to function, and that, of course, turns on its head the hierarchical order in the household.

In the early 1990s, yet another family problem was aired in the news media with stories of children, some still in primary school, left on their own or with non-family members as both parents, after formally migrating, returned to Taiwan to find work. Stories of twelve-year old girls being left in charge of one or two younger siblings were bandied about. The focus of the critical stories was not money, as children were well provided for, but of such a heavy responsibility for someone so young. While there was likely some exaggeration in these stories, there was also some truth in them<sup>8</sup>.

### Leisure Activities

It is paradoxical that leisure could be a problem in a society so leisure-oriented as Australia, but a problem it is because many in the Taiwanese community have so much free time. Taiwanese engage in few of the activities that the broader Australian community does (e.g. football or other sports as players or spectators, going to the beach) but do not find the sorts of activities that interest them, so they feel bored. Taiwanese under forty are not so much affected by this as they are active in school or work, both of which help them to become familiar with Australian society. But many aged forty and over, especially women<sup>9</sup>, have little to keep them occupied and must find ways to fill the time. Many men are engaged in business activities either in Brisbane or abroad and so have more structured activities, but those who are not find that too much leisure is a bad thing. Some said that when they first came to Australia they thought they were in paradise, being able to fish or play golf everyday, but that wore off after a while and they became bored.

In Taiwan, most older Taiwanese have had a life of hard work with little time or

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<sup>8</sup> I have personal knowledge of one such family, two children, grades five and six, being left with a newly-married Taiwanese couple. The children were well taken care of physically, but being left in a foreign society on their own took its toll psychologically.

<sup>9</sup> Most Taiwanese women in this age group in Brisbane are married to Taiwanese businessmen. Most of these women were housewives in Taiwan, and few have the level of education or the experience in the workplace that would have facilitated their developing the English language skills to be able to work outside the home here in Australia.



money for leisure. What leisure they had was centred around festivals. Businessmen, once their businesses were established, could spend some time banqueting and drinking with associates and customers or perhaps fishing or playing golf. Older rural women had little leisure other than chatting with neighbours and relatives or visiting their natal families. For urban women of all ages, a favourite form of recreation is shopping, often in night markets, mostly from hawkers who display their goods on a sheet of plastic on the ground. Some middle-aged and older people also like bush walking. Other than these activities, most leisure time is spent indoors reading, watching TV or videos, playing computer games for the young or mahjong for the older. In the past two decades or so, the MTV then the KTV have become popular. MTV, movie-television, were popular in the 1980s. One could go with a group of friends to an MTV, pick out a video to watch, pay a per person rental fee which included a drink, and go to a small room with couches and cushions to watch it. KTV, karaoke-television are similar except that the activity is karaoke singing.

Conspicuous by their absence are sports. Until fairly recently, there has been little emphasis on sport in Taiwan and few facilities or spaces for them. One might see people hitting a shuttlecock back and forth to each other in the alleys near their flats or in parks and school grounds, young children playing dodgeball, and older ones basketball. Early in the mornings, some, usually aged forty or over, go to parks to do light Taiji-style exercises, take walks, perhaps giving their caged birds a chance to get some fresh air and sing, practise ballroom dancing, or do go-go dancing<sup>10</sup>. However, sport was virtually absent from the school program in the larger urban areas where the better schools are located<sup>11</sup>. In rural areas and in the south, children are not so examination-oriented and they play organised sports, especially baseball and basketball, which are now professional sports in Taiwan. This is a relatively recent phenomenon, however, and even now many young people have virtually no experience playing sport.

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<sup>10</sup> This activity began about twenty-five years ago. Whereas both men and women do ballroom dancing, participants in go-go dancing are exclusively female, usually late forties to mid-sixties, and the dancing is done in unison rather than individually or in couples. One might liken it to a mild form of aerobics.

<sup>11</sup> My son attended grade three in a Taipei elementary school in 1987-88. Other than playing during their lunch break, there were no sporting activities at all. During the periods set aside for physical education, rather than learning to play sports, students were prepared for written test questions they would have on those sports. This school was regarded as a very good one, which explains the emphasis on exam preparation, but it was also attached to a teacher training school, where students were taught the latest education theories.

Lee Shen-rui surveyed Taiwanese with regard to their leisure activities and adjustment to living in Australia. She collected her data in the early 1990s when few Taiwanese had been in Brisbane more than three years. She found that primary school students and young adults (in their twenties) enjoyed being in Australia and many activities that interested them. However, high school students and adults with children (mid-thirties to forties) found little to do and complained of boredom. Primary school children loved Australian schools. They had far more 'fun' activities and much less pressure preparing for examinations or learning to write (though some parents taught them Chinese characters at home). Young adults, too, basically enjoyed Australia, especially the freedom from ties and obligations and their ability to follow their own life style, though they also missed some of the activities they enjoyed in Taiwan. Their main complaint was the lack of employment opportunities.

High school students were generally dissatisfied. Much of the problem was that there were large concentrations of Taiwanese students at a few adjacent high schools in the Sunnybank area, perhaps fifty or so per school. Having this critical mass, the students stuck together, spoke Chinese most of the time and did not participate in activities with non-Taiwanese students. This made other students to resent them and see them as clannish, notwithstanding cliques being commonplace in the schools. Resentment of the Taiwanese was amplified by the following: 1) as foreign students they often needed and got extra help, and 2) except for English they found high school in Australia much less demanding than in Taiwan, and some became top students in their schools. However, students who attended private schools further away from the main Taiwanese residential area, in which they were one of only a few Chinese at the school, were much happier and they adjusted better to living in Australia (Lee 1992).

Adults, especially those who were home most of the day, were least happy. Given their age and education background<sup>12</sup>, they were least able to acculturate. In my own conversations with such people, several said they knew they and others needed to get out and speak to Australians if they wanted to improve their English, but they found that

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<sup>12</sup> English is a compulsory subject in Taiwanese schools from grade seven throughout middle school, and most of these people have finished high school. But few learn to speak English from what they learn in school. Moreover, people in this group had mostly left school twenty years before, and their only exposure to English would have come from watching TV programs with subtitles.

very difficult. So they associated instead with their families and with Taiwanese friends. They did not watch Australian TV or go to films but instead rented Chinese-language videos. Their only link into Australian society was through their children which, as mentioned above, can cause problems.

### The Difficulties of Establishing Businesses in Australia

The aim of the Business Migration Program was to import into Australia both capital as well as expertise in manufacturing, product development, exporting, and international marketing, all of which the Taiwanese had. Once here, however, Taiwanese found it difficult to replicate these activities and establish businesses.

The Taiwan economic miracle is a product of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Although they used labour-intensive methods, most of these businesses employed ten or fewer people. They had low to very low capital bases, and their manufactures were low technology, labour intensive, and OEM (original equipment manufacture), i.e. making a product according to the design of the customer. They flourished in Taiwan because of its then bountiful supply of inexpensive but disciplined and relatively skilled labour and their own willingness to work very long hours for several years to establish their enterprises. However, businesses such as these would have little chance of surviving in Australia because of its high labour costs. Moreover, in terms of technical manufacturing skills, the Taiwanese of that era probably rank below Australians, though they are efficient and strongly market and export oriented.

Despite the difficulty, the majority of those I interviewed had established some sort of business activity in Australia. They are not a representative sample, however, one reason I was able to interview them was because they were physically present in Australia, while those without businesses here spend much more of their time tending to their investments in Taiwan or Mainland China and come to Australia for short visits to see their families. I suspect that fewer than half the Taiwanese business migrants have established companies; TABA has twenty-plus directors, only a few of whom spend more time in Australia than abroad. Moreover, many of the businesses Taiwanese have established are neither the sort the Australian government hoped they would establish, i.e. manufacturing enterprises employing Australian workers, nor are they satisfying to

the migrants themselves. I will describe their business activities and the problems they perceive below, but I will begin with a success story.

Stu<sup>13</sup> was born prior to Taiwan's leap into industrialisation into a poor farm family. His father told the children that farm life was very arduous but yielded little return, so they should not stay on the farm but should go to the city and either get educated or learn a skill. Stu did so, and after a very successful career in sales he established a factory to make pumps for an American company. Not long afterward, an older sister who had married an Australian and moved there many years before informed Stu that migration by Taiwanese to Australia had become easier, and she encouraged her siblings to join her there. Stu applied, was accepted, and came to Australia in 1985, and other siblings followed. All are presently living in the Brisbane area and are engaged in some sort of enterprise.

Once in Australia, Stu found work in a factory. However, he soon switched to selling real estate before setting up an import-export business with three partners. His company looks for products to import, but they also try to help local Australian manufacturers. When they see a product they believe has export potential, they approach the factory owner and offer to help him develop production with a foreign market in mind; they also supply the international expertise. There is no small amount of irony in this. In his early years in Australia, people would ask where he was from. When he said Taiwan, they would say, 'Taiwan. That's the place where all the cheap products are made. Made in Taiwan means it's junk, rubbish'. 'No', he would reply, 'Believe me, what we make in Taiwan now is high quality. Just wait another five years and you'll see'. But they would laugh, 'A mouse is a mouse. A cat is a cat. If you were born as a mouse, you will never be a cat. A snake will never be a dragon. Junk is always junk'. Now, born into a non-industrialised society, he is showing people who like to think of themselves as being from an advanced country how to develop industrial products for the global market.

Stu feels that he and his siblings are doing alright in Australia, though he is working harder and making less money than he would in Taiwan. But he is doing better than other informants. Tom takes orders from Australian businesses for labels

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<sup>13</sup>This and the names that follow are pseudonyms.

which are then made in Taiwan, and purchases greasy wool tips to supply his family factory in Tainan. Both of these activities are small. He says that large Australian companies have the big customers sewn up, but he has found niches in small orders which are poorly served by those companies. Len, whose family manufactured steel products in Taiwan, imports steel doors. He is not making much money and said it would take many more years of hard work before his business became profitable. Dr. Pan, who had established a private hospital in Taiwan before immigrating, has invested in a small Chinese restaurant and also exports seafood, but he said these activities were more or less just to keep himself active and keep his hand in the business world. Mark and Paul are in housing and construction. Mark feels that property development is a natural area for Taiwanese to go into because many have such skills and they can find customers among the Taiwanese community, although more of his business is in road construction. Donald and his wife run a small picture framing business, and John markets electrical systems such as home security and garden sprinkling. Some of these informants also maintain businesses or investments in Taiwan or Mainland China as do other informants who have not established businesses in Australia.

All these businesses are small, and informants see them as learning experiences, ways to keep active while they learn the ropes of how Australian business and government operate. Several said they were happy to be in Australia and to enjoy its clean environment and their pleasant surroundings, and they wanted to fulfill the obligation they undertook when migrating.

However, these informants are in their forties. Those in their fifties and sixties regarded themselves as too old and their English as too poor to start anew in a foreign country with its very different system of laws, regulations and procedures and also very different interaction patterns in the business community. Whereas many in the younger group had been to university and had worked in the white-collar sector throughout their careers, older informants were more likely to have started off poor, as blue-collar 'black hand' workers (those engaged in dirty and physically demanding labour). They had worked their way up from worker to small factory owner, to larger factory owner. They had struggled to make their fortune; they felt they did not have the energy to start over, moreover, at their age, they were reluctant to risk their capital. They either put

their capital into interest bearing deposits or kept it in businesses abroad. They hoped, however, that by educating their children in Australia, they were preparing them to enter the Australian business world<sup>14</sup>.

Aside from the above, there are some Taiwanese engaged in large businesses in the Brisbane area. The most prominent example owns a number of shopping complexes; another imports Australian beef into Taiwan. TABA also puts together large projects involving several investors. But whereas Taiwanese business migrants are a good deal wealthier than most Australians, those able to participate in such ventures are a good deal wealthier than most Taiwanese business migrants and are able to afford the services of solicitors and accountants.

Even Taiwanese with established businesses complain about the difficulties in doing business in Australia, and they perceive Australia and Taiwan to have very different business climates. These perceptions help some to rationalise not investing, and others to rationalise failure, should it come. Some of these perceptions are fairly accurate, others are less so, but they are believed, which means that they affect decisions. In some cases they represent the experiences of the speaker, but the Taiwanese community is small enough for gossip to reinforce preconceived ideas. Thus, a single experience can serve as an excuse for many people.

Taiwanese see Australia and Taiwan as contrasting in many ways. Australia is rich in resources, so rich that it can supply a good deal of what it consumes itself. Taiwan is resource poor, so it has had to turn outward, exporting to pay for goods it has to import. Taiwan, therefore, has had to accept the discipline of the international market in terms of quality, price, and on-time delivery, which increasingly holds for domestic sales as well. Australia was able to support its import needs through primary exports until the 1970s. Its manufacturing sector was aimed at serving the domestic market and was protected from competition; it remained inefficient and its entrepreneurs inward-looking.

Australia is a large country with relatively few people and low population density

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<sup>14</sup>Traditionally in Taiwan, a man could retire as soon as his sons were old enough to work and support the family, often in his forties. These informants did not have children that old, but most certainly had enough money to live comfortably for the rest of their lives. Thus, their willingness to start again from the very beginning to establish a business demonstrates a strong commitment on their part.

while Taiwan is about half the size of Tasmania but with a larger population than all of Australia. In density it ranks second in the world, this despite half the island being covered by mountains and being relatively sparsely inhabited. These characteristics have several ramifications for businesses. Australian cities are very far apart, which makes transport costs high and delivery times long. The high costs are exacerbated by the small number of companies in long distance transport because there is little competition between them. Moreover on some transport routes, the customer has no choice and the company can raise its prices or give whatever level of service it wishes.

In Taiwan, by contrast, cities are close together, and there are tens of thousands of small and medium firms. In many areas, orders of parts or raw materials can be delivered in a few hours, if not by a transport company then by the supply company's vehicles. This both shaped and was shaped by the predominant small business pattern with its myriad satellite factories. A company making any product involving more than one part or process can sub-contract parts or processes to other companies, often companies run by its former employees whose original employer helped them get started. This allows companies to spread risks and to expand productive capacity without committing a lot of capital or resources. Moreover, the success of small business in general and the numerous entrepreneurial opportunities available encourage many to find a niche and establish their own enterprises. This increased competition among businesses, forcing them to be efficient, and also customer choice.

Informants noted the differences in business style. Taiwanese are often nonplussed at the rigidity of Australia firms over price. In the words of one informant:

*If something is priced at \$102, it is \$102. In Taiwan, no one would worry about the \$2. I'd make a bit less, but I'm still making money. In Australia they say, 'I can't, I can't.' They would rather not sell it at all than sell it for a bit less. In Taiwan, people are more bold in doing business. They would rather sell more at a lower per unit price than to sell less.*

Others mentioned the Chinese expression, *boli duoxiao*, 'thin profit [but] more

sales'. They explained the Australian attitude on the basis of its low population, hence perceptions that its market is very limited. As they believe that customers are relatively few, Australians feel they have to make more per transaction to stay in business. Although the Taiwanese population is only slightly larger, by fewer than four million, Taiwanese entrepreneurs perceive the world, rather than the country, as their market. However, like Australians, Taiwanese importers in Australia must charge a high enough price to make a profit from the small domestic market.

Importers and others also complained about what they see as the domination of the domestic economy by large firms. Transport was mentioned above, but they also singled out firms such as K-Mart which can dominate sales of the sort of inexpensive consumer goods which Taiwanese would otherwise import and retail themselves. Some also mentioned the domination of companies such as BHP and the various marketing boards for agricultural commodities. One, whose family manufactured steel products in Taiwan, said that BHP would crush him if he tried to compete with them even in a small way. Others wanted to export Queensland agricultural products to Taiwan, starting with small amounts and gradually building up the market, but were told that output had been promised to other customers for the next several years (see Lever-Tracy et al. 1991: 57-9). Ip et al. (1998: 88-89) mention this complaint as well, explaining that Australian firms do not understand how Taiwanese entrepreneurs build up their businesses. Australian firms want large orders from the very beginning and regard small ones as coming from small, fly by night companies, but Taiwanese start with small orders and gradually build a market and a customer base.

Australian business practices was another area of complaint. Aside from Australians being inflexible regarding prices, Taiwanese say they are not sufficiently concerned with quality and meeting time commitments. There is also a feeling that Australian entrepreneurs are risk averse, inward looking and simply inept, especially in product development. In making this complaint, several informants mentioned the airliner black box debacle<sup>15</sup>. One informant brought up the anomaly of Hawaii producing and selling more 'Australian walnuts' (macadamias) than Australia does. He

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<sup>15</sup> The airline black box was invented in Australia but the inventors were unable to find developmental capital here, so the invention and the profits it generated went overseas.



also mentioned several other products that Australia produces in quantity and quality — wool, wheat, cotton — that are not sufficiently competitively priced to dominate the world market as he feels they should. This was because of both poor entrepreneurship and high labour costs, though he recognised that American access to illegal agricultural labour helped give it an edge in primary produce.

Labour also came in for blame. Most recognise that gross wages are approximately equal, but the Australia worker has a shorter work week (the average in Taiwan is 44 hours for government and office workers, 48 for industrial workers). Many also complained that Australian workers were less willing to work overtime<sup>16</sup>.

The attitude of Australian workers also came in for criticism, especially the adversarial relationship between labour and management. There is more identification of the worker with the company or at least the interests of the company in Taiwan. Taiwan is not a welfare state, and even basic social legislation there has come only in the last few decades. Taiwanese workers have long understood that a company that does not make a profit goes out of business, leaving them without a job. Moreover, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, many factory employees were village neighbours of the owner.

Informants spoke of cooperation in Taiwan between workers and boss for the sake of the firm — and, of course, its profit, which is shared with the workers<sup>17</sup>. One said he had tried to be a considerate boss but had been taken advantage of in Australia:

*I trusted the workers and treated them well, but they did not reciprocate by working hard or being willing to work overtime when I had a rush job. I thought that if I was very good to my employees they would return that treatment to the company, but they just looked after themselves.*

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<sup>16</sup> This is interesting because the change in Taiwan workweeks being willing to work overtime has been such an important factor in Taiwan in decisions to relocate overseas over the 10 to 15 years.

<sup>17</sup> Profit sharing of various kinds is very common in Taiwan and has been for quite some time. In the 1960s and 1970s, production and attendance bonuses plus bonuses at Chinese New Year and perhaps the other major holidays were very common. By the 1980s, year-end bonuses became institutionalised and, though based on profit levels, were substantial, often equivalent to several months base salary. Some companies now pay both a fixed year-end bonus as well as a share of profits. Companies now also routinely take employees on international tours during the Chinese New Year holiday.

He felt this would be less likely in Taiwan where workers would value being treated that way and would respond in kind because of the importance of *renqing*<sup>18</sup>. Another said he found it difficult to find 'key employees' (*bandi*), i.e. those the boss can trust to ensure that work is done properly and efficiently and that employees do not steal or misuse company property. Finally, though few felt that Australian workers were lazy, some felt that they did not work very hard and that they did not care very much about their jobs.

They blamed this on the welfare provisions in Australia, especially unemployment benefits — one informant called it socialism. Because of these welfare provisions, people need not worry about getting a job. If a company is in trouble, the workers do not care because if it closes down they can either get another job or go on unemployment benefits. In Taiwan, by contrast, there is no social security available so the jobless must rely on family or friends. This makes people care more about their jobs and the company they work for.

A few informants, older persons not actively engaged in business in Australia, mentioned unions and indicated a deep fear of them, though younger persons, who are actually involved with workers, did not. Those mentioning unions, mainly the older, inactive informants, cited the sorts of stereotypes that might have had a ring of truth in the 1960s or 1970s but not the 1990s. However, this reemphasises the point of misinformation that exists in the community carried by rumour and intensified by poor English communication skills which would allow persons to get a fuller picture.

Finally, there are complaints about government. It is blamed for its welfare policies, of course. It is also blamed for lack of a consistent policy direction and sudden changes in such things as tax or tariff rates. Several mentioned the role of government in Taiwan's development, its decisive role in promoting export-oriented industrialisation through policies on interest rates, tax, foreign exchange, tariffs and quotas; its establishment of R&D institutes; the orientation of government departments to assist exports from industries of all sizes; and its overall direction. The Taiwanese government also carried out infrastructure projects which facilitated manufacturing and export such as the transport network and the export processing zones. One felt that,

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<sup>18</sup> *Renqing* literally means 'human feelings' but it strongly implies reciprocity. See Jin (1987).

whereas the Australian government might say that an export processing zone is a good idea, the Taiwan government would simply build it. On a local level, several mentioned the degree of red tape in Australia: to carry out a project, one has to go to a number of government bureaux and get approvals. 'Why can't the Queensland government have a one-stop shop where all these permits can be taken care of', asked one? Lever-Tracey et al.(1991), in their survey of Chinese and Indians in Brisbane and Sydney, found a similar list of complaints, e.g. too much bureaucracy, inability to buy goods for export, high shipping costs, and monopolisation of certain businesses by large firms.

### Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In this concluding section I would like to make some comparative remarks about three issues which affect the settlement experiences of Taiwanese migrants in the three communities for which we have data. These are English as an impediment, the ability to establish a business, and racism. These problems, which face the Brisbane Taiwanese community, are to some extent shared by the Taiwanese communities in Flushing, New York and in Los Angeles County. Chen, whose Flushing informants include manual workers, small business operators (mostly family run and staffed companies), and professionals, cites many problems that stem from an insufficient command of English, especially for the small business operators, who have to deal with a variety of accents and levels of English from customers, and also with various representatives of local government. Day to day language problems receded in importance with better educational background, but even some of his professional informants, including a medical doctor who had completed both medical school and a PhD in the United States and his wife had an American MS degree said that because of communication difficulties they restricted their interaction with Americans to work related occasions (1992: 133).

In my interviews, facility in English stood out as the most daunting barrier to informants. Their facility ranged from virtually nil for a man with only a primary school education, to an MD who had run a hospital in Taiwan and had delivered and even written scholarly papers in English. However, even the doctor said he sometimes

had difficulties with telephone conversations, in part because of the difference in accent and usage between Australian English and the American English he learned in school. Others, whose English skills were quite good, said they had problems understanding laws, statutes and regulations, often a crucial part of their business activities. Most said they could function in routine matters such as shopping, especially if they do not have to explain much to the clerks, but they would have some difficulty in, e.g. a conference with their child's school teacher. For those in business, English is the key to understanding not only a very different method of operation but also an almost completely foreign body of laws and regulations as well as the principles that structure them. For others it is less crucial in an economic sense but is nonetheless vital for simply functioning in society.

However, many of the problems in cross-cultural communication go beyond words and are caused by differences in ideas, concepts, values. Even if there was no problem communicating, it is hard to imagine adult Taiwanese joining in conversations over beer or coffee with their non-Chinese neighbours as the topics discussed would most likely be completely outside their realm of experience or concern. Or imagine a woman who has just given birth trying to explain to a nurse or doctor that she does not want to go straight into the shower and wash her hair because, according to Chinese medical theory, she has expended an enormous amount of energy nurturing the foetus and giving birth and is therefore in a very weakened condition. It is thus imperative that she preserve all the warmth she has, and since bathing and washing the hair are both 'cold' activities, they should be avoided until she has regained her strength.

In the business realm, I have discussed above the problems Taiwanese have understanding the Australian business scene. Tseng (1994: 185-86) notes similar problems among the Los Angeles Taiwanese business community. Taiwanese entrepreneurs there assumed that the US adhered to *laissez-faire* principles and were surprised that local councils had the authority to regulate business activities<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, in both Taiwan and Hong Kong, businesses and residences are often mixed together in the same block or even the same building, and business activities-making a

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<sup>19</sup>Taiwan local government also has this authority, but officials often ignore it in order not to scare away business, or some will overlook it in exchange for a bribe.

living-definitely takes priority in the zoning regulations. The home country environment gave priority to economic development with no thought to its effect on the local community, and Taiwanese migrants had to learn that this was not the case in the US. She also found that business operators do not know how to interact with customers from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, which limits their ability to gain their custom.

Despite these problems, the Taiwanese in Los Angeles do not appear to have had as much difficulty establishing businesses as the Taiwanese in Brisbane have. The former are a highly educated group, over 53 percent having a first degree, about half of them advanced degrees. They were attracted to southern California because of its high-tech industries, especially information technology and aerospace. Moreover, the information age has brought about changes to the industrial structure which facilitates small, flexible subcontractors (Tseng 1994: 179). As subcontracting has been at the base of the Taiwan economic miracle, Taiwanese readily adapt to it. Those not technically trained have bought businesses such as automobile dealerships and hotels. They are also assisted by the size of the local ethnic Chinese community, almost 49,000 Taiwanese by 1990 plus another 86,000 born in Hong Kong or China (Tseng 1995: 41); this makes for ample opportunity to engage in businesses aimed at fellow Chinese.

The Brisbane Taiwanese, by contrast, tend to be manufacturers of low-tech goods, goods which require a plentiful supply of inexpensive labour, also goods which have for quite some time been too expensive to manufacture in Australia. Thus, their skills as manufacturers are not suited to the present Australian economy, and that, combined with their poor command of English, makes it very difficult for them to find a niche in their new country.

Finally, a word about racism. Lee (1992: 71-72), a Taiwanese herself, found perceptions of racism a source of discontent in the Taiwan community, especially among high school students. Ip et al. (1998: 92) note that despite their being from a very different socio-economic stratum from earlier migrants the Taiwanese are still socially constructed as the 'other'. There is no question that racism exists in Australia, in the 'Asianisation' chimera unleashed by Geoffrey Blainey in the late 1980s to the more recent surge of support for One Nation, and it exists in Brisbane suburbs as well as in

economically marginal rural electorates.

Indeed, the tenor of comments made by various participants in the hearings of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts Investigation into the Business Migration Program smack of a sort of racism. There are a number of comments about infiltration by Triads or suspicion of recycling the sum of money required by the government as proof that the intending business migrant did, indeed, have the wherewithal to establish the business submitted in the business plan. There is also a disguised resentment toward the business migrants, in part because they were perceived as 'buying their way in', thus queue-jumping (see Ip et al. 1998: 92). In one instance, after a Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs bureaucrat had said that half the surveyed business migrants had established a business within a year of arrival, a Member of Parliament took him to task for not having done enough; 'Even if they do set up business 12 months down the track, this country is losing out by not having their expertise established sooner, not having their investment created earlier' (JCPA 1990: 54). By contrast, Tseng (1995: 45), described as 'quickly', the fact that on average Taiwanese in Los Angeles County established businesses within four years of their arrival.

However, only two of my informants mentioned racism as a problem. One had done a surveying course at the Queensland University of Technology. Upon completion, jobs were arranged for all the students in the course. While all his classmates were given jobs in the Brisbane area, his was in Rockhampton, several hundred kilometres to the north. He interpreted this as an instance of racism. The other complainant was an older informant and the least educated, and his remarks were of a general racism, not of any specific incidents he or his family had experienced.

While in no way attempting to demean charges of racism or belittle the feelings of those who feel they have suffered from bigoted comments or actions, it is likely that many of the incidents interpreted as manifestations of racism are not so intended but are the result of culture shock and a clash between the differences in assumptions, rules, procedures, or values between two cultures<sup>20</sup>. People make certain assumptions about how they should be treated, and when they are not, it is easy to interpret that treatment

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<sup>20</sup> See Schak (1997) for a personal experience.

as prejudicial. For example, Tseng (1994: 186) notes that although the root of the problem was socio-cultural, Taiwanese immigrants in Los Angeles tended to interpret their treatment by local government agencies as racism.

I have demonstrated above that simply being financially well-off does not guarantee migrants a problem-free settlement experience. Most of the problems mentioned above are things they will gradually overcome. More serious are the conditions they perceive to be barriers to doing business. Australian governments can ameliorate this by creating a more favourable business atmosphere and by reaching out to the Taiwanese, in part educating them about the Australian context.

What is more serious is the potential loss of the younger generation, migrants who have attended high school and university in Australia and who would like to stay but who return because the job market is so unfavourable. These people are crucial to the establishment of a firm and stable migrant community. Lee (1992: 91-93; personal communication) writes that in spite of some of the negative feelings Taiwanese have about Australia, most Taiwanese who stay for a few years will be unable to return successfully to Taiwan. Those who completed high school in Australia will have fallen behind in their written Chinese. They also will not have formed the networks of contacts and friends that help many in their early working careers. Moreover, returnees often find on going back that there are many things they do not like about life in Taiwan. However, I would agree that the Taiwanese have proved to be willing to put up with many hardships in order to make a good living, and they value economic success very highly. Except for those who find that their language skills are simply not up to the task, many will choose Taiwan over Australia if the latter lags, in their minds, too far behind the former in economic opportunity.

**Table 1: Students with a Taiwanese Domicile: Number and Percentage of Total Students with an Overseas Domicile by Year**

YEAR	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
1990	23*	7.1
1991	41	8.8
1992	77	11.4
1993	90	12.1
1994	112	12.9
1995	117	16.0
1996	225	15.0

\*This figure is not from census figures so is less reliable but it is indicative.

Source: Griffith University Student Records Office.



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