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Cross-border Experiences and Perceptions of Mainland  
Chinese University Students in Hong Kong, Macau and  
Taiwan

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中華民國 103 年 7 月

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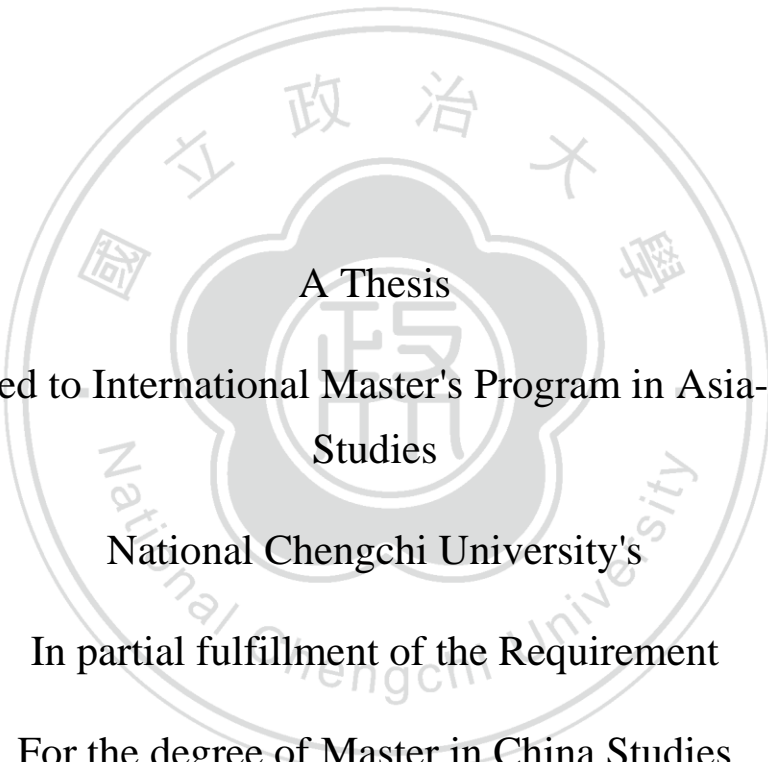
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國立政治大學

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碩士論文



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## Abstract

Hong Kong and Macau's education systems are perceived to be part of their European legacy which is highly regarded in mainland China, especially among China's new urban elite. Along with a consistent increase in demand for an English education, universities in Hong Kong and Macau are henceforth experiencing rapid growth in enrollment of students from mainland China, who are ever more present in the Special Administrative Regions' (SARs) societies. Moreover, mainland Chinese students studying in Taiwanese universities just recently commenced in 2011 and it is a policy in its infancy. This study aims to analyze mainland Chinese students' perception of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan before and after arriving, define a new demographic of elite mainland Chinese students in these three regions, and draw potential social implications these students have for their respective host societies and Chinese society. This study used qualitative research methods and data to confirm that mainland students who chose to study in the SARs because of closer location, cultural and linguistic familiarity and relative value of education. They were also considered potential immigrants to the SARs and abroad. This study provides insight using primary source data on mainland students in Taiwan, which remains a relatively un-researched demographic. This study is applicable to disciplines such as education studies, immigration, and sociology. Information from this study may also be of interest to those who study cross-strait studies, as mainland Chinese students studying in Taiwanese universities just recently commenced in 2011 and it is a policy in its infancy. Hence, this may have implications for future cross-strait policy changes.

Keywords: student migration, social distance, adaptability, cultural identity

## 摘要

香港與澳門的教育系統被中國視為歐洲的傳承並受到高度的重視，尤其是對在中國的新城市菁英而言。隨著英語教育的需求增加，香港與澳門的大學在中國大陸學生招生方面歷經快速的成長，中國學生在特別行政區域（SARs）的社會中占有愈來愈大的存在比例。台灣在 2011 年開始開放陸生來台後，也成中國學生留學的新興目的地。此份研究主要分析中國大陸之學生在抵達香港、澳門與台灣前後對移入地的觀點，定義中國菁英學生在這些移入社會的新人口群體，並討論此新群體對其留學目的地與及中國所具有的社會意涵。

本研究透過質性研究方法與資料，發現選擇就讀於特別行政區域(SARs)的中國大陸學生，是因為地緣位置接近、文化、語言相同性及相對的教育價值等因素。這些中國學生也被視為特別行政區域(SARs)及海外的潛在移民者。本研究亦透過問卷訪問在台灣就讀的陸生，這些在台陸生仍是相對未被深入研究的人口群體。此份研究成果適合用於教育學、移民學以及社會學，亦對兩岸學術研究者具有重要的參考價值。

關鍵詞：學生遷移，社會距離，適應力，文化意識

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Hong Kong (香港) and Macau (澳門) are two Chinese territories that have an extended history of European influence and political control which has significantly isolated them from sociopolitical and economic changes in mainland China (中國大陸). Macau, the smaller of the two territories with a population of 552 thousand, has been under Portuguese influence for over four hundred years and was traditionally known as a trading port in the vast Portuguese global trade network (Macau Census and Statistic Bureau 2011, Clayton 2009). On the other hand, Hong Kong was settled by the British much later in the 1800's and was acquired from the Qing dynasty following the Opium wars through a series of unequal treaties such as the Treaty of Nanjing. The colony originally consisted of only Hong Kong Island (香港島), but later annexations added the Kowloon Peninsula (九龍半島), and the New Territories (新界) to the colony respectively (Hoe and Roebuck 1999). By mid-2013 Hong Kong had a total population of 7.184 million residents (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department 2013).

Following the 1979 Chinese economic reform and the 1997-99 handovers of Hong Kong and Macau, the Special Administrative Regions (SARs) experienced massive inflows of mainland Chinese in the forms of tourists,

legal dependent spouses and children seeking public welfare. This group dubbed the SARs' “new immigrants”, were at an educational disadvantage to their local counterparts. Unlike prior immigration to the colonies (now SARs), some of the most recent immigrants and visitors are members of China's new middle class, and are more affluent than previous generations. Recent Hong Kong media frequently popularizes stories about mainland Chinese women entering Hong Kong to give birth and take advantage of social welfare and educational services. It is undeniable that education is of paramount importance to Chinese families, sometimes making investments comparable to real estate (Marginson 2012). Some parents of elementary and secondary school aged children pay costly fees to send their children to secondary schools in Hong Kong and even go so far to have their young children commute daily across the border at Lo Wu (羅湖) to attend school in Hong Kong (edu.ce.cn 2013, BBC 2013).

### **Higher Education in the SARs**

In the realm of higher education, rapid growth of mainland Chinese students entering universities in Hong Kong and Macau as well as expansion of universities by the construction of new campuses located in adjacent mainland cities of Shenzhen (深圳) and Zhuhai (珠海) leaves significant implications of social and educational change in the SARs as well as mainland China. Traditionally, elite Chinese students traveled and even immigrated to the United States, Canada, Australia or Europe to receive a Western education (Li 2005). In addition to statistics given by SAR schools, there is evidence everywhere suggesting that a newly forming breed of

mainland Chinese students are flocking to the SARs as a culturally similar, yet western-inspired alternative to conventional study abroad. Chinese students have a history of being drivers of social change in China (Yee 1999). Some of the most influential figures in modern Chinese history, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and Deng Xiaoping, were educated overseas to later return to China and be leaders in sociopolitical movements. It is expected that this new group of mainland students will be drivers of a new social phenomenon that will determine the fate of the role of the SARs as access points to education within a more integrated China.

Mainland post-graduate students currently make up the majority of post-graduate students in Hong Kong SAR. Hong Kong universities receive overwhelming numbers of post-graduate applications from mainland students every year. Currently, 99 percent of Chinese University of Hong Kong and 80 percent of City University of Hong Kong's post-graduate finance and economics programs are comprised of students from mainland China (South China Morning Post 2013). As local student bodies are shrinking and unable to sustain expansion of the universities, particularly graduate institutes must turn to the mainland to attract a new vast student body that is in high demand of a western-style, English degree.

In the case of Chinese university of Hong Kong which is a public university, the school was invited by the Shenzhen city government to build an additional campus opening in 2014 in Shenzhen to accommodate extra demand on the mainland side (CUHK 2013).<sup>1</sup> Among privately funded institutions, Hong Kong Baptist University collaborated with Beijing

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<sup>1</sup> Directly informed by the Chief executive of admissions at Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Normal University to create a new campus in Zhuhai called United International College (UIC). Graduates from UIC receive degrees from Hong Kong Baptist University directly as they use the same curriculum (UIC 2013). University of Macau (UM) has endeavored on the largest expansion project of the three. UM's new campus is situated on Zhuhai's Hengqin island, on a plot of land that was leased to Macau SAR by the Beijing central government. The new campus is to open in 2014 and be twenty times the size of the old campus, accommodating 10,000 new students. The Macau government invested MOP1.2 billion (US\$150 million) to lease the land for 40 years and implement Macau law on the territory (UM 2013). All these new campuses are an acknowledgment of mainland students' interest in the education systems in the SARs. It is reasonable to believe that this expansion is also beneficial to Shenzhen and Zhuhai in addition to the SAR schools themselves, hence groundbreaking collaborations between the mainland and the SARs.

### **Literature Review**

#### **New Wave of Chinese Immigrants to the SARs**

The topic of Chinese migration has historically been quite a popular one among social scientists and even economists (Charney, Yeoh, Tong 2003). Books about Chinese students studying in the US and Europe and then returning to China are relatively common (Li 2005). There are even works found on waves of immigration from the mainland into Hong Kong and Macau, and their different roles in society and in the local economy.

However, all original residents of Hong Kong and Macau have direct ancestry to those in the mainland. The closest academic work that investigates a similar topic to this research is analysis of mainland Chinese immigrant women who give birth in Hong Kong and/or married Hong Kong men and remained in the mainland to wait for residency permits to be granted, in addition to recent migrants who entered the territories after the 1997 and 1999 handovers (Newendorp 2008). These post-handover migrants are dubbed the “new immigrants”. Authors such as Pong and Tsang have outlined the circumstances of new immigrant children which made up 47 percent of newly registered immigrants between 1987-1997 and their academic success and integration into Hong Kong society vis-a-vis socioeconomic circumstances (Pong and Tsang 2009). However, there is still virtually no comprehensive research on post-handover mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong or Macau SAR universities, as this is a result of relatively recent policy reform and social change.

A comprehensive study conducted by Newendorp (2008) gives vast insight to the life of mainland Chinese women who recently immigrated to post-handover Hong Kong or are married to Hong Kong men and are in the process of waiting for their Hong Kong permanent resident cards (Hong Kong ID). Newendorp's book describes in detail the relatively poor and disadvantaged lifestyle of the new immigrants in Hong Kong's low-income residential blocks in Sham Shui Po (深水埗). The book also describes the prominence of family reunions as a motivator of immigrating to Hong Kong, in addition to taking advantage of educational and social services. Newendorp's study does not only contain comprehensive interviews with female new immigrants and Hong Kong social workers, but also clearly

outlines the mainland immigrants' perceptions of Hong Kong prior to immigrating and reactions after relocating. The role of Hong Kong media in personifying the modern image of a typical mainlander in Hong Kong is most profound and its origins can be traced back to the 1960's according to the author (Newendorp 2008). Newendorp's study is a very useful reference to this study to gain insight on the circumstances of mainland Chinese (new immigrants) residing in Hong Kong prior to the arrival of the post-handover mainland students.

### **Determinants of Adaptability**

Despite a lack of research specifically analyzing the post-handover mainland students as a group, there is various literature covering subjects such as adaptability of newcomers, and more specifically migrant students. One theme that was observed among such studies is the correlation of adaptability with language acquisition. Authors such as Fletcher and Stren (1989), Esser (2006), Dalton-Puffer (1997) and Brown (1980) all discuss topics of language acquisition, adaptation, and how they affect students or language learners in new social contexts. Fletcher and Stren (1989) conducted a general survey of foreign students in a Canadian university to determine the correlation between language acquisition and adaptation with students' social network of Canadian students, in which they found that this relationship to be positively correlated. Esser (2006) also focused on the topic of language acquisition and migrants' integration into society by attributing four main factors to language acquisition upon migration. The factors were: motivation, access, efficiency and cost of this investment. This will help explain why some students in certain territories opted to learn the local languages, while others did not.

Dalton-Puffer (1997) analyzed Austrian students' perception of differing English accents and concluded that a major factor that determined preferences was familiarity, mainly through media consumption and/or prior travel experience abroad. Brown (1980) created an optimal model for second language acquisition, but more importantly designated steps in an acculturation process that language learners go through such as culture shock. Analyzing how this acculturation process will unfold for mainland students in the culturally familiar SARs was most insightful. Findings from all these researchers' studies can be easily brought back to the case of mainland students studying in the SARs and used as supporting evidence to trends found within the students' adaptability. The dynamics of language and social interactions are more complicated in Hong Kong and Macau given the geopolitical relationship between mainland China, a predominantly Mandarin-speaking country, and the Cantonese-speaking SARs which have English-medium education systems and complicate concepts found in conventional studies of language acquisition and adaptation to host societies.

There are a few studies in a Hong Kong context that discuss language policy and changes in education within a Hong Kong context. Adamson and Lai (1997) and Law (1997) all discuss changes in language curricula within Hong Kong before and after the 1997 handover that promoted the status of Mandarin. Their research indicates a series of changes that occurred on an institutional and policy level, although did not relate that to how it may affect social adaptability of mainland students studying in Hong Kong and their language learning behaviors. The previously mentioned authors that studied language acquisition mentioned the presence of social distance between the migrant group or learner group and the host society. This then

brings us to question the impact of language learning on the social distance and overall experience of mainland students in the SARs.

Possibly the most referenced author in the theory of social distance is Schumann (1976), who developed a model of social distance in the context of language acquisition. Social distance is defined as “The perceived or desired degree of remoteness between a member of one social group and the members of another, as evidenced in the level of intimacy tolerated between them”(Oxford Dictionary Press 2014). Karakayali (2009) explains that social distance is defined and utilized by social scientists in four dimensions, affective, normative, interactive and cultural aspects of social distance. Affective is based on the concept of mutual sympathy in which those who are socially close to us are those we feel close to, and vice versa. Normative distance can be described as a set of collectively recognized norms about membership status in society. Interactive distance relates to how frequently and how long two groups interact with each other. Cultural distance, the most self-explanatory, assumes social groups and classes on a “social space” based on the types of cultural “capital” they possess, in which differences lead to concepts such as cultural center and periphery. (Karakayali 2009)

In relation to language learning, Schumann claimed that a second-language learner will tend to not learn the target language when they feel politically, culturally, technically or economically superior or dominant to those of the host society. Hence, their lack of willingness to learn or communicate with members of another group is tied to their perception of desire to maintain a level of remoteness. Verkuyten and Kinket (2000) emphasizes that social distance is closely related with the concept of prejudice although not interchangeable. Postiglione and Lee (1998) apply Schumann's theory to a

social distance model specifically designed for a Hong Kong context in their book *Schooling in Hong Kong: Organization, Teaching and Social Context* (Postiglione and Lee 1998). Their study draws several conclusions about social distance between different social groups in Hong Kong, in which language acquisition (mostly English) was a key factor that developed social distance and even socioeconomic stratification. However, Postiglione and Lee's book was written only one year after the handover in 1997, and is mostly referencing information from before the handover. Therefore, it did not include Mandarin speakers within its analysis. Application of their model together with Schumann's theory proves highly useful to the analysis of adaptability, social distance and language acquisition within this study of mainland Chinese students.

Sussman (2011) conducted a comprehensive study focusing on the adaptability and change in identity of Hong Kong people who migrated overseas (mostly to western countries) and later re-migrated back to Hong Kong. In order to classify their “identity shift” or changes to their culture, language use, educational background and social networks, Sussman developed a Cultural Identity model (CIM) to categorize these groups into four different identities; Subtractive, Additive, Affirmative, and Intercultural/Global identities. The methodology of the CIM seems to take into account both environmental factors as well as personal factors which result in a unique change in individual culture and identity. The CIM is a highly useful model even when measuring adaptation and identity changes other groups besides re-migrants and can be used to differentiate and analyze groups of study abroad students and the factors that determined their experiences in school and the host society.

The research done by the authors mentioned above has contributed a lot to the buildup to this study. Many of the themes in their research have inspired the design of my interviews and methodology. It is exciting to be able to apply models and concepts by such established researchers to the case of mainland Chinese students in other Chinese societies which is a social demographic still not widely studied. For those studying China studies and social sciences, understanding mainland Chinese students who study in the SARs and Taiwan is crucial, as this young generation may be the first to bridge gaps within Greater China. This study allows us to peer into their first perceptions and experiences living and studying there and serve as a good reference point to future sociological or ethnographic studies of the SARs and Taiwan.

### **Chapter Outline**

In the following sections, the application of the interviews as well as the results will be tied to the implications drawn in the hypothesis which is stated in Chapter 2. First, a summary of each group of students participating will be given to display the diversity of their backgrounds, academic achievements and general characteristics. The profiles of individual students will also be available as supplementary reference material and not be presented in their entirety. The student profiles are insightful, while respecting the respondents' personal privacy. Detailed accounts of their mannerisms, attitudes toward the interviews, and enthusiasm were also taken into account and highlighted when certain characteristics occur on a group level.

A detailed report of the results of the interviews in Hong Kong and Macau, will be backed up with a summary of supplementary data from the Taiwan interviews. In this section, patterns and similarities of responses will be drafted to estimate if students fall into the new demographic of mainland students defined in the hypothesis. Information about students' backgrounds is vital in order to detect correlations between place of origin, educational background, work experience, international experience, etc. with their perceptions of their respective territory of study. After meticulous analysis of each interview, the combined results of general perceptions of all students in each of the territories will be compared with one another in order to clarify differences in the type of mainland students that attended universities in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. The analysis also helps identify the structural factors in each territory that resulted in social distance between the mainland Chinese students and the local population.

The results from the section entitled “future plans” give insight on what this group of mainland students intends to do following graduation or their current level of employment. This shows that the international exposure and potential mobility the students have as a result of their academic experience in the SARs and/or upbringing. Several questions pertain to overseas immigration and acquisition of second passports. Responses to these questions will allow one to gauge the students' level of mobility and/or ambition to leave mainland China in the long-term. Results from this section are also critical for supporting the hypothesis's claim that the group of students interviewed is internationally minded, highly mobile, and more willing to relocate out of economic and academic opportunity than any other previously mentioned group of mainland Chinese.

The final section of the interview entitled “other questions” briefly asks the students in a very neutral and open-ended manner about their political opinions, opinion on the “One Country, Two Systems” policy, and perception of other mainland Chinese groups in the SARs such as the “new immigrants” and “birth tourists”. These questions, although not primary, may reveal some interesting supplementary insight into how the mainland students view the SARs and the mainland politically. It was also be a good opportunity to hear their opinions about other mainland Chinese groups in the territories, and how their viewpoint differs from the controversial one of many local SAR residents.

In addition to the data from the field interviews, this study will also reference some media reports on the SARs and Taiwan that regard mainland Chinese in the territories as well as the mainland students. More detailed information from literature that was mentioned in the literature review will be referenced again in Chapter 4, the group analysis section, in order to form a clearer picture of the data found in the interviews and apply it to existing theories and models to support the hypothesis. Results were analyzed in relation to Sussman's CIM, to classify which students interviewed would correspond to which identity shift that Sussman's re-migrants were labeled. Analysis of students' adaptability on the individual and group level were also conducted by applying Schumann's social distance theory and Postiglione and Lee's social distance model developed in a Hong Kong context (Schumann 1976, Postiglione and Lee 1998). Observing the social distance that students described and perceived to have from the local society helps to understand the level of their adaptability and possible future mobility, which

is key to preparing them for a more global, interconnected world (Egron-Polak 2012).



## **Chapter 2: Research Questions & Methodology**

### **Research Questions**

The background information given in the introduction and research presented in the literature review lead us to the following research questions.

1. Why did mainland students chose schools in the SARs; 2. What factors affected their perception of the SAR societies and higher education before arrival; 3. What factors affected the students' adaptability and their social distance with the local milieu (SARs or Taiwan); 4. What are their future plans for the future in regard to employment and migration? The answers to these questions will help understand what attracted mainland students to their respective schools and how their perception was shaped before enrolling. We also want to know about their current experience and determine what personal factors as well as environmental circumstances are impacting their adaptability and social relationships. It will also be insightful to hear what plans they have following graduation and if they have the intention to either stay in their new host society, or relocate to another foreign country.

### **Hypotheses**

This study primarily focuses on the patterns of mainland Chinese students' perceptions of the SARs as well as experiences of the newly arrived mainland students in the SARs' societies. It is expected that findings will indicate that recent, post-handover mainland Chinese students studying in the SARs have chosen to study in SAR universities not for reasons of fleeing or seeking refuge from the mainland as their processors did, but relocated out of choice due to a perception of superior western educational incentives. It is anticipated that some of the students analyzed in the study chose the SAR universities as an alternative to directly going to a western country due to closer proximity to their hometowns, similarities in language and culture, and lower cost. Most mainland students currently studying in the SARs are expected to be from relatively wealthy families and/or be high achieving, highly motivated students due to high competition for acceptance. However, the study will confirm that most students who study in a university in the SARs have future plans to relocate to another country and/or acquire an alternative passport and identify their reasons for doing so. Hence, this newly defined group of elite mainland Chinese students can use the SARs as “stepping stones” to the rest of the world by acquiring a western, English education while remaining in the culturally familiar greater China area.

It is reasonable to believe that their experiences in the SARs will not impact their cultural identity as being “Chinese”, but their different educational background and exposure to foreign concepts and lifestyles will result in some type of identity shift as described in the Cultural Identity Model (CIM)

used by Sussman (2011).<sup>2</sup> In using Sussman's model to classify which students fall into which category, and another sociological theory such as Schumann's Social Distance Theory, we can identify personal characteristics and structural factors that result in adaptability. Such factors will include language acquisition, changes in social networking, curiosity of host culture, and future aspirations in the host society or abroad. This will also indicate that the mainland students in all territories are by no means a uniform group, as they chose their schools and study locations for different reasons, and hence have differing levels of adaptability or shifts in identity. Therefore, at the conclusion one can observe the differing degrees of benefit and satisfaction gained from studying in each territory based on both individual and environmental circumstances.

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<sup>2</sup> Sussman, N.M. (2011) *Return migration and identity: a global phenomenon, a Hong Kong case*. Hong Kong University Press.

## **Methodology**

In order to have an understanding of why these mainland students chose to study in the SARs as well as their perception of and experience in the SARs, a series of interviews were conducted among a body of current or recently graduated mainland students who attended universities in the SARs. The sample was drawn mainly using a snowball sampling method, and respondents were corresponded by email or online social networks such as QQ or Facebook prior to the interviews. The students were interviewed on a one-on-one basis, and met in informal locations in Hong Kong and Macau. Only one interview was conducted on Skype due to a sudden change of plans. The interviews aim to: 1. collect personal and educational background information; 2. analyze perceptions of the respective SAR and international experience and awareness prior to their study; 3. analyze perceptions of respective SAR and inquire about current experience since relocating; 4. inquire about future plans and intentions in regard to employment and potential immigration; 5. briefly inquire about political opinions, standpoint on the One Country, Two Systems policy, and predicted future of SARs. Each interview was approximately one hour in length, and was conducted mostly in Mandarin Chinese and recorded using an audio recorder. Only one student insisted on responding to the interview questions in English. For the remainder of this study, the subjects will be referred to as: Mr/Ms. (abbreviated name). Details will be given about their respective home province, age, major in school, length of stay in respective territory, and educational and work histories.

Supplementary interviews were also conducted on mainland students studying in Taiwan (台灣), who were only allowed into Taiwanese universities starting in 2011. The interviews in Taiwan were conducted several months before the ones in the SARs as a trial run and a means to perfect the interview questions before traveling to the SAR universities. The interviews in Taiwan were conducted in a similar fashion to the ones in the SARs, with questions worded slightly differently and adjusted to match local circumstances. All the students in Taiwan were from National Chengchi University and introduced by the school's mainland student association and were all from different departments. The data collected from the interviews in Taiwan can be used to contrast the varying opinions and experiences of these mainland students studying in a different Chinese society. In order to facilitate communication, interview sheets and all forms of correspondence were typed completely in simplified Chinese characters. Administrative staff at Chinese University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Baptist University, two teachers at University of Macau, and staff at National Chengchi University's mainland affairs office were informally inquired about their views of the mainland students and about any supplementary information regarding any future plans for the schools in terms of the mainland students.<sup>3</sup> Finally, it is important to note that the sample of data from Taiwan and Macau was more homogeneous than Hong Kong which had students from three schools.

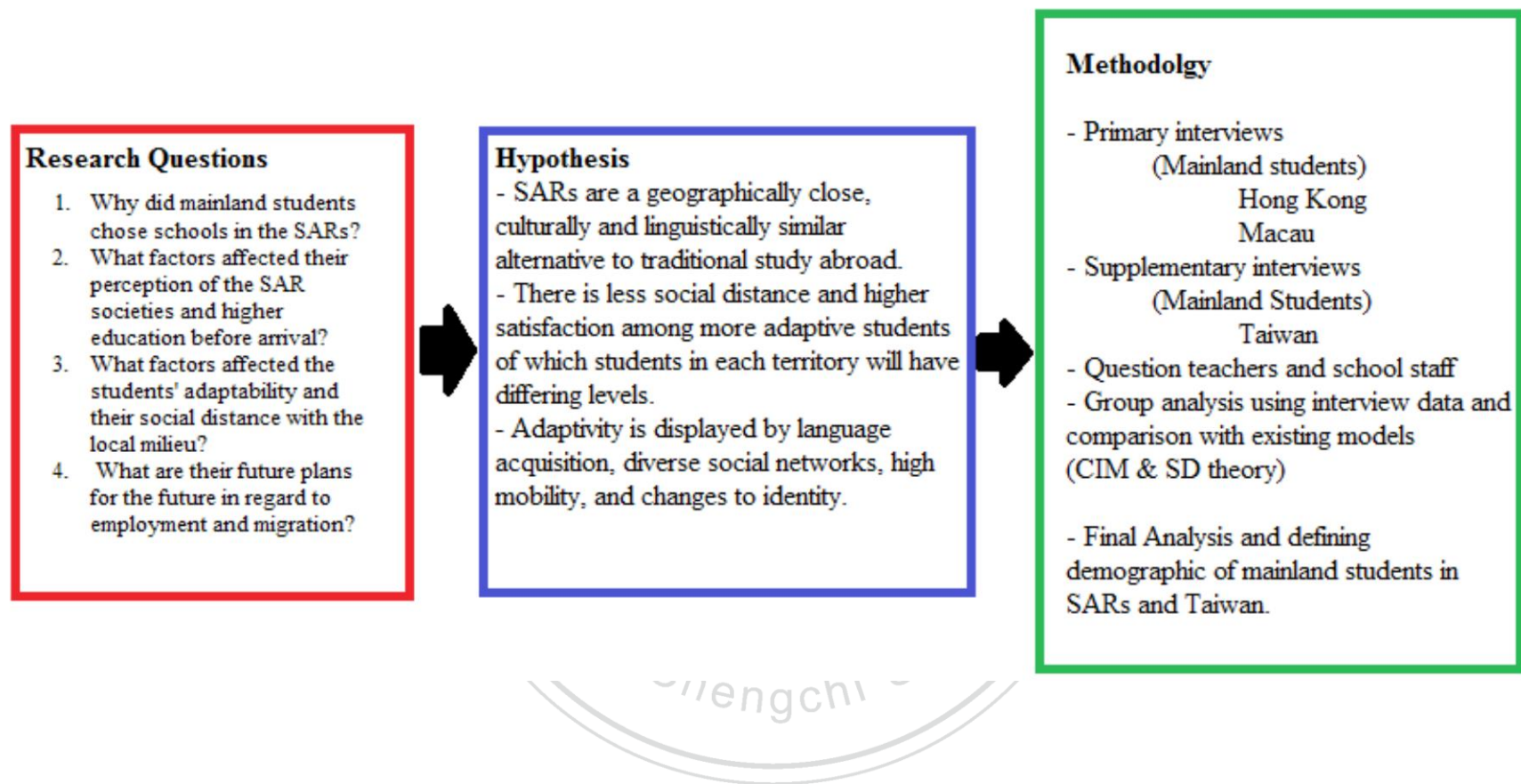
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<sup>3</sup> The research fieldwork was limited to individual interviews with students in the SARs and Taiwan, and was not able to collect primary data regarding university development and the increase of Chinese student population directly from university officials despite several attempts.

The research flowchart for the following series of interviews is depicted in the chart below (Figure 1).



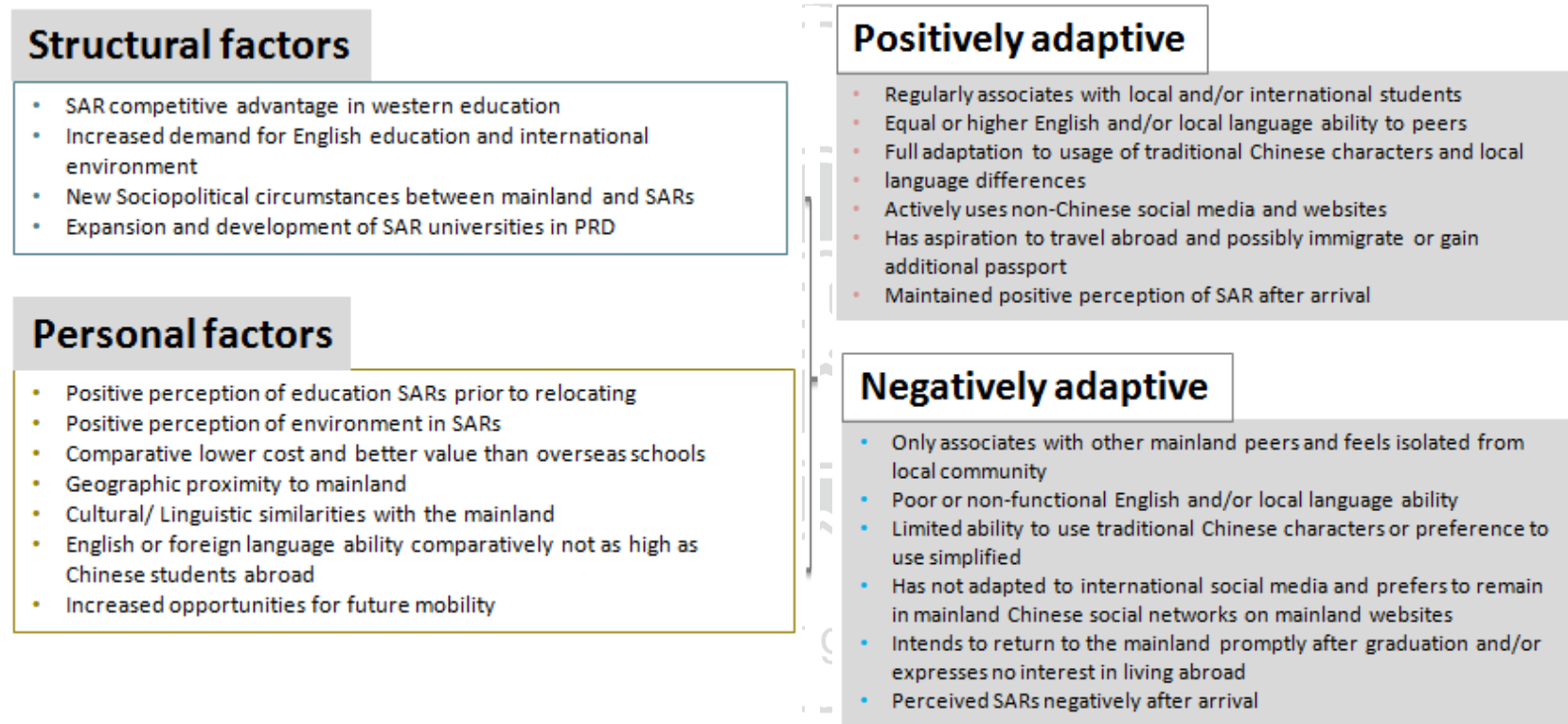
Figure 1: Research Flowchart





All students in each territory received the same fundamental questions with certain questions adjusted to match the circumstances of the territory they are in. For example, students studying in Hong Kong were questioned about perceptions of Hong Kong, while students in Taiwan were questioned likewise in regard to Taiwan. The interviews were designed to question the students on their perception of the educational opportunities available in the SARs due to structural changes in the higher education environment, and about their own personal reasons for choosing their school or program of choice. The answers to these questions helped draw a line between students that are highly adaptive to their new environment and those who had a mostly negative reaction to the SARs and experienced limited adaptation. This concept is outlined by the chart below. (Figure 2) It is important to remember that no individual will perfectly fall into one of the two categories, as these are simply listing the positively and negatively adaptive qualities that students may have. In reality, the students will possess different combinations of both categories.

Figure 2: Student Adaptation Matrix



Measuring the students' adaptability to their new environment is also a crucial step in defining the new group of mainland students as unique from others. The interviews as well as informal correspondence with the researcher also helped gauge more subtle factors such as spoken language, written language in emails, activity on social networks such as QQ and Facebook. Taking these behaviors into account are important in determining the student's potential to adapt to live abroad, function in an international environment, and understand how their identity has been impacted by their experiences in the SARs or abroad. Even analyzing how they responded to the researcher who is a non-ethnic Chinese foreigner conducting the interviews in Mandarin may show the degree to which they are open minded. I recorded anecdotal information about each student's mannerisms, attitudes, and use of language when interacting with them in the results of the interviews. I also inquired about the mainland students to NCCU's Mainland Affairs office.

### **Research Fieldwork**

In October of 2013, I conducted the supplementary interviews in Taiwan prior to departing for my fieldwork in Hong Kong in Macau. The interviews were conducted on campus at NCCU and were done as a trial run in preparation for the main fieldwork. Following the interviews in Taiwan, questions that were deemed to be most significant were expanded in the final version of the interview given in Hong Kong and Macau. The order of certain questions were also adjusted, however the overall four section structure of the interviews was maintained. Questions did not vary to the extent that they collected a different set of data from the SAR interviews.

In December of 2013, I conducted fieldwork in Hong Kong and Macau. Appointments to interview students were arranged in advance via university mainland Chinese student organizations, and social and personal networks. In order to obtain a widespread opinion and ensure results were not biased, a wide range of students of different personal and academic backgrounds were selected. Therefore, to the extent allowed, each student in each of the three territories were of: both genders, graduated from different colleges (in the case of post-graduates), from different home provinces/towns, have different work experiences, and have different majors in university. All students interviewed were current students or recently graduated students of an SAR or Taiwanese university (for the Taiwan interviews). During this time, I also visited administrative offices of several universities and spoke with Chinese University of Hong Kong's Chief Executive of Admissions, Hong Kong Baptist University's non-local student affairs director, and one professor at University of Macau. I also corresponded with another professor at University of Macau via email prior to my fieldwork. Any applicable statistics available on mainland Chinese student enrollment were collected from school websites, census websites and media sources. This series of fieldwork in the SARs lasted from December 12, 2013 to December 23, 2013. Due to Hong Kong and Macau's school year ending earlier than that of Taiwan, the condition and availability of the students and faculty were rather limited. However, a sufficient number and variety of students were collected and interviewed in each territory. The interview schedule in Appendix 1 depicts the breakdown and series of questions that were asked of students or recent graduates.

### **Chapter 3: Interview Summaries**

The summaries of the data collected in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are presented respectfully in this chapter. Data that was considered particularly significant, and/or unanticipated findings are highlighted accordingly.

Commonly used words, phrases and descriptions of their perceptions and experiences will be noted. In addition to information about how their opinions and perceptions have changed after relocating, statistics based on their satisfaction with the education system are shown. A figure is provided below in order to give an outline of their satisfaction levels based on their backgrounds. (Table 1)

### Table 1: Student Profiles

<u>Student Names</u>	<u>Home province</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Undergrad/Post</u>	<u>Residing term</u> (Years)	<u>Major</u>	<u>Satisfaction Level</u> 0 to 5
<b>Hong Kong</b>						
University, (1),(2),(3)						
Mr. Jerry (1)	Tianjin 天津	20	Undergrad	1.3	Industrial Engineering	5
Ms. Meng* (1)	Liaoning/Hainan 遼寧/海	19	Undergrad	1	Political Science	4
Ms. Yu (1)	Beijing 北京	18	Undergrad	0.3	Journalism	4.5
Ms. Jessie (1)	Zhejiang 浙江	21	Undergrad	2.4	Science	3.5
Ms. Joyce (2)	Shaanxi 陝西	24	Post Grad	2.4	Translation	3
Ms. Charlene*(2)	Hebei 河北	26	Post Grad	2.4	Chinese 2 <sup>nd</sup> language E	4
Ms. Xi* (3)	Hunan 湖南	24	Post Grad	2.4	Journalism	5
Ms. An* (3)	Beijing 北京	22	Post Grad	0.4	Journalism	4
Ms. Bai (1)	Zhejiang 浙江	23	Post Grad	1.3	Education	4
<b>Average:</b>		21.9		1.54		4.1
<b>Macau</b>						
(University of Macau)						
Ms. Demi**	Chongqing 重慶	19	Undergrad	0.3	Accounting	4
Ms. Rain**	Anhui 安徽	18	Undergrad	3	Accounting	4
Mr. David	Hainan 海南	19	Undergrad	2.3	Hospitality Management	3
Ms. Sha	Fujian 福建	19	Undergrad	1.4	Elementary Education	3
Mr. Han	Beijing 北京	19	Undergrad	1.4	Computer Science	3.5
Mr. Ian	Hunan 湖南	25	Post Grad	1.5	Social Science	4.5
<b>Average:</b>		19.8		1.65		3.66
<b>Taiwan</b>						
(NCCU)(國立政治大學)						
Ms. Jia	Heilongjiang 黑龍江	29	Post Grad	1.3	Broadcasting	5
Ms. Yuki	Beijing 北京	23	Post Grad	0.3	Taiwanese Literature	3.5
Ms. Yi	Zhejiang 浙江	21	Post Grad	0.7	Journalism	4
Mr. Yang	Hubei 湖北	26	Post Grad	0.3	Broadcasting	4
Ms. D	Guangdong 廣東	23	Post Grad	0.3	Accounting	4
Mr. Z	Beijing 北京	23	Post Grad	0.3	Management	4
<b>Average:</b>		24.2		0.53		4.08
<b>Legend:</b>	(*) : Ethnic Minority (**) : Immigrated					

## Hong Kong Summary

In total, there were nine students interviewed in Hong Kong, of which four of them were undergraduate students, and five were either post-graduate or recently graduated (from post-graduate programs at three institutions in Hong Kong). Although the students were diverse in background, for unknown reasons, there was a clear imbalance in gender distribution strongly favoring females. Of the nine students interviewed, only one student was male. It remains inconclusive why this occurred, but some possible explanations may be: the method in which interviewees were collected, some individuals that introduced students via social networks were female (this is based on the assumption that females are more likely to refer their female friends), as well as the age, gender, and background of the interviewer possibly attracting a certain type of participant. The only information given about the interviewer was: name, school of origin, and “a foreign graduate student in Taiwan”. Correspondence with the students in Hong Kong was done in either English or Chinese (traditional).

Some of the female students mentioned in conversation or during the interview that their boyfriends were influencing factors in their post-graduation plans. Approximately four of the eight female students indicated they had boyfriends and they planned to either remain in Hong Kong, return to the mainland or immigrate overseas based on the males' career plans. Given the gender imbalance, this phenomenon is clearly most present in the Hong Kong group. It was also not surprising that the four that did not mention having boyfriends were all undergraduate students and several years

younger than the other 4 who were post-graduate or recently started a job in Hong Kong.

The interviews of the students in Hong Kong had another unexpected element that was unknown prior to meeting the students in person. Four of the nine students identified themselves as ethnic minorities. All of the ethnic minority students did not make this clear at the time they accepted the interview. Given the incredibly small scale of the student sample, it is quite peculiar that almost 50% of the mainland students interviewed in Hong Kong were ethnic minorities. Furthermore, all four of them were introduced by different sources, and none of these sources had any sort of affiliation to ethnic minorities in mainland China. These students were asked the same questions as the Han students, although they were asked a few follow-up questions relating to their experience as an ethnic minority. It is not a factor that interferes with the methodology of this study, the interview or the results, however gives rise to several new questions. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it may give potential for further research to be done on the attractiveness of education in the SARs or foreign countries to ethnic minorities of China. Researchers also may infer that ethnic minorities are more likely to participate in such studies given the relatively high turnout of ethnic minority students in such a small-scale study.

### **First Group Hong Kong**

The first three students were undergraduate students. All three were from the same university and knew each other through a student organization that discusses political topics in Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China, but had different majors in different departments. Mr. Jerry, Ms. Meng and Ms.

Yu were 20, 19 and 18 years old respectively and were the youngest three students among the group in Hong Kong. They all indicated that they were high caliber students in secondary school, which enabled them to enter a prestigious university in Hong Kong. Based on their comments and opinions of their educational experience, they were among the most satisfied and possibly the most curious students in the Hong Kong group.

Due to their common interest in political issues, they had relatively pronounced political opinions. Participation in such extracurricular activities would also imply that they all had some degree of interest in politics, which was most likely an important factor for them when considering Hong Kong as an option, especially in the case of Ms. Meng, an ethnic minority student majoring in Political Science. All three students noted that they had considered studying abroad in either the United States or Europe, or were considering going there in the near future for employment or further education. All of them appeared extremely satisfied with their school and the Hong Kong education system as their rated satisfaction averaged 4.5 out of 5. Based on their comments, this was attributed to the openness and flexibility of the teachers as well as opportunities to communicate directly with the teachers. All three students attended public secondary schools in the mainland. Their description of Hong Kong's higher education matched the characteristics of a Western style education system, however remaining in a Chinese society like Hong Kong still retained some Chinese elements. Geographical and cultural proximity to mainland China influenced their communication habits with their family and friends.

In terms of communication technology, all of the students said they actively started using Facebook, Youtube and Google soon after coming to Hong

Kong, as well as using traditional Chinese characters. Any correspondence in Chinese with all of them via email was done so in traditional characters. All of the students stated that they now regularly use Wechat (微信) and cellphones to contact their friends and family in the mainland, whereas they all used Renren (人人網) and QQ prior to relocating. Ms. Yu commented that she no longer likes to use Renren and prefers Facebook to contact friends in Hong Kong, and uses Wechat to contact mainland friends and family on the same cellphone. This implies that these students now have two separate social networks that are divided due to differences in cultural and linguistic preferences of software and web content. This is also partially due to several of these sites being blocked in mainland China, which results in a different standard of online communication.

Despite great interest in immigrating and experiencing foreign, particularly Western cultures, Mr. Jerry and Ms. Yu seem particularly attached to their Chinese identity and clearly do not want to “stop being Chinese.” Their shared decision to study in Hong Kong was not motivated by permanent residence in Hong Kong as much as the program of their university being a viable alternative to US or European universities. In the case of Mr. Jerry, he has a great interest in other Chinese societies such as Hong Kong and Taiwan for cultural reasons, although he also emphasized his final decision came down to the program he is now enrolled in. Ms. Meng on the other hand indicated that her Chinese nationality was “not so important” in her mind. Her association with European lifestyles as being secure and care-free reveals some sort of contrast from mainland Chinese and Hong Kong societies as being highly competitive and high-pressure. It may also be important to note that Ms. Meng moved away from Liaoning, her province

of birth at a young age, which possibly distanced her from her ethnic minority culture and environment.

### **Second Group Hong Kong**

The next three students interviewed had a slightly less positive impression of Hong Kong after starting school in the territory. Ms. Jessie was the fourth undergraduate student of the Hong Kong group, majoring in Science. After relocating and enrolling in a Hong Kong university, she felt that Hong Kong is not the best place to major in science, and little emphasis is put on grades, but rather to prepare the students for the future careers. Ms. Joyce, a recently graduated translation major complained of a relative short length of the post-graduate programs in Hong Kong, and even went so far to say that the schools intentionally have a high turnover of students to make a profit. Ms. Charlene, an ethnic minority who recently graduated and is now working as a Mandarin teacher was relatively satisfied with the education in Hong Kong, but was slightly disillusioned with aspects of Hong Kong society such as large gaps in literacy and small, cramped living conditions. They all had an average satisfaction level of 3.5 out of 5. All of them had an initial impression that Hong Kong was an international city full of job opportunities with a more international education system which were the factors that ultimately drew them there. They also went to Hong Kong anticipating the opportunity to establish a more international social network, as all three of them mentioned the presence of English as well as foreigners. Ms. Jessie and Ms. Charlene went to Hong Kong full of curiosity and an incomplete understanding of the complicated dynamics of the society. Ms. Joyce on the other hand seemed to have some background knowledge of certain negative aspects of Hong Kong society prior to deciding to pursue

her post-graduate studies in a Hong Kong school. For example, she had been aware of Hong Kong's unique local media culture (such as Hong Kong's "Paparazzi culture" and the press following the lives of celebrities) before arriving. She along with the other two mainly accessed Hong Kong music and media on the internet or on TV and were left with the feeling that Hong Kong people paid a lot of attention to movie stars. Her impression of Hong Kong society at that time led her to believe that Hong Kong men have a high amount of social pressure to be financially successful, which attributes to a high degree of them seeking out wives from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in mainland China, a topic of research among regional social scientists (Newendorp 2008). Ms. Joyce was also the only student who went into the situation expecting some type of discrimination from the local community.

After relocating, all three of them mentioned experiences of hostility from the local Hong Kong students even though Ms. Joyce was the only one initially expecting such negative reception. Their descriptions indicated levels of suspicion from the local students as well as increased levels of perceived competition with the mainland students. Ms. Jessie said that she had the impression that most Hong Kong people have a "deep-rooted belief system" and hold stereotypes toward mainland Chinese and foreigners alike. She also independently expressed a relatively negative attitude toward the Hong Kong government and called them "ineffective". When asked about her opinion on the Communist party, she responded that the Communist party had done a good job and has achieved great success considering China's massive size and population. One may infer that Ms. Jessie's dissatisfaction with elements in Hong Kong society and her school translated

into negative attitudes towards the Hong Kong government. This question goes beyond the scope of this study, but poses an intriguing research question.

Given that Ms. Joyce and Ms. Charlene had possibly the highest Cantonese ability among the students interviewed in Hong Kong,<sup>4</sup> they surprisingly both struggled to befriend local Hong Kong students when enrolled in school. Although Ms. Jessie did not have such an advanced command of Cantonese, she claimed to have has many Hong Kong friends. This group of students exemplifies that language ability may not be the predominant factor in building social networks in the new environment. Possible explanations for this could be that Ms. Charlene and Ms. Joyce came into Hong Kong at a slightly older age, entering a post-graduate program, while Ms. Jessie and the students from the first group of three entered at a younger age, pursuing an undergraduate degree. Furthermore, all members of the first group were clearly active in the school's extracurricular activities, while those of the second group did not mention any such club participation. Given that Ms. Joyce's boyfriend was also a mainlander working in Hong Kong, this might also limit her opportunities for social interactions within the local community.

### **Third Group Hong Kong**

The remaining three students in Hong Kong entered the territory with a focus on their respective fields of study. Ms. Xi and Ms. An, both ethnic

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<sup>4</sup> They displayed their Cantonese skills when speaking with staff at the cafe where the interview was held.

minority females majoring in journalism and broadcasting respectively, were attracted to Hong Kong based on the perception of Hong Kong universities being more advanced than the those of the mainland in those fields. Ms. Bai, majoring in foreign language and education, also went to Hong Kong with the belief that it had a superior foreign language environment and higher quality education. However, Ms. Bai made it clear during the interview that she originally had intended to study abroad in North America, and settled for Hong Kong as an alternative. Their average level of satisfaction ranked 4.3 out of 5. All three of them shared the perception that education in Hong Kong was more westernized and offered an English-speaking environment. They also all felt like going to Hong Kong would be like going to a foreign country. Ms. An noted that she was concerned about discrimination toward her prior to relocating, but later felt that people were more affable than she originally had thought. Ms. Bai felt that both Hong Kong students and residents did not welcome mainland students, and that the local students may particularly feel threatened by highly skilled and multilingual mainland students. Ms. Xi said she had not received any type of negative feedback from Hong Kong students and has a vast social network in Hong Kong, while Ms. Bai said she only had local Hong Kong friends after getting a job. These comments ran closely parallel to Ms. Joyce and Ms. Charlene, the two language majors from the second group. The correlation of Ms. Bai's linguistic ability and relatively small social network among Hong Kong people is remarkably similar to that of Ms. Joyce's. In addition, the main similarity between them is their relatively negative feelings toward the local Hong Kong students. Both of them also had more prior knowledge about Hong Kong prior to entering the territory.

It is noteworthy to mention that Ms. Xi has possibly made the largest transformation out of any of the students interviewed in Hong Kong given her background of growing up in an ethnic minority village in rural Hunan. Aside from graduating from Beijing University, she graduated within the top ten of her class in her post-graduate school in Hong Kong. She appears to be the most socially active and has adapted to a significant extent. Coming from a poorer, rural village, she became a multilingual, top-tier university graduate working for an international company and frequently traveled between Hong Kong and mainland China. Perhaps her ability to shift roles and maintain multiple social networks in Hong Kong and in the mainland attributes to her overall high level of satisfaction. Ms. Xi did make note that she regularly conversed with her Hong Kong friends in Cantonese, which may be a tool that allowed her to adapt more. However, the cases of Ms. Joyce and Ms. Bai prove that language ability alone is not the determining factor to one's ability to adapt. However, almost all students acknowledged to some degree that the language differences between Hong Kong and mainland China are clear barriers for most mainland students to adapt.

### **Hong Kong Final Results**

Overall, mainland students who studied or were studying in Hong Kong are satisfied with their experience. The total average level of satisfaction with the schools and education system in Hong Kong is 4.1 out of 5. There were varied responses from the students given their diverse backgrounds and experiences. In some cases, certain opinions contradicted other students'. However, several patterns in students' responses were reoccurring. Regarding the perception of Hong Kong society before relocating, common descriptions included: "International", "Westernized", "Open-minded",

“Affluent”, “Sophisticated”, “Developed” etc. (國際化, 西方化, 開放, 豐富, 人的質素高, 發展高). Most of the students who ranked their overall satisfaction as 4 or above had all their expectations met, or even had better experiences than their original expectations. In the case of some students, particularly younger ones who had less background knowledge about Hong Kong mentioned a degree of curiosity that led them to their decision. Almost all the students had a shared interest of wanting to explore another culture, and in some cases after relocating to Hong Kong had increased interest or created future plans to go to a foreign country for work or further education. The countries that were indicated were predominantly North American or European countries, particularly English-speaking ones. This is reasonable as most of the students have relatively fluent English skills and were attracted to Hong Kong schools by their English-medium education and curricula. Opportunities to use English and meet foreigners consistently seemed to be factors attracting them to Hong Kong. Many of the students' impressions of Hong Kong had changed slightly after starting school. Many of them also became more aware of social problems in Hong Kong and changed their opinions or developed a new impression of local Hong Kong people. There were varying opinions about how mainland students are received by local students and residents, but patterns in their answers show that this greatly depended on their attitude prior to moving to Hong Kong. In other words, some students that went to Hong Kong expecting people to not welcome them often described such experiences.

A continued theme throughout the interviews in Hong Kong was the Cantonese language being a barrier to adapting to the new environment and establishing bonds with local students and residents. Some of the students

made extensive efforts to learn Cantonese and claim to use it in their daily life. However, some students who have exceptionally high language abilities did not necessarily have more local Hong Kong friends than the other students. Even a few students claiming to have little grasp of the Cantonese language said they have local friends in Hong Kong. However, these students noticeably had a more positive perception about how they were received by the locals, while students with exceptional language abilities such as Ms. Joyce and Ms. Bai had continued feelings of suspicion toward and from the local students.

In the future-plans section of the interview, all students were asked about any desire or intention to immigrate, change their nationality or acquire another passport in the future. Four of the nine students said they have thought of the possibility of changing their passport. Two of the four said they would like a Hong Kong passport<sup>5</sup> because it was more convenient and would allow them to travel more; one said the United States, while the remaining one, Mr. Jerry said he would like a Taiwanese passport as he is interested in Taiwan for similar reasons as to why he initially attracted to Hong Kong. Also, four of the nine students indicated they were interested in immigrating; one chose Hong Kong, one Europe, one the US, and one Canada.<sup>6</sup> The remaining five students who said they had no interest in immigrating and gave reasons such as distance from their families, their sense of local identity is too strong or important to them, or they simply had

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<sup>5</sup> Having a Hong Kong passport does not indicate permanently living in Hong Kong in the future, but having the passport as a means of convenience.

<sup>6</sup> Immigrating implies settling down in another country or territory long-term.

not considered it an option. On the question of nationality<sup>7</sup>, only two of the nine students, Ms. Meng and Ms. Charlene said they would consider changing their nationality if they had the chance. Ms. Meng said her Chinese nationality was “not so important” and Ms. Charlene said she would like to change her nationality as she would like to live in the United States, but emphasized she does not dislike China. It may be of importance to note that Ms. Meng and Ms. Charlene are ethnic minorities and were relocated away from their hometowns to attend high school and undergraduate school respectively. Furthermore, they both have relatively negative impressions of their local Hong Kong classmates, as they felt unwelcomed. Both their reasons for wanting to immigrate to Europe and the US were based on the perception of leisurely lifestyles and low-stress environments (悠閒, 壓力低).

The other two ethnic minority students, Ms. Xi and Ms. An, maintain relatively intimate relationships with their family and friends in mainland China. Ms. Xi claimed she visited her hometown once every two months, while Ms. An said her parents and boyfriend frequently visited Hong Kong. Although they expressed interest in going overseas in the future for study or travel, they were not interested in changing their nationality. Ms. Xi responded to this question by saying her Chinese identity was too strong and would only need another passport if China was unsafe at any point in the future. As Ms. Xi took an interest in politics, she added that: “Being Chinese

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<sup>7</sup> This implies disassociating themselves from the Chinese nationality regardless of which passport one holds, as this was an entirely separate question from the one on passports. However, a PRC or SAR passport implies Chinese nationality.

and being communist is not the same thing.” “These are two things that the Hong Kongers distinguish between very clearly. But in the mainland they are mixed together.”(Ms. Xi part 3, 11:15) By saying this, she indicated that her Chinese nationality did not reflect her condolence with the Chinese Communist Party, but rather the Chinese identity that Mr. Jerry mentioned during his interview. This information may be relevant to those conducting research on either recent immigrants from Asia to western countries, or overseas ethnic minority immigrants.

The two most satisfied students, Mr. Jerry and Ms. Xi were noticeably the most enthusiastic and outgoing students in the Hong Kong group despite their significantly different backgrounds. They both mentioned the feelings of a strong Chinese identity and intimacy with their hometowns. However, they both expressed discontent with the Communist party and the political system and concept of “guanxi” (關係) in mainland Chinese society. Aside from educational incentives and demand for an English-medium environment, they both seemed to be attracted by the alternative Chinese society that Hong Kong offered. In other words, Hong Kong was like “China outside of the PRC”. Mr. Jerry also explained how he deeply admires the buildings and architecture in Hong Kong. Beyond their decision to study in Hong Kong, they both mentioned their personal interest in Taiwan.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Jerry went so far as to say he would like a Taiwanese (ROC) passport. Ms. Xi also informally told the researcher after the interview that she had visited Taiwan and it was one of her favorite places. It therefore shows that Mr. Jerry, Ms. Xi, and perhaps some of the other students have an interest in

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<sup>8</sup> They both talked with the researcher about Taiwan during and after the interview.

Chinese culture and were attracted to Hong Kong by its unique Chinese society that a western country could not provide. This question will be revisited during the summaries of Macau and Taiwan to observe if there is any correlation.

### **Macau Summary**

There were a total of six students interviewed in Macau. Overall, the group of students from Macau was a much younger group, consisting of five undergraduate students and one post-graduate student. The gender distribution was even, with three females and three males. The one post-graduate student was a male. All of the students are from University of Macau, which is the largest and oldest comprehensive university in Macau. Furthermore, University of Macau is by far the largest institution in Macau, given the small scale of the higher education industry as well as the small size of the territory. Half of the students were introduced through the University of Macau's Mainland Student Association, while the other half were introduced through various other social networks, each from a different source. Not only do the students have diverse backgrounds, they appear to be a very different group from the students interviewed in Hong Kong. One noteworthy difference among the students in Macau compared to the ones in Hong Kong was that all the students in Macau went into the interview thinking that the interviewer was Chinese or of Chinese heritage. All of the students in Macau made remarks upon meeting the researcher saying they “did not realize the researcher was not Chinese”, even though the initial email specifically stated the interviewer's (foreign) name, and that he was a foreign student in Taiwan. Perhaps they could not conceive of a non-ethnic Chinese person being able to speak or write Chinese or they had no

experience meeting Chinese-speaking foreigners. This is a stark contrast from the reception in Hong Kong, where a few of the students entered the situation speaking English or assuming the interview would be conducted in English. Furthermore, all correspondence with students in Macau was done in Chinese (some simplified, some traditional). This indicates a distinct difference in the adaptability and internationalization between students in the two territories.

### **First Group Macau**

The first two students, Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain are different from the other students as they are part of a special, relatively new demographic of mainland students emerging in educational institutions in Macau. Both of them were born in mainland China but have acquired Macau permanent residence, ID cards and passports due to their parents investing in real estate in Macau. A professor from University of Macau confirmed that in some of his classes, up to 20% of the students that call themselves “local” were in fact born in mainland China and immigrated via such immigration schemes. Furthermore, he stated that other smaller colleges in Macau that already have a majority of their student body composed of mainland students or immigrated mainland students.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Ms. Demi, although she had acquired permanent residence in Macau, she had yet to reside in Macau for more than 3 months at the time of the interview. Although she was even willing to identify herself with Macau, she had yet to grasp the Cantonese language or establish a large social network in Macau. Her classmate Ms. Rain had clearly adapted to Macau society to a greater extent, as she had

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<sup>9</sup> This information was acquired through an informal conversation with a professor at University of Macau.

attended middle and high school in the neighboring mainland city of Zhuhai before residing in Macau for three years. She was therefore already proficient in Cantonese prior to enrolling in university in Macau. However, even after living in Macau for three years, she still strongly identifies herself as a person from Zhuhai. She explained: “I introduce myself as from Zhuhai, but sometimes...because I've already immigrated, I say I'm from Macau.” (Ms. Rain part 2, 13:15) They both maintained tight relations with their friends on the mainland and did not feel isolated as they were able to frequently visit Zhuhai even for a day trip.

Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain were 19 and 18 years old respectively. Given their parents' costly investment in Macau which earned them permanent residence, they therefore had stronger incentives to consider University of Macau than their other mainland classmates, even to the extent that they considered no other universities. They both acknowledged that the main reasons they chose University of Macau was the English-medium education as well as the lower entry requirements which did not require students to take the mainland standardized test, also known as the “gaokao” (高考). As they are now considered local students by the university, they are no longer in competition with the considerably larger pool of mainland applicants and are exempt from visa requirements, limits on employment, and non-local student enrollment limits. At the time of fieldwork, the Macau government did not offer one-year visa access to non-local graduates to search for local jobs as Hong Kong did. According to University of Macau's official statistics, there were 2701 registered students from mainland China, comprising 30% of the school's student body (University of Macau 2013). In addition, Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain admitted that entry to the school in Macau was not so difficult

for them. So far they are both satisfied with their experience and both ranked a 4 out of 5 for satisfaction. They both shared similar aspirations after graduating to remain in Macau and search for a job in Accounting or Finance.

### **Second Group Macau**

The other three undergraduate students, Mr. David, Ms. Sha, and Mr. Han were more conventional study-abroad students. All three of them belonged to different majors but were members of the school's mainland student association. In regard to the mainland student association, they indicated that they spend a lot of their time with the other mainland students they knew through the club meetings. They gave one the impression that they are a more tight-knit community than the first group of mainland-born local students. Overall, they were slightly less satisfied with their academic experience. Their average scores ranked a 3.17 out of 5 for satisfaction. They seemed to all agree that the quality of the school facilities and the teachers were all very high. However, they felt that the content of many of their courses is quite broad, and not as in-depth as they would have hoped. They also commented that the construction of the school's new campus has been delayed numerous times. None of the officials from University of Macau chose to offer any information regarding the construction of the new campus.

All three of them consistently mentioned a major advantage in studying in Macau was a means of escaping the mainland “gaokao” exam. Mr. David claimed that his grades in high school were “not particularly good” and therefore felt he was unable to attend a good school in mainland China. They

all consistently mentioned that they had both local Macau friends and foreign friends, although still overwhelmingly associated with other mainlanders. Another reason they were attracted to Macau was the English-medium education, as well as the continuing education system (繼續教育). Two of them said they considered schools in Hong Kong, and one in Singapore, although they felt their English ability and grades were not high enough to enroll. Their comments on factors that attracted them to Macau imply that Macau is a good option for mainland students who want to be exempt from the “gaokao”, and it shares some of the educational and social advantages with Hong Kong.

The only post-graduate student in the group from Macau is Mr. Ian, a social science major. His decision to come to Macau was done shortly after graduating from his university in Chongqing where he majored in criminal investigation. He explained that he had also considered Hong Kong but felt his qualifications were not good enough to be accepted. Therefore, his next best alternative was University of Macau. He specified that there was nothing else about Macau that attracted him other than the school itself. However, he said he always enjoyed watching Hong Kong police dramas, in which Macau was often depicted as place associated with criminal investigation and is a topic related to his undergraduate major. He specifically said getting the scholarship was very important to him and his decision enroll as his family would not be able to afford the tuition otherwise. He emphasized the competitiveness of the scholarships in Macau by explaining that only one or two students a semester are awarded full scholarships. The high level of competition for scholarships and comparatively higher costs than the mainland show that financial status has a

strong correlation with access to higher education in Macau. By contrast, Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain virtually had little barrier to entry.

Overall, Mr. Ian was the most satisfied student in Macau. He ranked a 4.5 out of 5 for satisfaction. He said he thought the education system is “better than the mainland”. In regard to the local students, he felt that they did not have the same sense of vigor and competitiveness as mainland students did. He even commented that many of the local students as “lazy”. He believes the reason behind this is that the employment rate in Macau was relatively high and local students had limited competition for jobs upon graduation. He also noted a difference in the student-teacher relationship by saying some students would discuss content of assignments with teachers in a democratic manner, rather than teachers simply giving assignments. His comments imply Macau is a relatively laid-back, progressive environment.

### **Macau Final Results**

Overall, mainland students who were studying in Macau were mildly satisfied with their experience, but may not have had all their expectations met. The total average level of satisfaction with the school and education system in Macau is 3.66 out of 5. It is important to note that the group of students from Macau is a relatively young group, with Mr. Ian as an outlier as the only post-graduate student. The average age of the group was 19.8 compared to the Hong Kong group at 21.9. Similar to the responses obtained in Hong Kong, certain patterns in students' responses were reoccurring. In regard to the perception of Macau before relocating, most students claimed to have limited knowledge about Macau other than the presence of casinos and a booming gaming industry. Most of the students interviewed in Macau

clearly did not have outstanding English or foreign language abilities, as most of them described their abilities as “decent” at best. Nevertheless, except for the two students who had already acquired Macau permanent residence, none of the students mentioned any significant effort to learn Cantonese. All of the students concurred that the Cantonese language acts as a major barrier to adapting to the local society and culture, as well as a force that divides social networks in Macau. Their inability or unwillingness to learn Cantonese may be caused by a more tight-knit group of mainland students than that in Hong Kong, as all students unanimously said they spend most of their time with other mainland students and live in the same dorm facility with each other. All of the students' surprised responses at meeting a Chinese-speaking foreign interviewer, and going into the situation thinking he was of Chinese decent implies that most of the students have limited cultural awareness or experience interacting with foreigners even though many of them claimed to have foreign friends. Another notable statistic is that 4 out of the 6 students had already known one or more people in Macau prior to deciding to attend school there. One could therefore infer that having an acquaintance in Macau prior to going was a major factor that influenced their decision.

Almost all of the students consistently acknowledged that Macau was a good alternative for them as it was more financially affordable and geographically accessible than any overseas institution and did not have such strict academic requirements as Hong Kong universities. Five of the six students specifically mentioned the reason for considering Macau as an option was a means of avoiding the mainland Chinese high school exam or “gaokao”, as some students noted they would not have had high enough grades to attend a

good school in the mainland. Some of these same students also noted that their English ability was not proficient enough to consider an institution in Hong Kong, let alone a western one. This therefore implies University of Macau is a good fallback for mainland students who do not have the academic credentials to attend a school in Hong Kong or overseas, but still want a school in a good environment with a fully English-medium education and a slightly more international atmosphere. In the case of a slightly older, post-graduate student like Mr. Ian, Macau also acts as a “springboard” to overseas institution and job opportunities much in the same way Hong Kong does.

Two of the six students, Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain exemplified that there is a demographic of extremely wealthy, but not necessarily high achieving mainland students whose families buy their children permanent residence in Macau by investing in local real estate. Regardless of their academic abilities, Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain entered Macau at a younger age than the other students and now have a much larger social network in Macau than the other students. In contrast, Mr. Ian, the oldest student claims to have only one local friend in Macau. Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain even went so far as to identify themselves as Macau people just because of their permanent residency status. In the case of Ms. Rain, she had attended high school in the neighboring city of Zhuhai which is also a Cantonese speaking environment and therefore seemed to have the least difficulty becoming accustomed to life in Macau. Ms. Demi had yet to reside in Macau for an extended period but claimed some sense of identity with Macau just because she possessed a Macau ID card and passport. It is important to note that such students are registered at University of Macau as “local students”. It is therefore difficult

to tell from the demographic census the locally born versus the mainland born Macau residents. When they were asked to rank themselves at speed of adaptability, the average score among the 6 students was 4 out of 5, excluding Mr. Rain who claimed she had adapted long before starting school.

In terms of communications habits, all of the students primarily used Wechat, QQ and their mobile phone prior to relocating to Macau. Four of the six students used Facebook as a main outlet to connect to their new social network in Macau. Another noteworthy point is that Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain were not only active on Facebook, but also wrote their family names out using a Cantonese spelling rather than a Mandarin one. For example: Wong instead of Wang; or Tong instead of Tang. They also primarily used traditional characters, showing a higher level of adaptability to the local environment and conformity with their local peers. The major reasons for Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain to identify with Macau rather than the mainland are most probably because they immigrated to Macau at a younger age, and their permanent status as a Macau resident ensures them a future career in Macau, and therefore may give them higher incentive to integrate with the local society. However, they were also the only students that expressed no interest in traveling or working abroad in the future, as the other students all mentioned countries/regions such as: the US, Canada, Australia, Singapore and Europe. Mr. Ian was the only student who said he would be interested in obtaining a Hong Kong or Macau passport.

The group in Macau clearly showed that technology such as mobile phones, the usage of Wechat and the integrated infrastructure between Macau and Zhuhai city significantly limit the level of perceived isolation of the mainland students in Macau from friends and family back in the mainland.

All of the students unanimously responded that they did not entirely feel that Macau is like a foreign country, but rather another part of China. Due to Macau's small size and easily accessible border with Zhuhai city, most of the students said they frequently visited Zhuhai on weekends for shopping or simply getting out of Macau. In addition to a more closely bound mainland community who shares the same dorm facilities, geographical proximity and minimal restrictions at borders gave them a feeling that they were still in China. Furthermore, all of the students said they contacted their friends in mainland China on a daily basis via Wechat on their phones. These factors combined with a significantly lower level of resistance from the local students and local community would leave little room for isolation among the mainland student community.

All of the students in the Macau group noted that they either considered no other institution other than University of Macau, or they had the perception that University of Macau was the only viable option as a comprehensive university in the territory. Given the considerably large mainland Chinese student body and limited choice of institutions compared to Hong Kong, one may infer that the circumstances of the mainland students in Macau are more similar to one another than the more diverse group in Hong Kong. Another factor that strongly supports this is that most of the students in Macau claimed to have local friends or mainland friends already in Macau prior to making their decision to enroll in University of Macau, while a majority of the students in Hong Kong had no friends in Hong Kong prior to relocating. This is based on the assumption that students in Macau would be likely to refer their friends with similar circumstances and similar interests. In the case of the Hong Kong group, Mr. Jerry, Ms. Meng and Ms. Yu all attend

the same school and had rather positive experiences, while Ms. Joyce and Ms. Charlene attended another school and had relatively negative ones.

Based on the responses of the students in Macau, there is no strong evidence to suggest that a factor that attracted them to Macau was an alternative Chinese society like in Hong Kong. Several of the students did mention that they opted to study in Macau as an easier alternative to Hong Kong, however their responses did not have much political connotation. Most of their rationale for going to Macau seemed to solely focus on the educational elements, and not political or social ones. In fact, for the exception of Ms. Rain, the students in Macau claimed they had little perception of Macau society at all apart from the casinos and gambling culture. None of them suggested in any way that this was a factor that attracted them to the university. However, a student like Mr. David was attracted by the school's reputable tourism and hospitality management department. As stated above, the mainland Chinese student community in Macau is quite developed and enables the mainland students to maintain close contact with one another and with people back home, limiting most senses of a foreign atmosphere in Macau.

### **Taiwan Summary**

A similar series of supplementary interviews were conducted on a group of mainland students in the researcher's home university, National Chengchi University (NCCU). The materials of these interviews were used as a reference point to the results collected in Hong Kong and Macau, as well as take a sample from students that study in Taiwan soon after recent policy liberalization, allowing mainland students to directly enroll in Taiwanese

universities. In total, there were 6 students, 2 male and 4 female. The cause of an unbalanced gender distribution is believed to be the same as in Hong Kong. All of the students were post-graduate students, from different home provinces and in different departments in school. Most of them know each other through the school's mainland student association. In general, the group in Taiwan was a slightly older group than the ones in the SARs and has several years work experience in the mainland prior to starting their studies in Taiwan.

### **Taiwan Final Results**

Overall, the mainland students studying in Taiwan were satisfied with their educational experiences. Their total average satisfaction level with the school and education system in Taiwan was 4.08 out of 5. Most of the students stayed in Taiwan for less than six months at the time of the interview, all were post-graduate students, and only two of the six students were male. The average age of the group was 24.1, noticeably older than their counterparts in the SARs. Some of the older students in the Taiwan group had several years of work experience prior to enrolling. Similar to the findings in Hong Kong and Macau, there were numerous reoccurring patterns in the students' responses. Many of them commenting on Taiwan's nature and environment being cleaner/nicer, Taiwan's media being open but disorganized or messy, high-quality products and food, Taiwanese people/students being nice and friendly.

Three of the students, Ms. Jia, Ms. Yi, and Mr. Yang all majored in journalism studies. This is not surprising as NCCU is known to have one of the top journalism (or communications) studies programs among all

Taiwanese universities. In the case of Ms. Jia and Mr. Yang, the oldest two students of the group, they had several years work experience in online software companies prior to enrollment. All three of these students worked and attended undergraduate school for several years in cities far from their respective hometowns before coming to Taiwan. The most significant similarity between them is their shared perception of the quality of NCCU's journalism and communications program. In addition, all three of them made comments that they liked Taiwanese media prior to arriving in Taiwan. For example, Ms. Yi explained: "Before, my impression of Taiwan came from TV dramas or news reports. It just made me think that Taiwan has great scenery, and a lot of great food and local delicacies" (Ms. Yi part 1, 00:58). As these students' majors are related to the media, they may have a keener sense for images they view in Taiwanese TV programs or movies. Furthermore, the information acquired through the Taiwanese media built up a reference point and gave them a more vivid perception of Taiwanese society without ever visiting Taiwan. Although some of their perceptions of Taiwan have changed after arrival, Taiwanese media was the main source of their initial perception.

The other three students, Ms. Yuki, Ms. D and Mr. Z majored in Taiwanese literature, accounting, and management respectively. In the case of Ms. Yuki, studying at a Taiwanese university was because of her plan to study Taiwanese literature, and therefore she did not consider schools in the SARs or overseas. However, Ms. D and Mr. Z clearly stated they both wanted to study outside of mainland China and that they felt that Taiwan was a viable option as entry requirements and application criteria were not as strict as overseas. Mr. Z also indicated that the Taiwanese media was a factor that

attracted him to Taiwan. He commented: “I really like Taiwanese media, because the media (here) is more open. They report things that you would not normally see on the news (in the mainland). I think in the case of music, the music culture in the mainland and Taiwan are pretty similar, so we have a pretty good understanding of Taiwanese music” (Mr. Z part 1, 03:10). It is also important to note that all three of these students indicated that they planned to go to English speaking countries in the future for work or for further study. Although none of the students mentioned English-medium education as an important factor to them when choosing a post-graduate school, they all clearly had a degree of English ability and were interested in traveling overseas. However, the key appeal of a Taiwanese university like NCCU to them is the positive perception of Taiwanese education and society, and the relatively low entry requirements.

The mainland students in Taiwan generally seemed to be on friendly terms with the local Taiwanese students, as all 6 of the students claimed to have local Taiwanese friends. The only students that claimed to have any foreign friends were the two male students, Mr. Yang and Mr. Z. Another consistent response from all of the students was regarding their impressions about Taiwanese young males and females before relocating. The responses described Taiwanese males as gentle, effeminate, passive, and speaking in a soft/light voice (溫柔, 很娘, 委婉, 說話更輕). Taiwanese females were described as: open, relatively gentle, coy/childish, fashionable (開放, 比較溫柔, 嗲, 時尚). The consistency of these responses is much higher than the wider variety of responses received in the SARs. This clearly shows that a wider range of mainland students have a more developed impression of local Taiwanese students their age. Based on their parallel descriptions, one

can infer that their view of their Taiwanese counterparts is gentle, non-threatening and possibly affable. The correlation between this impression and all of the mainland students having local friends appears to be highly significant. One possible explanation for this being that prior to deciding to relocate to Taiwan, five out of the six students mentioned they enjoyed Taiwanese media, which may have been an outlet that built up a stronger identification and larger frame of reference with Taiwan and its people. In addition, five of the six students already had Taiwanese friends or mainland friends who went to Taiwan before them, which may have given them validation in choosing to pursue post-graduate studies in Taiwan, and reinforced preexisting perceptions of Taiwan and its people through hearsay. Having local friends or mainland friends already in the territory proved to be a highly significant factor in choosing schools for the students in Macau as well.

The number of mainland students at NCCU in particular and all Taiwanese universities in general are still relatively small. There are approximately 160-167 full-time mainland post-graduate students at NCCU according to the school's mainland affairs office out of a grand total of 15,000 students in the whole student body (NCCU 2012). The numbers of mainland students are quickly growing but are still a microcosm of a group, and therefore do not stand out within college campuses in Taiwan as do the mainland students in Macau or Hong Kong. Also, the mainland students in Taiwan noted they have local roommates and are not grouped together with their mainland classmates. In this case, they are forced to associate with the local students due to the circumstance of dorm accommodation.

Another major difference in the group of students from Taiwan was the lack of mention of English-medium programs. Although five of the six students did mention and display a degree of English ability, they did not say that was a factor that they took into consideration when choosing their post-graduate school. However, five of the six students did mention they were considering going to an English speaking country in the future for either work or possible immigration. Several respondents also stated that they have a family member already overseas. For the exception of a difference in accents, none of the students mentioned any major difficulty in adapting to life in Taiwan as a result of no substantial language difference, whereas in Hong Kong and Macau language differences posed a large barrier to adaptation. However, several of the students did mention that Taiwanese students' usage of Taiwanese/Hokkien words in social contexts did make them feel mildly excluded.

It is plausible that the lack of strong English language requirements, a Chinese-medium education, and little difference in the language use reduced the level of perceived competition among the mainland and local students in Taiwan. The overall small number of mainland students in Taiwan may also contribute. Several of the students in Hong Kong who had relatively hostile or suspicious views of the local students mentioned that local students may feel threatened by high-performing mainland students and their increasing numbers. In addition, according to officials from Chinese University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Baptist University, the mainland students are on average much more active in extracurricular activities and more frequently attend lectures than their local counterparts. These comments support research that was done by Pong and Tsang (2009) documenting that newly

immigrated mainland primary and secondary students outperformed their local Hong Kong counterparts in every subject except English. Furthermore, Pong and Tsang's research concluded that mainland Chinese students assimilated to the education system more effectively in a Chinese-medium environment, which would support the findings that the students in Taiwan adapted more easily to the school environment and social situations (Pong and Tsang 2009).

Based on the relative absence of English-medium, international programs and the comments from the students in Taiwan, it is reasonable to infer that aspects of Taiwan's traditional and modern culture and friendly atmosphere were factors that attracted the students. Similar to the results found in Hong Kong, Taiwan offers an alternative Chinese society that lacks sociopolitical elements of the PRC. Mr. Yang commented:

“Before I came to Taiwan, I thought Taiwan had better cultural atmosphere. The environment was cleaner and better, and the people have a better appreciation of culture....because the media is not regulated like in the mainland, it is a bit messier” (Mr. Yang part 1, 00:30).

During Ms. Yuki's interview, she was asked if she had considered a school in either Hong Kong or Macau and responded:

“I never considered it, because I don't really like Hong Kong....I think Hong Kong people are very cold, and the city it too fast-paced. I've been there before on a work trip and I've had some bad experiences, so I do not have a good impression.....I think Taiwanese are more polite.

Furthermore, the Taiwanese uphold more traditional Chinese values. So, I think Taiwan is a good place for studying literature” (Ms. Yuki part 1, 04:28).

In addition, Taiwan's clean environment and lack of pollution proved to be a consistent factor in the perception of all the students. Mr. Z explained: “Before coming to Taiwan, I actually knew some things about Taiwan....in terms of the nature/environment, I think the air in Taiwan is quite good. If I had to compare it with my hometown (Beijing), the environment (in Taiwan) is better. However, in terms of economic development, I think the economy in Beijing is stronger” (Mr. Z part 1, 00:30).

Due to current policy restrictions, mainland graduates from Taiwanese universities are not allowed to remain in Taiwan for work. However, a majority of the students said they would not remain in Taiwan even if they were allowed. By finally adding that he knew the economy in Beijing is stronger, Mr. Z acknowledged that he decided to study in Taiwan knowing that he would not remain for future work, but simply enjoys the nature and clean environment.

## **Chapter 4: Group Analysis**

The group analysis section will take the findings of the qualitative interviews and establish connections to relevant, supporting literature and media stories. Through the analysis, we can apply students' responses to related models and theories such as Sussman's Cultural Identity Model (CIM), and several authors' application of models based on the Theory of Social Distance. It will compare the students' various responses, highlight important patterns that appeared throughout all the interviews, analyze the students' adaptability and place in local academia and society, and discuss their future plans and their impacts on society. The group analysis will cover the interviews of students in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan respectively.

One element that is paramount to the group analysis is the students' language ability and acquisition. Language ability refers to their self-perceived ability to function in the local language (Cantonese in the case of the SARs), and the academic language (English). Academic literature as well as common assumption suggests that language ability of foreign people is directly related to their adaptability to the new environment and their social interactions with the local population.

## Hong Kong Analysis

In Hong Kong, all students acknowledged that they were attracted to the universities in the territory by English-medium academic programs, and perceived Cantonese to be a barrier in adapting to the local environment and to establish social ties with the locals. Whether the students were proficient in Cantonese or not, they all stated that it was a challenge to them and their mainland classmates upon arriving. Unlike many sociological studies that analyze foreign students' experiences in an overseas setting, the mainland Chinese students in this study share the same race and traditional culture as the people in Hong Kong. Therefore, one of the major factors differentiating the two societies is the use of Cantonese and English and differing historical roots such as Hong Kong's colonial rule by Britain and the Cultural Revolution in mainland China. A unique element of Hong Kong education is that local and mainland students are both studying in a non-local language environment (in English) and are arguably equally disadvantaged and studying in a leveled out playing field more so than in a conventional overseas study abroad environment. In addition, Hong Kong students are also considered Chinese nationals along with their mainland classmates.

Although some Chinese students had excellent Cantonese and English abilities, the interview findings indicated that simply knowing the languages or majoring in translation would not warrant these students to adapt better or to establish better social relations with local people. It was rather their perception of their place in the school environment and their willingness to exert themselves to learn and use Cantonese in a social context, not simply a professional one. The students that mentioned participation in extracurricular activities tended to have more local and international friends as well as an

overall more satisfying experience in Hong Kong. Analysis by Postiglione and Lee of social distance among social groups in Hong Kong using Schumann's social distance model (Schumann 1976) displays several findings pertaining to language acquisition and social distance (Postiglione and Lee 1998):

1. Dominance - unequal power structure.
2. Integration - social distance between the language learning group and the target group will be increased without intention of acculturation, assimilation, or integration.
3. Enclosure- without common activities, clubs and associations, social distance will increase.
4. Cohesion- the more internally cohesive the language learning group the greater the social distance.
5. Size - the larger the language learning group, the greater social distance.
6. Congruence - the more similar the culture of the two groups, the less social distance.
7. Attitudes - negative attitudes lead to greater distance.
8. Residence – the less time the learning group stays in the target area, the greater the distance

In the context of this study, the “learning group” would be the mainland students in Hong Kong, and the “target group” would be their local counterparts. Particularly the points of integration, enclosure, cohesion, size and attitudes explain the significant social distance between these two groups, and why students excelling in languages experienced social exclusion from the local population. Although the point of residence pertains

only temporally, one could argue that circumstances and location of residence also play a role. For example, students living in dorm facilities that only associate with their mainland roommates will tend to associate less with the local population.

Sociological studies show that local perception of foreign student's home country (or territory) lead to the factor of national status affecting student's adaptive ability. Richard Morris's study of foreign students in the United States suggests that students from countries which are generally less well known by American people were subject to naïve questions or unintentional insults, while students from Western European countries were idolized and gained positive reinforcement (Morris 1960). This may help explain reasons beyond the ones presented in the social distance model why students like Ms. Joyce and Ms. Charlene had difficulty making local friends and had relatively negative experiences in school. When inquired about how she introduces herself in Hong Kong, Ms. Joyce explained:

“I say I'm from Xi'an (西安), but most Hong Kong people don't know anything about Xi'an. I know many foreigners know Xi'an. But Hong Kongers only know about cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and maybe Guangzhou because it is near Hong Kong” (Ms. Joyce part 2, 19:00).

Ms. Charlene also responded to the same question in a similar way by saying:

“I would say I'm from Hebei province. But many people here are not familiar with Hebei at all. So most of the time I end up saying I'm from 'around Beijing' in order for them to understand” (Ms. Charlene part 2, 12:55). Although a seemingly trivial question, it reveals that they feel that

local Hong Kong people have little knowledge or recognition of their hometowns. Even Ms. Xi who was possibly the most positively adaptive student, introduced herself as being from Beijing rather than actually being from a small ethnic minority village in Hunan. She justified this by saying her undergraduate university was in Beijing, so she therefore identifies with Beijing. Without directly indicating so, she may also be prompted to say Beijing, as it is a more familiar city to Hong Kongers. In this case, the concept of locational status (what Morris called national status) is a factor to adaptation as well as identity development.

Literature based on a similar study surveying 1,146 foreign students' adaptability in a Canadian university concluded that "one of the most important elements in successful adaptation is skill with the language in the host society." (Fletcher and Stren 1989). The case of Hong Kong is slightly more complicated given that English is the language used in schools and determines their academic success, while Cantonese, although sharing a writing system with Mandarin, is an unintelligible dialect that is necessary to function on all levels of Hong Kong society. That is not without saying that Mandarin is becoming a language of ever increasing importance to Hong Kong and its local education system. Many changes in Hong Kong's primary and secondary education curricula to further incorporate Mandarin courses were instigated within Hong Kong's own education bureau before the 1997 handover (Adamson and Lai 1997). Authors such as Law speak of a decolonization and sinofication process of Hong Kong higher education in the 1980's and 1990's in which staff and administration positions in Hong Kong universities were filled by ethnic Chinese, many of which were Mandarin-speaking. This was mostly done due to the Hong Kong education

bureau's preparation of future exchange with the newly opened PRC, in which Mandarin would be more necessary (Law 1997). Mainland students generally acknowledged that Mandarin had become a secondary language in Hong Kong, particularly since the handover, which may decrease incentives to learn Cantonese. However, English is an international language and the language that would determine their ability to study and work in Hong Kong and abroad and is therefore of high importance to them. Therefore, they may be more motivated to overcome the barrier of English in order to excel in school and their careers.

Analysis of Hong Kong people's perception of mainland China is not a part of this study. However, it is important to clarify possible reasons why Hong Kong society has a general negative perception of mainland people. Research suggests that Hong Kong media has acted as a dominant force in creating an image of mainland Chinese people within Hong Kong society over the past 40 years. According to Mathews, Ma, and Lui (2008), decades of local Hong Kong media have built a strong sense of local identity and a weak national identity in Hong Kong despite post-handover efforts by the SAR government to re-sinofy Hong Kong society. They also drew a comparison of Hong Kong TV programming in the 1970's and 80's to more recent programming, showing evidence of a shift in depictions of mainland Chinese. Mainland characters were originally depicted as “ignorant of social norms”, “uncivilized”, “lazy”, “lawless”, and “uneducated”, resulting in the new immigrants being nicknamed “Ah Chans” after a pathetic mainland Chinese TV character that encompassed all mainland stereotypes. By the 1990's, mockery of mainland characters had significantly diminished and stories of mainlanders success in Hong Kong became more prevalent

(Mathews, Ma, Lui 2008). The authors believe such shifts were due to Hong Kong media companies' increasing market shares in mainland China which influenced the content of their programming. However, media projecting mainlanders in a negative way clearly had an influence on public opinion. A 1982 survey showed that 72% of locals believed that new immigrants were competing for local jobs, 40% believed that they were responsible for violent crimes, and 24% believed that they were responsible for a burden on government public services (CUHK 1982). Such evidence gives reason to believe that generations who grew up viewing such images in the media continue to hold similar viewpoints. Although media representation may have changed, and more Hong Kong movie stars produce films together with mainland actors or located in mainland China, younger audiences are still equally influenced by the mass media. (Ma 2008) A 2003 survey of Hong Kong university students shows that their attitudes towards the Chinese nation are more influenced by the media than their schools (Fairbrother 2003). There were rather mixed responses from the students in regard to their experiences with the local people's attitudes to them. However, differences in adaptability seem to be the main factor that corresponded with their response.

Such negative attitudes manifest within media stories that reflects negative opinions of mainlanders, and more recently even toward mainland students in Hong Kong. In mid-2013, media sources reported that Hong Kong university students starting a movement called “anti-mainlandization of Hong Kong universities”. The movement was mainly against mainland students taking local job opportunities and public medical services that the students were entitled to while residing in Hong Kong (Global Times 2013).

Even non-local media outlets such as Singapore's Straits Times reported about the movement and anti-mainland sentiment, and it noted that though local Hong Kong students had better chances at being accepted than non-local students despite high competition, the high caliber of mainland students intensified the competitive sentiment from the local students (Straits times 2013).

Comments from the students shed light on their reception to the negative public opinions of mainland China. For example, Ms. Charlene has felt discriminated against by the language she used, when making a phone call. She explained: "I made phone calls using Mandarin when I was moving into my apartment, and I received negative feedback from the people answering my calls would refuse to respond in Mandarin and persistently spoke Cantonese. And their attitude was very bad." (Ms. Charlene part 2, 08:47).

However, Ms. Charlene seems to hold less than positive attitudes toward mainland China and the political environment there and called the country a "one party dictatorship". Ms. Xi's comment "Being communist and being Chinese are not the same thing" shows she shares a similar viewpoint with Hong Kong people by separating her Chinese identity from China's communist political environment. Mr. Jerry also made similar comments about how his Chinese cultural identity is independent from the mainland political arena which he seems to strongly oppose. Mr. Jerry even explained how this issue of social responsibility among schools in Hong Kong affected his decision-making process.

He explained: "Before I came to Hong Kong I got an offer from HKU and HKST, and Beijing University. Because all three of them gave me an offer

for engineering, but the engineering in Beijing University is not very good. Not as much as Tsinghua university, but I don't really like that school because they borrow the ideas of the communist party very much. But between HKU and HKST, I believe the engineering program in HKST is better, but I opted for HKU because I did not want to only learn about engineering every day. I feel HKST emphasizes more on academic achievement, but HKU emphasizes more on social responsibility for Hong Kong and even for China. For example, Occupy Central started from HKU. So, they care more about social issues.”(Mr. Jerry part 1, 18:30).

These students' opinions show that they would like to disassociate themselves with mainland China's sociopolitical environment, but maintain a Chinese cultural identity as most people in Hong Kong do. A Hong Kong government survey of local residents found that while 73% of people felt “proud to be Chinese”, 72% felt “some affairs happening in China make me feel ashamed” (Connolly 2005). These shared feelings and viewpoints of cultural identity among the mainland students may also be an element of attraction to Hong Kong as an alternative Chinese society that is conveyed by Hong Kong media outlets. These students share similar characteristics of their value system with Hong Kong people, and therefore initiate a process of self-selection in which they chose the school that was right for them.

All four of the ethnic minority students were of ethnic groups that primarily use Mandarin as their main language, and are therefore at no linguistic disadvantage as non-Mandarin speaking minorities (Lee 2001). Their physical features and appearance are not different insofar as they would stand out in mainland China or in Hong Kong. Despite Ms. An's ethnic minority group being a predominantly Muslim group, she appeared to be

dressed in modern clothing with no significant variance from most females of the same age group in Hong Kong. She did not wear any head covering or “hijab” symbolizing Islamic faith among females. There was no particularly significant factors that set them apart from the Han students other than the question of changing nationality which was mentioned earlier. However, there is reason to believe that the locational status factor would be a factor affecting their acceptance even within certain regions of the PRC. Given the fact that all of them expressed high interest in working and even immigrating overseas, this may give reason to believe that they have higher perceived benefit in going to multiethnic, immigrant countries such as the United States. Even the fact that this study has such a high turnout of ethnic minorities shows that Hong Kong was at least an attractive option to them prior to relocating. Perhaps their ethnic minority status and the connotations associated with them are not present in Hong Kong as they would be in a mainland Chinese context. The methodology of this study was not designed to analyze questions on this intriguing matter. I suggest that researchers conducting studies in mainland China on ethnic minority students ought to base on their attractiveness to studying or immigrating to the SARs or foreign countries.

Sussman's CIM is a useful model in measuring the adaptability and status of foreign student's cultural identities. The foundation of model is to measure to what degree a person has developed a new cultural self and aligned their values with the values of the host society. Sussman's study is a more temporally involved study that follows respondents up until a time of repatriation, which the author believes to be the time when cultural identity changes are more apparent, and overwhelmingly result in negative responses.

However, due to the limitations of this study, students will only be analyzed based on their changes to their perception shared during the interviews.

The CIM proposes that 4 distinct types of identity shifts may occur upon repatriation (Sussman 2011)

(Table 2)

Sussman's Cultural Identity Model (CIM)	
1. Subtractive Identity shift	(High flexibility to new culture, high distress upon return) Subtractive returnees will respond by seeking out other returnees with similar values in home country. They will also continue to seek opportunities to interact with members of the host culture.
2. Additive Identity shift	(Low-Med flexibility, limited distress upon return) May continue to seek out aspects of the host culture in the form of food or language study.
3. Affirmative Identity shift	(Home culture is maintained and strengthened throughout the transition cycle, results in low adaptation) In most cases repatriation for these returnees will be a welcomed relief.
4. Intercultural or Global Identity shift	(Less common, Able to hold multiple cultural scripts simultaneously.) There is low cultural centrality and high flexibility resulting in high adaptation. In some cases repatriates define themselves as world citizens and are able to act appropriately and effectively in many countries or regions by switching cultural frames as needed.

Source: Sussman 2011 P.73-78.

Students such as Mr. Jerry and Ms. Xi show many features of a “subtractive identity” as well as a “global identity”. They both showed extensive efforts

to adapt to Hong Kong society, were active in extracurricular activities, and built a solid social network with the Hong Kong locals. Depending on whom they interacted with, their social interactions with friends involve switching languages and context of conversation. During their interviews, Mr. Jerry insisted on speaking to the researcher in English, while Ms. Xi spoke in Mandarin and would periodically switch to English. They both inquired about the United States after the interviews were over, showing their cultural awareness of and interest in western countries. They both acknowledged that they would have difficulties in readjusting to their hometowns if they were to return, as they have become accustomed to the political freedoms and world-class connectivity that Hong Kong offers. They both had high aspirations to travel and possibly work abroad in the future. Interestingly, Mr. Jerry and Ms. Xi had the highest levels of satisfaction among all the students in Hong Kong.

Most of the students such as Ms. Meng, Ms. Yu, Ms. An, and to a lesser extent Ms. Charlene and Ms. Jessie fell into the category of “additive identity” as they did not entirely become integrated in Hong Kong society and retained a high amount of attachment to their hometowns and more frequently associated with other mainland students. Their Cantonese abilities and satisfaction with the education in Hong Kong differed from each other slightly, but they all had a shared interest in using English and befriending other foreign students, which was one of the initial factors that made Hong Kong appealing. Even Ms. Charlene and Ms. Jessie who were less satisfied and often felt that they were not welcomed by the local students still expressed future interest in traveling or relocating to foreign countries.

Ms. Joyce and Ms. Bai fell into the “affirmative identity” category. They not only had negative experiences in school, but had continuous hostile feelings toward the Hong Kong students and residents, had only mainland Chinese friends, and also expressed little interest in going abroad as a result of their experience in Hong Kong. Surprisingly they both said they planned to remain in Hong Kong for the foreseeable future to work. They claimed they would have little difficulty readjusting to their hometowns and would only miss Hong Kong's large variety of products. As mentioned earlier, although their majors are translation and education respectively, they both seem to use their exceptional language ability only to acquire jobs, and mostly surrounded themselves with their mainland friends. This therefore resulted in being closed off to the rest of society and any opportunities to local networking in Hong Kong. Both Ms. Joyce and Ms. Bai claimed to have prior knowledge of Hong Kong society before relocating, and may have had preemptive intentions to avoid local Hong Kong people before ever arriving. Although Ms. Jessie and Ms. Charlene had less than positive experiences, they both claimed they were attracted to Hong Kong by high curiosity with an open-minded attitude, which resulted in them eventually establishing some friendships.

(Table 3)

CIM analysis results	
1. Subtractive Identity and Global Identity	Mr. Jerry, Ms. Xi
2. Additive Identity shift	Ms. Meng, Ms. Yu, Ms. An. To a lesser extent, Ms. Charlene and Ms. Jessie
3. Affirmative Identity shift	Ms. Joyce, Ms. Bai

Other explanations for why some students in Hong Kong experienced distress throughout their adaptation process is mentioned in Brown's research on an optimal distance model for second language acquisition (Brown 1980). Brown makes note of several stages of acculturation that language learners go through when in new environments: 1. excitement and euphoria; 2. culture shock; 3. acculturation; 4. assimilation or adaptation. The second of the stages is "culture shock" in which learners have feelings of estrangement, hostility, frustration, loneliness, etc. Ms. Joyce's comments perfectly match this description and support Brown's findings. She explained her feelings of isolation by saying:

"It's not that I can't speak (Cantonese), I can...but the culture is different.... The language is one part of the culture....Because of this, the feeling of culture shock is constantly present." (Ms. Joyce part 2, 13:00)

Ms. Joyce's training in school primarily focused on perfecting her Cantonese and English skills, and struggling to keep pace with native speakers and adapt to a new environment caused feelings of distress and isolation, which she explained in great detail. Other students who were not as engaged in language studies may have not exposed themselves to such challenging situations that it entailed, and therefore experienced less culture shock. It is also possible that some of the students who did not explain such distress have not experienced it because they have yet to endeavor on any Cantonese study and were still in the first stage of the acculturation process. Ms. Joyce and Ms. Bai's language abilities are exceptionally high, and although they have experienced more difficulty in adapting, we may also explain this difficulty and isolation by saying they were deeper into the process of acculturation and language acquisition than some of the others. In fact,

Brown claims in his model that culture shock may even be a necessary process in complete second language acquisition. However, whether this stage be a necessary step to a process of acculturation or not, some students have developed a series of new perceptions and opinions about Hong Kong society and people while exposed to such social distance.

### **Macau Analysis**

All the Macau students interviewed were attracted to Macau by the English-medium university curriculum as well as by the perceived higher quality of tertiary education that in the mainland. The students consistently mentioned the school also offered a way out of the mainland “gaokao” exam and relatively low entry requirements. The two main barriers to entry were the higher tuition and living costs and the Cantonese language which made adapting to the local environment more challenging. However, the students in Macau found that their local Macau classmates were relatively friendly and hospitable, and few of them found the need to learn Cantonese.

The structure of the mainland student community in Macau takes a very different form from that of Hong Kong in the sense that it is somehow divided. Aside from the conventional mainland students, there are a large group of mainland-born local students who hold their identity somewhere in between Macau and mainland China. No university statistics are available to show the number of mainland-born local students enrolled at Macau's universities. However, based on University of Macau's teacher's comments and considering that 2 of the 6 students interviewed fell into that category, there is reason to believe they are substantial in number. Interview results

also showed that the mainland-born locals had very different levels of adaptability and social networks than the other mainland students.

Macau has historically had a different relationship with mainland China than Hong Kong. This is primarily due to generations of being disillusioned with Portuguese rule, and certain citizens' groups having political connections within the PRC following protests in Macau in the 1960's (Clayton 2009). Therefore, there is far less negative sentiment toward mainland Chinese in Macau than in Hong Kong. Macau's economy is arguably more dependent on mainland China than Hong Kong's. As a result, a much higher percentage of Macau's professionals and service sector workers speak Mandarin proficiently. When asked if they felt welcomed by Macau residents, most of the students said that there are two groups of residents, some welcomed them, and some did not. Furthermore, the university's dormitory facilities primarily serve mainland and foreign students, therefore limiting interaction between the mainland students and the local Macau students. Given Macau's size and the large scale of mainland students at the university, all living together, it is safe to say they have developed their own enclave within Macau and will adapt less than the mainland-born local students.

In terms of social distance, the students in Macau have more to overcome in some ways than students in Hong Kong despite a more welcoming environment. Most of the students mentioned little adaptation to the local culture, which shows limited integration. There is also high enclosure and cohesion due the large size of the mainland student community all living on campus and strongly tied to one another. Most of the factors that Schumann, Postiglione and Lee mentioned clearly manifested in the Macau case. Although local attitudes seem to be generally positive, the students do not

display an enthusiastic attitude toward learning Cantonese, changing habits to suit the local environment or exploring Macau's cultural heritage. The following circumstances are not advantageous to their study of English, which was a major factor of attraction. According to research on language acquisition and migration by Esser, language acquisition upon migration is an intentional investment dependent on four factors: motivation, access, efficiency and cost of this investment. More importantly, the other factors at play that Esser (2006) mentioned are “media contact with the society of origin (mainland China) and linguistic, spacial and social distances.” (ibid: pg97).<sup>10</sup> All of the students noted they were in contact with people in the mainland daily and continue to be connected to the mainland via the internet. Frequent travel and ease of accessibility to Zhuhai make spacial dimensions trivial and low integration with the local students widen social distance. These students mostly seem to treat their college and social experience as if it were part of their experience in mainland China, however located within an enclosed, cohesive enclave within Macau.

According to Ms. Demi and Ms. Rain. The mainland-born local students do not usually live on campus. They usually live in the property their family purchased in Macau and are considered local students by the university. Ms. Rain, who has resided in Macau showed a higher adaptation than Ms. Demi who had only lived in Macau for several months. However, they both wanted to adapt to the local society by learning Cantonese, English and even Portuguese in the case of Ms. Rain more than their mainland classmates. Their physical appearance and choice of fashion were also noticeably

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<sup>10</sup> Esser, Hartmut. (2006) *Migration, Language and Integration*. University of Mannheim WZB publishing.

different from the other mainland students in Macau. However, possibly the most significant difference in their responses from the other mainland students was that they stated that they initially were “concerned” or “having second thoughts” about going to Macau, as it was not entirely their decision, but rather their parents'. This therefore implies that they had a different set of expectations upon arriving. Interview results show that they ranked a higher satisfaction score and had more positive comments about their experience than their undergraduate classmates Mr. David, Ms. Sha and Mr. Han. Their higher level of adaptability and relatively low initial expectations seems to translate into a higher level of satisfaction with education in Macau. Their level of satisfaction, effort and enthusiasm to improve their language skills and ability to establish a larger local social network run parallel with research done by Mickle and Chan (1986) on study abroad students from Hong Kong in a university in Canada. Mickle and Chan's research results show that students' adaptation positively correlates with the number of Canadian friends they made during their stay. (Mickle and Chan 1986)

Given the two groups of mainland students' circumstances, the mainland-born local students have more opportunities to establish a local social network as well as be able to shift identities to match different social situations they are in, whether they are interacting with mainland Chinese or Macau residents. Since they have already officially immigrated, it was more likely for them to consider employment in Macau. However, to the extent that mainland students in Macau do not adapt to the local society and improve their English skills to be fully functional overseas, they will be unable to use Macau as a springboard and acquire mobility to foreign countries. There is evidence to suggest that both mainland-born and Macau-

born students have a positive attitude toward learning English and English-medium education. Apart from all students in the interview saying they were attracted by University of Macau's all-English curricula, a 2006 survey of 341 undergraduate students in Macau reveals that both groups (mainland-born and Macau-born) of students were highly motivated to learn English and attached great importance to it. The survey's findings further indicate that the students did not believe that studying English threatens their Chinese identity in any way (Yee and Young 2006).

Although the mainland-born local students were able to immigrate to Macau due to affluence and not academic ability, they clearly had lower relative social distance with Macau people than the other mainland students. Much of this difference in social distance came from differing circumstances in residential arrangements and attitudes toward the local society. Although the first factor listed in Schumann's model, dominance was seen as a relatively less significant factor in Hong Kong, in the case of the mainland-born local students in Macau, it may influence attitudes. As these students now hold Macau permanent residence cards and passports, they may feel entitled to the same benefits enjoyed by local people and therefore have a sense of a more equal power relationship. This is an individual example of dominance, while there is also a factor of structural dominance as local Macau people may feel less autonomous and more part of the Chinese nation, hence less of a reason to look down on mainlanders. In the case of the attitude factor, their attitude is significantly different from the other students as they feel greater necessity to integrate with the local community and result in lower cohesion. In the case of Ms. Rain, high familiarity with the Cantonese language boosted her local social network immensely. It may be important to note that

as this demographic becomes more prominent in Macau; they may start to form an entirely new enclave of their own which may be a force stratifying them from the mainland study abroad students and Macau-born locals. In time, this could lead to a major social change in Macau, let alone the education system as a significant percentage of Macau's population will be born in mainland China.

When applying Sussman's CIM to the Macau group, there is a clear division between the mainland-born locals and the conventional mainland students. Ms. Rain and to a lesser extent Ms. Demi would fall into the “intercultural (not necessarily global) identity” category. They had both local and mainland groups of friends and were developing their foreign language abilities. As they grow older and progress with their careers in Macau, they will become more attached to their local community but still maintain contact with their origins in the mainland as well as remain mobile between the territories due to close geographic proximity.

Mr. David, Ms. Sha and Mr. Han mostly fall into the “additive identity” category. Due to the lack of a one year visa extension following graduation, job prospects are limited, and Macau's job market is mostly confined to the gaming and hospitality industries. Given his major and aspirations to work in Macau, Mr. David is the only one who may find employment in Macau. Ms. Sha and Mr. Han seem to have plans to enter post-graduate programs overseas. Despite their interest in further education outside the greater China area, they both directly clarified it was “not inspired by their experience in Macau”. Due to the large social circle of Mandarin-speaking students surrounding them, it does not appear that studying in Macau gave them an

international college experience other than the English-medium curricula of the school.

Mr. Ian, the only post-graduate student in the group seems to fall more into the “subtractive identity” category. He was more satisfied than the other students and claimed that he would have some trouble readjusting to his hometown if he were to return. He was interested in pursuing his PhD at an American or Canadian university, but also in visiting Portugal due to exposure to Portuguese colonial architecture and culture during his time in Macau. Despite his attitude in wanting to embrace the local society, Mr. Ian also had trouble making many local friends and only had one foreign friend. He claimed the main reason for this was that all his roommates were mainland students, and the local students all left campus after classes were over.

Many of the mainland students' issues adapting and forming non-mainland social networks seem to be circumstantial or on an institutional level. Mastery of the Cantonese language seems to be less of an issue in Macau given local attitudes toward the mainland, Mandarin proficiency among local people, and the scale of mainland Chinese in Macau. Rather, because mainland students are largely isolated from the local community, they may see little necessity to adapt, or may feel that Macau society and its people are on a track to adapt to the mainland. On the other hand, mainland-born local students are sent by their parents and put in unfamiliar social situations, often entailing a language difference. Universities in Macau should consider providing supplementary Cantonese or Portuguese language classes to assist in introducing local culture to the mainland students. This would also

differentiate Macau's education industry from Hong Kong's and create new appeal to the mainland Chinese students.

### **Taiwan Analysis**

The mainland students interviewed in Taiwan were undoubtedly high-performing students who graduated from top-ranking undergraduate schools in the mainland. However, the factors that attracted them to Taiwan were quite different from the advantages offered in Hong Kong and Macau. There is no evidence that suggests the students came to Taiwan hoping for an international program. Although some of them had decent English skills, English-medium programs were not primary to their decision-making. All students expressed that their choice of major and how it related to Taiwan was a much more significant factor that attracted them to Taiwan, and more specifically to NCCU. Provided that all were post-graduate students, and several had prior work experience, having a major suited to their ideal profession was of high importance. Half of the students were majoring in journalism as well as television and broadcasting programs, which were among the most reputable programs at NCCU. One of the students in the journalism department effectively summarized her reason for enrolling at NCCU by saying: “ZhengDa (NCCU)'s journalism department is especially good...probably the best in Taiwan. I also studied that in my undergraduate, so I just wanted to be able to change my environment and learn about cross-strait issues through a journalism program. I think studying journalism in a different environment will help me have a better perspective in the future.” (Ms. Yi part 1 02:00)

Ms. Yuki majored in Taiwanese literature, which therefore makes a Taiwanese university specializing in social sciences like NCCU a good match. While the other two students claimed to choose Taiwan because the schools' entry criteria fit their circumstances well, they also seemed to have a positive perception of Taiwan prior to arrival. All students unanimously agreed that Taiwan's nature, environment and cultural atmosphere were major factors that attracted them. Beyond several of the students majoring in media-related subjects such as journalism, television and broadcasting, Taiwanese media clearly played a role in shaping their perceptions of Taiwan prior to arrival.

One unanticipated, yet very noteworthy finding that is related to positive perceptions of Taiwanese media and how it lead to familiarity with Taiwanese society and its people was the students' perceptions of males and females of the same age. One of the descriptions that applied to both males and females was “gentle” and “talks in a soft voice”. Given the students' comments about following Taiwanese media, this implies that the mainland students acquired an impression of Taiwanese males and females through such media outlets, and therefore built up a sense of familiarity with Taiwanese ways of talking and accents. A study done by a group of researchers from Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TOSEL) indicated that surveyed students from certain countries in SE Asia and the Americas had a preference for General American (GA) English over British, Australian or New Zealand accents due to American global media dominance. (TOSEL 2006) Another study on accents conducted by an Austrian researcher Dalton-Puffer revealed the presence of accent stereotypes among Austrian students of English. When students were asked

to survey recorded accents of both non-native and native speakers of English, a majority of students preferred the Received Pronunciation (RP) (British English), and associated it with being educated, organized and courteous. Students from the same group who had previously traveled to the United States preferred GA and showed that familiarity with an accent can influence opinions (Dalton-Puffer 1997). Comparing the TOSEL researchers' and Dalton-Puffer's findings with the comments of the mainland students in Taiwan, one may infer that their familiarity with Taiwanese accents and ways of talking via media outlets impacted their attitudes toward Taiwanese people positively. Although the two studies focused on non-native speakers' perceptions of English accents, and the mainland students and their Taiwanese classmates are native speakers of the same language, the fundamental points of awareness and familiarity remain significant. One student, Ms. D even claimed she has changed her way of talking slightly after arriving in Taiwan to have a more Taiwanese style. In addition, the only negative comments the students made in regard to communication were the feelings of being mildly excluded due to Taiwanese students' usage of Taiwanese (Hokkien), an unintelligible dialect from Mandarin.

Studies like Verkuyten and Kinket's ethnic-based social distance among Dutch elementary school students reveal the presence of ethnic hierarchies and preferences. The study tested the interactions and tendencies of several groups of young students in various social contexts to find the most significant factors that lead to social distance and segregation of ethnic groups. They found that familiarity with the groups lead to less social distance (Verkuyten and Kinket 2000). Although there was no mention of any language barrier in the study, its results suggest that a higher level of

familiarity with a specific group may lower the amount of perceived social distance among the mainland students in Taiwan. The study also indicated that interactions between groups were not only determined by individual characteristics, but by social contexts. This indicates that student' personal backgrounds along with the social context, or circumstances in Taiwan and the university helped to shape these students' positive social experiences.

All of the female students in Taiwan seems to have relatively similar levels of adaptability and opinions of Taiwanese society. Although the sample size of only two male students was too small to conduct a comparative analysis, the two male students were the only ones in the group who noted they had foreign, or non-Chinese friends. Both the male students, Mr. Yang and Mr. Z both indicated that they were active members of international social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Mr. Yang referenced an interest in “backpacking in Europe”, which is an activity not well known in mainland China. He was also the only student in the Taiwan group that initiated conversation in English with the researcher. They both showed signs of being rather adventurous and willing to try new things. For example, Mr. Z said after graduation he would like to try “traveling around South Africa to see the nature”. The male students seemed to have comparably positive attitudes toward the Taiwanese students with their female counterparts. If Sussman's CIM were to be applied at all within the group in Taiwan, it would show the two male students leaning slightly more toward an area between the “global identity” and the “subtractive identity” categories, while the female students were all in the “subtractive identity” category. This is justified by their high degree of adaptation to the environment in the school and Taiwanese society in general. However, none

of the mainland students indicated any factors that could contribute to a high level of distress upon return to the mainland, but they did note an interest in future travel abroad. Several students' comments implied that upon returning to mainland China for employment, they would seek out jobs in large cities even if it is located far from their hometown.

As the Taiwan mainland students' post-graduate programs do not encompass language learning or potential of future employment in Taiwan, the structure of their motivating factors are believed to be different. The element of local language difference was deemed as negligible as a barrier to accessing institutions in Taiwan, and lack of any possibility of remaining in Taiwan after graduation reduces perceived competition with local students. Given such circumstances in Taiwan, mainland students in search for a career-oriented education, and an enhanced English language ability will not be attracted to Taiwan, while the ones determined to study in Taiwan will be driven by personal interest which is based on positive perceptions prior to enrolling and suitable entry requirements.

## **Chapter 5: Comparative Analysis**

### **Sample Comparison**

Despite the student sample having some fundamental differences in size, age, gender distribution, and variety of home institutions, the group analysis of students in Hong Kong and Macau had some noticeable differences. The main differences in the student samples are:

(Table 4)

	Hong Kong	Macau
1. Average Age	21.9	19.8
2. Satisfaction level	4.1 of 5	3.66 of 5
3. Average time resided	1.54 years	1.65 years
4. Gender distribution	1 Male, 8 Female	3 Male, 3 Female
5. Ethnicity	5 Han, 4 Minority	6 Han, 0 Minority
6. Provinces represented	Tianjin, Liaoning/Hainan, Zhejiang(2), Shaanxi, Hebei, Hunan, Beijing, Hunan	Chongqing, Anhui, Hainan, Hunan, Fujian, Beijing

A major point of significant difference that can be seen above is that the group in Hong Kong contained a large percentage of ethnic minorities, while the Macau group did not. Also, the gender distribution in Hong Kong was significantly favoring females for reasons stated earlier. The group in Macau was also comprised of far younger students, containing only 1 post-graduate student, while more than half of the Hong Kong group were either post-graduate or recent graduates working in Hong Kong. Please refer to Figure 3 for an outlined comparison and breakdown by individual student.

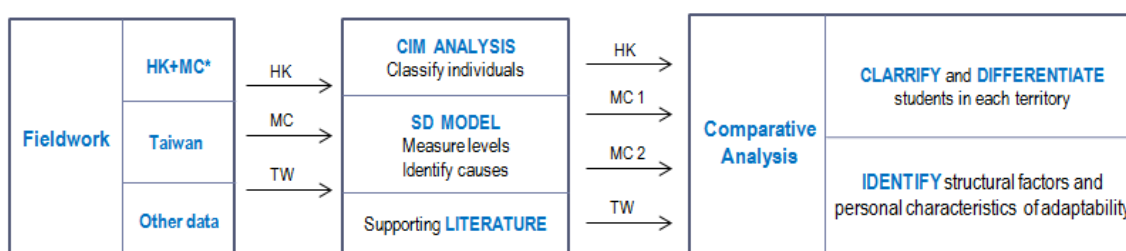
Judging from the impression that each student gave along with personal information they supplied about their background including undergraduate university, scholarships, awards, etc., one can assume that the academic standard of the mainland students in Hong Kong is noticeably higher than those in Macau. Most of the mainland students in Hong Kong mentioned previous work experience, and scholarships. In the case of the post-graduate students, they attended prestigious institutions in the mainland. Several of the students in Hong Kong noted that they refused offers from prestigious universities in the mainland and opted for Hong Kong instead, while most of the students in Macau saw no other comparable alternatives other than the University of Macau. More than half of the students in Hong Kong displayed knowledge of English and in some cases Cantonese during the interview and their time with the researcher. Some mixed English words while speaking Chinese during conversations, and initiated conversation in English before or after the interview. In contrast, 5 out of the 6 students in Macau noted they were attracted to their university due to the exemption of the “gaokao” exams. Several also specifically said their grades were not high enough to get into a Hong Kong university, and opted for Macau as it was less

competitive. Based on these differences in academic ability as well as expectations of their respective institution, it is difficult to categorize the students in Macau together with the students in Hong Kong as part of the same elite group of students.

### Comparative Analysis

In order to have a secondary reference point to contrast the fundamental similarities and differences in experience and perception of mainland students studying in the SARs, this section will bring in data collected from interviews in Taiwan. After comparing the results from Hong Kong and Macau with the findings from Taiwan, a more solid analysis can be conducted, hopefully providing a clearer method for defining these groups of mainland students and highlight their individual characteristics that lead them to their school and study location of choice and determine their adaptability. By comparing the institutional differences in the education systems and social circumstances specific to each territory, we can identify structural factors that resulted in social distance on a group level. The framework for the analysis that would lead us to the conclusion is represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Analysis Framework



**Note:** Other data - information collected on school websites, government websites, and information provided by teachers and staff.

CIM – Cultural Identity Model developed by Sussman.

SD Model – Social Distance Model created by Postiglione and Lee based on Schumann's theory. Supporting Literature refers to other literature cited in the group analysis section.

MC 1- Mainland students in Macau.

MC 2- Mainland-born local students that are now permanent residents in Macau.

On an educational level, Taiwanese universities differ greatly from the SARs in the sense that they are not English-medium schools and generally do not market themselves as such. However, several of the schools in Taiwan are perceived to be of higher quality than most schools in mainland China.

Similar to their classmates in Hong Kong, many mainland students in NCCU opted for a post-graduate degree in Taiwan over studying at a prestigious school in the mainland or maintaining their job at a large Chinese company.

All the mainland students had a positive perception of Taiwanese education prior to enrolling. The students in Taiwan ranked higher (4.08 of 5) than students in Macau (3.66 of 5) but not quite as high as Hong Kong (4.1 of 5).

With the absence of English language programs or international faculty, Taiwan has significantly different appeal to mainland Chinese students as the schools market themselves to a different demographic of student.

Differing degrees of familiarity with the respective territories was a significant factor to the perception as well as adaptation of all the students.

Many of the students in Hong Kong mentioned having feelings of curiosity and relocated with limited knowledge of Hong Kong society. However the few students that claimed to have prior knowledge of Hong Kong seemed to mostly be aware of the negative aspects of society and eventually had rather negative experiences. The students in Taiwan all claimed to have knowledge of Taiwan and its people via widespread Taiwanese media in mainland

China. The media that familiarized them with Taiwan seemed to take form of TV dramas, movies and variety shows, while the students in Hong Kong seemed to be exposed to Hong Kong news stations. One of the students in Hong Kong referenced being aware of Hong Kong's "Paparazzi culture". In the Taiwan analysis section, findings show that the student's exposure to Taiwanese media prior to relocation gave them a developed impression of Taiwanese people, and their ways of speaking (accents, slang, etc.) and resulted in high adaptation and better social networking than their SAR counterparts.

In the case of Macau, very few students had any impression of Macau other than casinos and the associated gambling culture. One student noted that the first thing that came to mind in regard to Macau was Hong Kong, as it has much in common. This lack of familiarity with Macau and lack of distinctiveness from Hong Kong in mainlanders' perception of Macau could be a result of a less well known education industry as well as Macau's localized, small-scale media outlets that do not have a regional following in south China and abroad as do Hong Kong's. Generally speaking, Macau's population mostly consumes Cantonese language media produced in Hong Kong, as well as Macau-born actors and actresses' tendency to relocate to Hong Kong to further their careers. For these reasons, Macau does not have global or even regional marketing abilities as Hong Kong or Taiwan have. Particularly in regard to education, most of the students in Macau had no conception of what education in Macau would be like, other than it being different from the mainland. Not including the mainland-born local students, the students in Macau all seemed to make a large part of their decision based on their social network of Macau friends or mainland friends in Macau. This

was a stark contrast from Hong Kong, in which all but one of the students did not have any acquaintances in Hong Kong prior to enrolling. Taiwan shared this same characteristic as Macau, in that most of the students had mainland friends already in Taiwan, or even more specifically NCCU itself. One student in Taiwan had actually already attended a short-term study abroad program in a Taiwanese university while in undergraduate school. Perhaps because the universities in Macau and Taiwan are not known as world-class, and do not have the same reputation, students base their decision-making more on social networks in order to validate their educational choices.

After analyzing the interview data in the group analysis section and clarifying the qualities of each group (including the mainland-born local students in Macau), we can compare the characteristics of these students vis-a-vis their structural features in their respective environments. Appendix 4 represents the characteristics chart showing the personal characteristics unique to each group of students, as well as showing attitudes of local students and residents in respective territories. When comparing this chart with the incentives to study in each territory shown in Appendix 2, it becomes quite clear why these students were attracted to their respective study location of choice. A top-ranking student with an excellent English ability, highly curious of foreign cultures, and a desire to work in an international environment would have no reason to enroll in Macau, as they can be in a better and more international school in Hong Kong, and would not choose Taiwan, as it does not offer international, western-style programs. The offerings of the schools in Macau and Hong Kong are relatively similar in structure in terms of English-medium programs and western style. Both

the groups attach importance to learning English and acquiring a western-style education, regardless of their language ability or academic standing. Nevertheless, the mainland students in Macau may not have been qualified to enroll in a Hong Kong school. Macau society is more open to mainlanders and Mandarin speakers, but this was not part of the students' initial perception of Macau.

The students in Taiwan did display academic ability on-par with their counterparts in Hong Kong. However, their lack of English ability and different set of interests in post-graduate programs set them apart from the mainland students in the SARs. Two students in Taiwan specifically said they did not consider Hong Kong because they did not like the crowded, fast-paced environment. The factor of appreciating an alternative Chinese society was present in both Taiwan and to an extent in Hong Kong. This seemingly applied to the most adaptable students throughout the study period, who were coincidentally in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Experience in an alternative Chinese society seemed to be at the core of what mainland students in Taiwan hoped to gain from their education, knowing there were no job prospects in Taiwan for them. Although it was also an incentive to the students in Hong Kong, there were additional motivators such as job opportunities, chances to acquire Hong Kong permanent residence, and chances to use Hong Kong as a springboard to international jobs and overseas migration. Similar factors were not present in Macau partially due to government restrictions, different economic circumstances in Macau and closer political ties with mainland China. Furthermore, none of the students mentioned appreciation of Macau's alternative Chinese society or heritage, due to low adaption, and lack of perceived displacement from the mainland.

It is therefore important to compare the differences in adaptability among the three groups.

### **Comparison in Adaptation**

The interview results show that the students in each territory adapted differently. The students were all asked to rate themselves on their self-perceived speed of adaptability, which resulted in all responses either being “fast” or “very fast”. However, there were clear discrepancies between the information the students provided regarding their experiences and how they adapted to their new environments. One fact stands out from all groups, and confirmed by previous research, is that those who had a higher degree of adaptability had an overall more satisfying experience. The correlation of the adaptability of each group and individual with satisfaction levels prove this point to be valid. On a group level, the students in Hong Kong were far more adaptive than the students in Macau. As explained earlier, this was caused by both individual as well as structural circumstances. Some of the most high-performing students in Hong Kong fell under the category of “global identity” in terms of the CIM, while most others in the “additive identity” category. Some different structural reasons include a wider variety of schools in Hong Kong, most students went to Hong Kong not having any friends and were placed in accommodations with non-mainland students, the proportion of mainland students in Hong Kong is smaller, and they were in an environment less accommodating to Mandarin speakers than Macau, and one in which fluency in English is more necessary. The Hong Kong group's English ability as well as their daily use of the language is significantly higher, while the students in Macau not only have a self-proclaimed lower ability, but have less reason to use English as a language of daily

communication, which results in English being more of a literary language for their studies. The students in Hong Kong appear to have higher aspirations of future travel or migration overseas, and therefore put more stress on the importance of learning English. As explained earlier, Macau people have a more conformist tenancy toward the mainland and tend to be on friendlier sociopolitical terms with mainland China than Hong Kong people do. As a result, all of the mainland students reportedly had Macau friends, but mostly stuck in their own microcosm. Geographic linkages between Macau and Zhuhai make for easier access to mainland China which limits any feeling of isolation from the students' homeland. Hong Kong and to a greater extent Taiwan are more isolated geographically, and have more complicated sociopolitical landscapes vis-a-vis the PRC, which leaves more room for students to adapt as well as giving them feelings of greater displacement from the PRC.

All the students in Taiwan more or less fell into the same category of adaptability. One key difference that aided the adaptability of mainland students in Taiwan was the lack of language difference in society as well as in the classroom. The difference in use of traditional Chinese characters as well as Taiwanese-style words did not seem to make any significant difference. In fact, all students made note of differences in Taiwanese people's way of talking, however these patterns of speech seemed to be familiar to them due to Taiwanese media consumption and resulted positively in their adaptation. In contrast, there seems to be a higher level of expectation of students' English abilities in Hong Kong in order to be admitted to the schools and even to be employable. This therefore makes social networking in Hong Kong far more complicated than in Taiwan. In

Macau, none of the students except the mainland-born locals made any effort to learn Cantonese and seemed to socialize with their Macau classmates using Mandarin. Not only do local Macau students seem more accepting and affable to the mainland students, they seem to be the ones that feel they must adapt to the mainland, rather than the other way around.<sup>11</sup> Structural factors include not only mainland students being rather isolated from local Macau students outside of class, but Macau being even more reliant on mainland Chinese tourists than Hong Kong, which may make Macau people feel more of a need to be proficient in Mandarin in order to be economically successful.

On the one hand, mainland students in Hong Kong seem to be out-competing their Hong Kong classmates in all areas except English. On the other hand, in Taiwan there seems to be lower competition and tension between the local and mainland students in Taiwan given the absence of international, English-medium programs. Four of the nine students in Hong Kong used descriptions like “threatened by mainland students” to describe Hong Kong students' reception to them, while the students in Taiwan described Taiwanese students as non-threatening and “coy”. Lower competition may also be due to simply smaller numbers of mainland students in Taiwan compared to many of Hong Kong's universities' post-graduate departments being made up of mostly mainland students. For example, Chinese University of Hong Kong and City University's finance and economics departments are now made of up 99% and 80% mainland

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout the field work in Macau, the researcher found the staff in University of Macau and security staff all communicated in Mandarin rather than English. When asking local students for directions around campus, they also used Mandarin, giving one the impression that it is becoming a more Mandarin friendly environment.

students respectively (SCMP 2013). Two teachers from University of Macau claim that some of their post-graduate programs also had a mainland student majority. Due to policy differences, mainland students are entirely banned from working in Taiwan, and accessing local medical services which would limit any area of competition or public opposition. Open policy allowing mainlanders access to employment and medical services are at the core of Hong Kong anti-mainland student movements' complaints. Hong Kong's policy as well as the education system's more career-oriented design was geared toward preparing students, both local and non-local, for jobs in Hong Kong more so than Macau or Taiwan. Therefore, job market competition in Hong Kong is directly reflected in the competition for entry into Hong Kong universities as well as the overall atmosphere within the schools.

Although the interviews were not designed to inquire about the students' or their families' financial status, we have gathered that all students in all three territories must at least have the financial capability to sustain themselves throughout their study periods without working. All three territories in this study entirely prohibit mainland students from working while studying. In the case of Taiwan, mainlanders are excluded from the public healthcare system, any type of scholarships or assistance and are required by purchase private health insurance during their stay. (Taiwanese Ministry of Justice 2014) Therefore all of the students' adaptabilities in the host societies were not affected by this factor, as their financial status as full-time students was uniform. In other words, some students did not struggle to adapt while managing a part-time job in between their studies.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions**

In this study, the first hypothesis indicated that post-handover mainland students who were motivated to study in the SARs relocated out of choice due to a perception of superior western educational incentives and viewed SAR universities as a geographically close alternative to directly going to a western country but with, similarities in language and culture, and lower cost. The results show that this statement is mostly true. However, the analysis differentiates certain types of students in each territory by showing different cultural identities or identity shifts and levels of social distance. It also confirms that the mainland students in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are by no means a uniform group. The local structural circumstances differ insofar as these three territories instinctively attract different types of students.

The second hypothesis that, “the mainland students used the SARs as 'stepping stones' to the rest of the world while staying in a culturally familiar Chinese territory and maintaining their Chinese identity” is also true provided that the students adapted to the new society, through language acquisition and expanding social networks. For this reason, analyzing adaptation of each group was crucial to show what characteristics would affect students' adaptability.

Secondly, in using Sussman's CIM and the Social Distance model for language learners provided by Schumann, Postiglione and Lee, we are able to identify students' characteristics and factors in the host society that aid adaptability or increase social distance. (Appendix 4) The findings demonstrated the type of students Hong Kong attracts and how their experience with the schools and people changed their perceptions of the destination. It also identified the mainland students in Macau and the mainland-born local students as two distinct groups with very different circumstances and processes of acculturation. The students in Taiwan were found to have an entirely different set of interests and motivators than the students in the SARs, as they were not attracted by English-medium programs, or an international environment, but rather the alternative Chinese cultural environment that Taiwan offers.

In these three regions, each group of mainland students experienced different levels of adaptability and degrees of social distance with the populations. The students with the highest amounts of adaptability were the most satisfied. Levels of perceived social distance were high on a group level when the mainland student community were disengaged from the local community. The greater social distance of the mainland Chinese with the locals resulted in lower adaptability and less opportunity to take part in processes of localization such as learning Cantonese or English and making local friends. The adaptation matrix (Figure 2) shows individual and structural factors that affect individuals' adaptations. The information from the interviews and examples from supporting research suggest that the element that is gauging the relationship between adaptability, satisfaction and social distance on an individual level was the perception of the education system and society prior

to migration. Curiosity about the host territory and desires to pursue a higher level of academia outside mainland China were also positive forces at play. The adaptability process chart (Appendix 3) illustrates this process of adaptation and change of attitudes and perceptions which lead to either high adaptability and low social distance, or low adaptability and high social distance.

On a structural level, the government policies of the Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan as well as the recruitment methods of institutions of higher education dictated the forces of educational incentives and restrictions. Differences in the three societies from one another and from mainland China complicated the analysis of this study greatly, as it could be sometimes difficult to tell which factors were mutually exclusive from social structures, and which were caused by them. In summary, there appears to be several sociopolitical characteristics of each territory that shaped the students' experiences. Researchers that conducted their own studies on social distance concurred that social context is a contributing factor along with individual ones.

Hong Kong is a highly competitive environment that has the most to offer within the greater China region in higher education. English-medium programs on the undergraduate and post-graduate level, combined with an international atmosphere offers a good alternative to studying in a western country at a more affordable price and in a convenient location. The education curricula are generally career-oriented, and Hong Kong government policy allows students to remain in the territory to seek employment. Sociopolitical attitudes toward mainland China, and the dominance of the Cantonese language in Hong Kong make for more hurdles

to overcome for mainland students in Hong Kong and maintains wider social distance with the local population, making it particularly challenging for less adaptive students. However, students who choose Hong Kong have the greatest potential for adapting to the local culture, learning Cantonese and English and using their experience in Hong Kong as a springboard to foreign countries. Therefore, Hong Kong is the most challenging yet potentially has the most to offer academically.

Macau's education industry is still relatively small, though developing quickly, with one comprehensive university that plans to more than double its student body and increase its campus size by twenty times in the next one to two years. Mainland Chinese students already play a paramount role in Macau's education industry and will continue to be the largest demographic that it attracts. Macau offers mainland Chinese students English-medium courses but also a means of escaping mainland China's "gaokao" college exam. Although the atmosphere is less international than Hong Kong's, it has several similar characteristics as Hong Kong in terms of local culture, Cantonese language, and European heritage. Attitudes of the local community and students are generally accommodating toward mainlanders and they are more willing to use Mandarin than those in Hong Kong, and therefore mainland students are generally on good terms with their Macau classmates. However, the proportion of mainland students in Macau is quite high and the cohesiveness of their community combined with their proximity to Zhuhai does not give most students the feeling of being outside of China. The size/proportion, enclosure, cohesion and residential conditions were the main criteria that explained the relatively high social distance between the mainland students in Macau and the local community.

Therefore, mainland students who study in Macau may find it slightly more difficult to adapt to the local community or less of a need to adapt.

During this study, we were able to identify a new demographic of students in Macau who were born and raised in mainland China but acquired Macau permanent residence, and studied in Macau as “local students”. These students were found to have considerably different incentives, future plans, and living conditions than the other mainland students, and adapted to a much greater extent to the local society. The two mainland-born local students both expressed higher levels of satisfaction than the others, and generally showed signs of higher adaptability and lower social distance from the locals and society in Macau. Such students are rapidly growing in number, although it would be a monumental task on the census level to measure just how many of them are enrolled in Macau's educational institutions as they are registered as “local students”. Often times, such information is not publicly available. However, this newly immigrated demographic will be a significant force for social transformation in Macau society, and shape the future definition of the population of Macau.

Taiwan has already come a long way from allowing mainland students to freely enroll in its universities since 2011. Officials at NCCU made clear that they expected increasing numbers of mainland applicants in years to come. However, Taiwan has a strikingly different appeal than the SARs in that mainland students are entirely prohibited from seeking employment and remaining in Taiwan following graduation. There are other restrictions such as lack of medical coverage and scholarship opportunities. Despite such restrictions and Taiwan's complicated geopolitical relationship with mainland China, Taiwanese universities are quickly attracting students by

capitalizing on local nature/scenery, soft power via dominant media, and offering an alternative cultural environment that has academic programs that are perceived to be of higher quality than most mainland schools.

The mainland students interviewed in Taiwan showed they were quite satisfied with their experiences in the school and in the social environment. Although most of the students had aspirations to travel abroad in the future, they did not choose to seek out international, English-medium programs such as those in the SARs or overseas. They claimed they chose Taiwan because of its proximity, low cost, quality of programs, cultural and natural environment, and suitable entry requirements. Several of the students noted that they made their destination choices based on their major and the perception that Taiwan and NCCU were good places to study their respective subjects. Based on comments students made and lack of career-based incentives, it is evident that one element of Taiwan's appeal is its alternative Chinese society. Some of the students who chose majors that were more oriented toward Taiwan did so because of differences from the PRC. The students with the highest adaptability in Hong Kong also noted that Hong Kong was appealing for similar reasons. However, students in Macau did not appear to choose Macau for these reasons and did not adapt to the society as a result of high social distance and cohesiveness of the mainland student community. For mainland Chinese students in Macau, geographic and social linkages to mainland China and other mainland students respectively are too strong to gain any benefit of Macau's alternative Chinese society.

Possibly due to the curricula being in Chinese, and not having any English requirements, the students in Taiwan had the least difficulty adapting to their

new environment out of the three groups. Other research in Hong Kong by Pong and Tsang (2009) supports this finding by showing that mainland immigrant students in Hong Kong adapt much better in Chinese-medium schools than English ones. Lack of language difference also leads to better social networks with local students. As language acquisition is not part of their adaptation process, it eliminates a crucial barrier which could lead to what Brown (1980) called “culture shock” that their counterparts in Hong Kong experienced. However, it significantly limits their contact with English-speaking foreigners, which results in most students having no foreign friends. Another difference detected in the Taiwan group was a greater degree of familiarity with Taiwan prior to arrival due to Taiwanese media influence in China. Familiarity was a major force which reduced perceived social distance. This manifested in comments on Taiwanese students' accents and ways of talking which were received positively by the mainland students and in some cases even emulated. This was a huge contrast from the Macau group in which students had little impression of Macau society at all before arrival, and ultimately experienced the highest social distance and least adaptability; none of the students overcame the language barrier and mostly interacted with locals in Mandarin.

It is true to say that all the students in the study chose the SARs or Taiwanese universities as an alternative to directly going to a western country due to closer proximity to their hometowns, similarities in language and culture, and lower cost. The post-handover mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong have chosen their respective university and relocated out of choice due to a perception of superior western educational incentives. Most mainland students currently studying in the SARs appear to be from

relatively wealthy families and are particularly high achieving, and highly motivated students in the case of Hong Kong due to high competition in universities and in the local job market.

It is more difficult to apply this definition to the mainland students in Macau as many of the students were not as high-performing as the students in Hong Kong and appeared to have low prospects of adaptation or future employment in Macau. The mainland students in Macau do choose their school as an alternative to a western country, but even more so as an alternative to Hong Kong itself, although Hong Kong offers many of the same incentives, but its universities are harder to enroll and more competitive. It is fair to say mainland students in Macau are to be defined as somewhere in between students studying in mainland China and Hong Kong.

The demographic of mainland-born local students are not to be compared to the other mainland students in Macau, and are in an entirely separate category of their own. Using their family's wealth more than personal academic credentials to enter a university in Macau and immigrate. These mainland-born local students were sent by their parents to pursue an education and reside in Macau as an alternative to remaining in mainland China, and studying at a university in Macau was a result of that investment. Despite their educational experiences and perceptions, they appear to be able to adapt far more to Macau society than the other mainland students. As a result, the mainland-born local students are expected to be the demographic that have a lasting effect on Macau's society and education system in the long-term, with their intention to remain in Macau as permanent residents and incorporate Macau into their identity.

The mainland students in Taiwan are undoubtedly high-achieving and perhaps rather well-off as they need to be self-reliant to pay tuition, medical coverage and living expenses. For reasons mentioned in the analysis, they feel comfortable and welcomed in Taiwan and are highly adaptive overall. However, the definition of elite, western-educated student cannot be applied to them like their counterparts in Hong Kong. They did not relocate to Taiwan as an alternative to being overseas or in a more international, English-speaking environment like Hong Kong in which they can use as a “spring board”. Rather, they chose Taiwan as an alternative cultural and academic environment to change their perspective yet still retain their Chinese identity. Descriptions of the natural, cultural, and mass media environments seem to have been encompassed with their positive educational experiences. Even though government policy in Taiwan is still restrictive to mainland students, many top-ranking mainland students who do not wish to study in a non-Chinese environment put value on a post-graduate education in Taiwan. With less than three years of experience hosting mainland students, Taiwanese universities still have a huge potential for attracting more mainland students and future policy liberalization, especially as the domestic student bodies and the whole Taiwanese population continue to contract.

### **Suggestions**

Although this study sheds light on the perceptions, experiences of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, there are still several other research questions that arise from the findings.

1. The cases of students in Hong Kong excelling in languages such as Ms. Joyce, Ms. Bai and Ms. Charlene give rise to a question on the role of language ability in adaptability and social distance. Results from this study show that they were the least satisfied with their educational and social experiences in Hong Kong. Aside from their initial perception being different from the other students, certain applications of the social distance model helped explain the reasoning for this as being part of a greater acculturation process. However, a more in-depth study can be done by focusing on this factor. This would be useful to social scientists and those studying migration studies, linguistics, psychology, and language education.
2. A series of similar interviews or surveys can be conducted covering a more balanced gender sample of students. In this study, it was most challenging to gather male participants for the interviews in all the territories, especially in Hong Kong. One possible way to solve this dilemma would be to recruit students on the premise that there are two interviewers, one male and one female of roughly similar ages and backgrounds to have a more gender-neutral impression. In terms of recruiting interviewees in Hong Kong and Macau, it is also highly advised that future researchers seek out interviewees near the beginning of the semester, rather than the end. These interviews were conducted in December before the winter break, during the

time when most students are either leaving to return to their hometowns early, or are too preoccupied with exams to take part in the study.

Unfortunately, for the same reasons, many of the officials at the universities were unavailable to meet at that time of year, and thus primary information from teachers and staff was therefore quite limited. In the case of Chinese University of Hong Kong and University of Macau, the construction of their new campuses complicated the issues and restricted availability of the administrative staff to meet with the researcher.

3. Further research should be conducted to understand how and why Chinese ethnic minorities are attracted to Hong Kong or foreign countries. A study of this sort could take various forms. Upon seeking out a sample pool of ethnic minority students in either Hong Kong or mainland China, similar in-depth interviews can be conducted to understand if and how education or life in Hong Kong is attractive to them, and how it would affect them in their ethnic minority context. This would not only be applicable to researchers of migration studies and ethnology, but also those studying social reform in China.

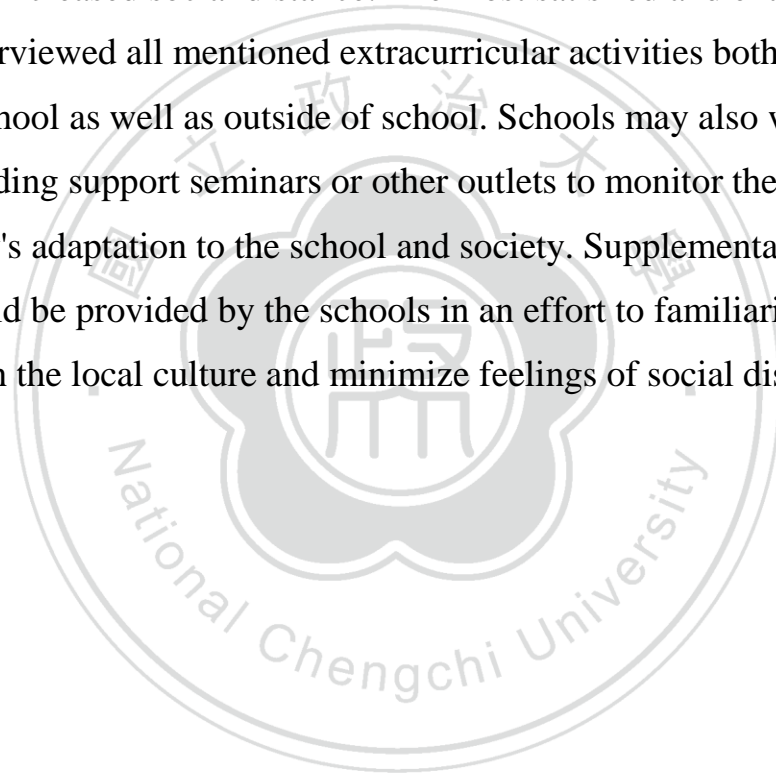
4. For future research, researchers may consider comparing students studying in different disciplines, which may reveal different degrees of adaptability based on study fields. For example, perhaps engineering students may not need the language skills required in studying social sciences or humanities. In addition, students from different home countries may be compared as they will have different degrees of social distance depending on their social and cultural upbringing.

5. To conduct a more complete analysis of this topic, researchers must conduct similar interviews on students that are in mainland China and have not yet embarked on their undergraduate or post-graduate studies in the SARs, Taiwan or even overseas. A series of follow-up interviews could be conducted after they relocate to their school and territory of choice to measure more accurately how their perception, habits, identity, and social networks have changed.

Including the students studying in the SARs and Taiwan, the flight of China's best and brightest may be considered as a double-edged sword for the Chinese government. As the mainland integrates further with the SARs and Taiwan, it is losing many top-ranking students in addition to Chinese students studying in the west who believe their academic and professional potential may be limited within mainland China. This could provoke future educational policy change in China. It is anticipated that educational reform and restructuring of the student bodies of SAR universities will benefit and compliment the contracting and aging local populations of the SARs more than popular media or social media would like to admit, as it is the first time in modern history the SARs have an opportunity to draw from mainland China's elite talent. It is also essential for a place like Hong Kong to maintain strong human capital from the mainland and abroad in order to diversify into a more knowledge-driven economy (Wong and Wong 2008).<sup>12</sup> This shift to a competitive advantage in higher education will also give the SAR economies a rare chance to diversify away from industries such as finance in the case of Hong Kong and gaming in the case of Macau.

Finally, in order to facilitate a more cross-culturally integrated student body and school atmosphere, it is recommended that respective universities in the

SARs and Taiwan make efforts to encourage more social interaction among mainland, local and foreign students. This study along with supporting research and literature all indicate that students that have more local friends are more integrated with the local community and participate in extracurricular activities and have a more satisfying experience. A key element of social distance between groups is enclosure, in which groups that do not share the same clubs, activities and associations will grow further apart, hence increased social distance. The most satisfied and enthusiastic students interviewed all mentioned extracurricular activities both associated with their school as well as outside of school. Schools may also want to consider holding support seminars or other outlets to monitor their non-local student body's adaptation to the school and society. Supplementary language classes should be provided by the schools in an effort to familiarize the students with the local culture and minimize feelings of social distance.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1 (Interview Sheet)

## 在港陆生访谈表

### 基本资料

中文名字:		年纪:	
英文名字:		抵港时间:	
性别:		预计停留时间:	
故乡(省):		家庭人数:	
民族:		国外有家人: (有/无)	

### 语言能力

母语:		其他外文能力:	
英文能力:			

### 教育背景

高中所在地:		公立/私立:	
本科大学所在地:		科系:	
研究所校名:		科系:	
学习成就/获奖纪录:			

### 工作经验

从事行业:		年经验:	
工作所在地:			

### 来港前，对于香港的看法:

1. 您当初来香港之前，对于香港有什么样的看法？和您的故乡比起来又如何？

社会:

教育:

其他:

2. 来香港前，您对于香港生活环境的印象为何？
3. 离开大陆前，您认为留学于香港如同在其他国家或者是中国的其中一省份？
4. 在高中时，您曾想过会来香港念书吗？
5. 当时您觉得香港哪方面吸引您？以及哪方面不吸引您？
6. 当时您喜欢香港何种媒体？(譬如:音乐，电视剧，电影，报纸...等等)
7. 当时如何接触到香港媒体？对于此媒体的印象为何？
8. 当时您如何联系朋友和家人？使用什么社交网络？
9. 您认为香港的男生/女生跟大陆的有何不同？是否比较好？
10. 到香港前，您有香港的朋友或者已在香港的大陆朋友吗？
11. 您的父母或者家人对您到香港念书有何看法？
12. 何因素让您最后选择您现在所就读的学校？香港的学校与其他的学校(如:台湾或国外)有何差异？

13. 离开大陆前，您的身份认同为何？（中国人？大陆/内地人？什么省的人？什么城市的人？）

### 在港的经验

1. 到目前为止，您对于香港教育以及您所就读学校的满意程度为何？  
请以 1-5 标示满意程度（1:非常不满意，2:不满意，3:普通，4:满意，5:非常满意）
2. 来香港后，您对于香港的看法有何改变？

社会:

教育:

其他:

3. 来香港后，您对于香港生活环境的看法有何改变？
4. 您现在有香港的朋友吗？有几位？
5. 您现在有非华人的朋友吗？有几位？
6. 您平常会跟大陆的同学交流吗？
7. 您藉由什麼方式与家人朋友联系？平均每月次数为何？
8. 您认为香港的学生欢迎大陆的学生吗？
9. 您认为香港的居民欢迎大陆的学生吗？
10. 您在香港是否有感受到被孤立的感觉？为何？
11. 您是否有感受到文化差异？为何？
12. 您是否有过被歧视的经验？
13. 您在香港是否有感受到在国外的感觉吗？或者是在中国的其他地方？
14. 您的哪些习惯改变了？(譬如:饮食，穿着...等等)
15. 您想念您故乡或者大陆的什么东西吗？(譬如:某种故乡点心...等等)
16. 来香港后，您观察到本地人的身份认同为何？
17. 您在香港和他人第一次见面时，如何介绍自己？从何处来？（譬如：大陆, 某某省分）

18. 来香港后，您对自我身份的认同是否有改变？(譬如：因为不同文化的冲击以至于对自我及自己的国家有了不同的看法或认知)
19. 您对于香港的适应速度为何？请以 1-5 标示适应速度（1:非常慢，2:慢，3:普通，4:快，5 非常快）

## 未来规划

1. 毕业之后，您有何打算？(譬如：就业, 升学...等等)
2. 因为您在香港的经验，您有否想去其他的国家或地区吗？为何？
3. 您是否想留在香港就业或升学？为何？
4. 您认为回去您的故乡后，会有适应上的问题吗？
5. 自从香港开学后，您是否曾返回您的故乡？若是，
  - a) 返回故乡后，您认为您的家人或社会对于您的看法是否会让您感受到压力？
  - b) 返回故乡后，您最想念香港什么？
6. 在外求学的经验是否会引发您移民的动机？若是，
  - a) 请说明理由，还有您想要移民的国家或地区？
  - b) 是否有永久居住的计划？
  - c) 是否有取得该国国籍的计划？
7. 您是否想要获得其他的护照？若是，请说明是哪一个国家的护照？

## 其他问题

1. 您对香港政治的看法为何？
2. 您对共产党的看法为何？
3. 您对于国民教育的看法为何？
4. 您对”一国两制”的看法为何？
5. 您对于香港”新移民“和“生育旅游”的看法为何？

到此结束，再次感谢您的协助。

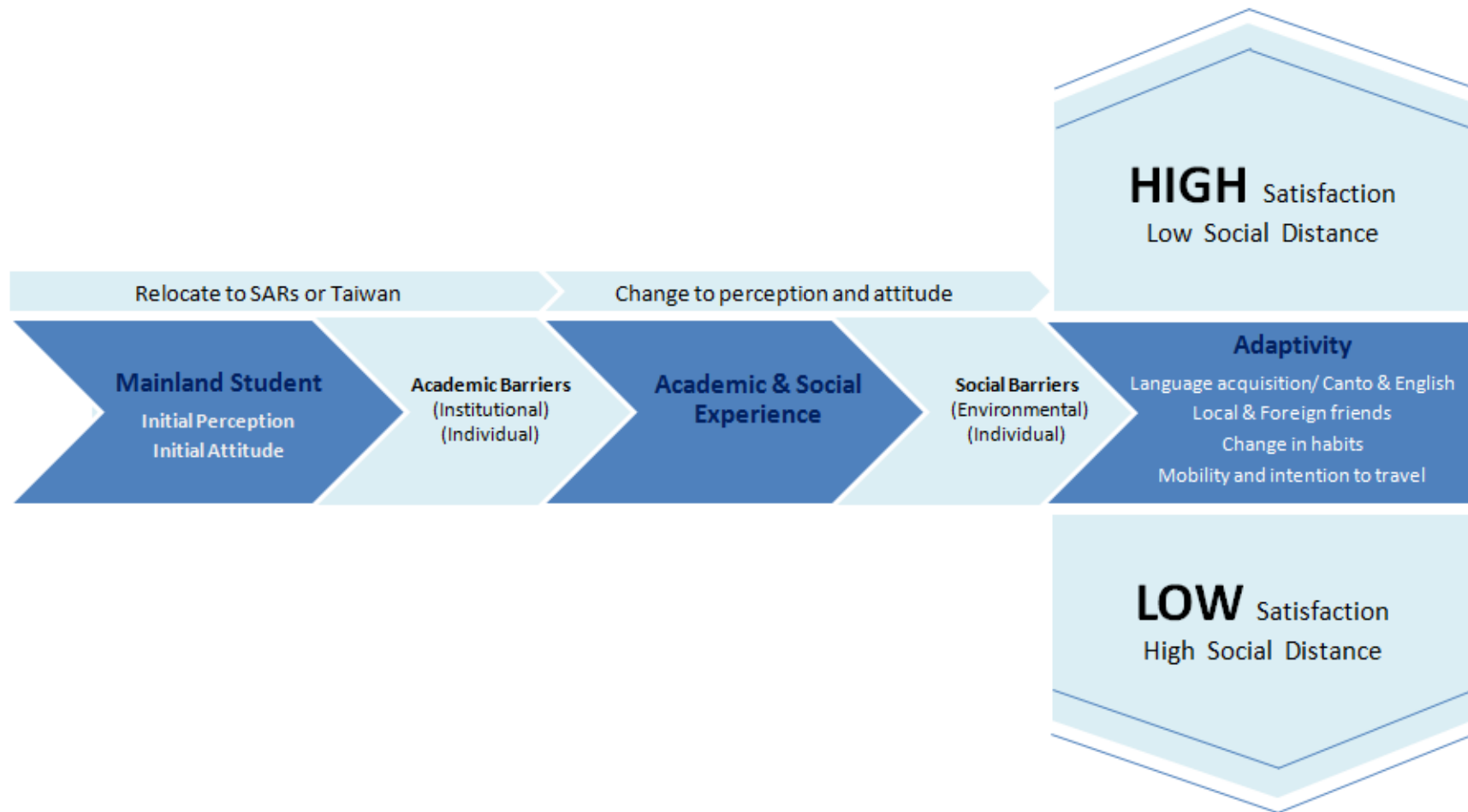
Note: In each version of this interview sheet given out in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, questions were rephrased to be appropriate to the host territory. For example: “抵港” was changed to either “抵澳” or “抵台” respectively.

## Appendix 2

**Chart of advantages/disadvantages for mainland students in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.**

	Hong Kong	Macau	Taiwan
<b>Education</b>			
<b>Advantages</b>	English-medium education World renowned institutions Academic freedom International environment Tuition lower than overseas Quickly expanding facilities	English-medium education Relatively low entry requirements Academic freedom Tuition lower than overseas Quickly expanding facilities	Lack of language barrier Relatively low entry requirements Academic freedom Affordable tuition Unique set of programs from mainland
<b>Disadvantages</b>	Highly competitive Short length of certain programs Geared more toward job training	Limited scholarship opportunities Limited number of institutions Lack of higher education heritage	Small mainland student community Government cap on mainland student enrollment
<b>Society/Economy</b>			
<b>Advantages</b>	Large job market International financial hub Springboard to overseas 1-year visa access post-graduation Better environment	Gaming/Entertainment hub Accepting society More international than most mainland cities Better environment	Accepting and friendly society Increasing integration with the mainland Better environment Influential popular media
<b>Disadvantages</b>	Presence of social tension from local community Politically sensitive environment Potentially ineffective bureaucracy	Limited job market outside gaming industry	Government policy closing off job market Still relatively closed to mainland individuals Politically sensitive environment

### Appendix 3 (Adaptability Process)



**Appendix 4 (Characteristics Chart)**

*****	<b>Hong Kong mainland students</b>	<b>Macau mainland students</b>	<b>Macau mainland-born locals*</b>	<b>Taiwan mainland students</b>
Personal Characteristics Unique to Respective Group of Mainland Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curiosity with Hong Kong and foreign societies.</li> <li>- Appreciation for alternative Chinese society</li> <li>- Aspiration to live abroad</li> <li>- Interest in politics, strong opinion and possible negative political attitude toward mainland.</li> <li>- Travel experience, high mobility.</li> <li>- Relatively high English and language ability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Virtually no familiarity with Macau society.</li> <li>- Aspiration to return to mainland and maybe seek foreign passport.</li> <li>- Politically abstinent toward mainland and Macau.</li> <li>- Very frequent trips to mainland.</li> <li>- Relatively low English ability, though attaches importance to English.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reason for relocating not based on education.</li> <li>- Intends to build career in Macau.</li> <li>- Little incentive to go overseas.</li> <li>- Holds identity somewhere between Macau and mainland.</li> <li>- Increased political interest after migration.</li> <li>- Very frequent trips to mainland.</li> <li>- Relatively low English ability, though attaches importance to English.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High familiarity with Taiwan society</li> <li>- Appreciation for alternative Chinese society.</li> <li>- Appreciation for nature and alternative cultural environments.</li> <li>- Aspiration to live abroad</li> <li>- Have local Taiwanese friends, but no foreign friends.</li> <li>- Experience living away from hometown in big cities.</li> <li>- Relatively low English ability, although expresses interest.</li> </ul>
*****	<b>Hong Kong residents</b>	<b>Macau residents</b>		
Social Factors in Respective Societies that Impact Social Distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some hostile sentiment.</li> <li>- Generations of media exposure stereotyping mainlanders.</li> <li>- Landowners may welcome mainland people due to profit seeking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Half are positive, half are negative toward mainland students.</li> <li>- Closer political attitude to mainland China.</li> <li>- Improving Mandarin ability due to economic reliance on mainland China.</li> </ul>		
	<b>Hong Kong local students</b>	<b>Macau local students</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May feel increasing competition in job market and academia as a result of mainland students.</li> <li>- Pride in English ability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mostly positive attitude toward mainland students.</li> <li>- May feel a greater need learn Mandarin.</li> <li>- No concern of competition in local job market.</li> </ul>		
			<b>Taiwan residents</b>	<b>Taiwan local students</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mostly friendly.</li> <li>- Generations of exposure to anti-mainland propaganda.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mostly friendly.</li> <li>- Limited contact with sparse mainland student body.</li> <li>- No concern of competition in local job market.</li> </ul>

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