

Born Glocal: Youth Identity and Suburban Spaces in the U.S. and Taiwan

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Introduction

The youngest generation of diaspora societies wrestle constantly to find an enabling interlocking of the different cultures in which they find themselves: it is a struggle indeed to build another, different hybrid culture.

—Doreen Massey¹

Inside a San Francisco Bay area mall, four pan-Asian teens head spin and body pop to modern Taiwanese and American hip hop beats. In these hallways of what western observers have termed the “Asian mall,” these youth have found a place to express the complex cultural milieu that they inhabit as both Asians and Americans.² As they contest and simultaneously redefine the cultural norms of this space, they work to build a hybrid culture from the materials they encounter as diasporic youth. This paper explores this struggle among transnational Taiwanese youth who spend their lives straddling cultural and national borders, as part of what Shenglin Chang has termed “transpacific commuter families.”³

In both Taiwan and the U.S., the suburbs are increasingly the spaces where the majority of these transpacific youth grow up.

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This study asks how transnational suburban youth have refashioned their everyday suburban landscapes to reflect their border-crossing experiences. We argue that through the process of transpacific migration, Taiwanese American youth learn to articulate the spaces they inhabit with markers and symbols of both their Asian and American identities. These liminal spaces reveal transnational youth identity as complex and contextual—often situated and negotiated within and between multiple and sometimes conflicting cultural norms and values. On the one hand, we find that transnational youth geographies and identities are highly tied to parental and dominant cultural norms regarding education; on the other, we see youth struggling to craft their local everyday environments as reflections of individual and collective identities. In this respect, spaces like Asian malls in the U.S. and soccer fields in Taiwan serve as important destinations for the expression and reflection of Taiwanese transnational youth identity and culture.

This study is based upon fieldnotes and observations gathered over the past decade from various suburban communities in the San Francisco Bay area, including Richmond, Fremont, and Cupertino, and Hsinchu and Taizhong Science Park in Taiwan. This study employs in-depth interviews and surveys with transpacific and new immigrant parents and youth together with educators in American and Taiwanese schools. These interviews are supplemented by behavioral observations and physical landscape analysis of popular youth hangouts, as well as content analysis of media and other archival materials relevant to Taiwanese youth culture and identity.⁴

This article is organized into three main sections. First, we underscore the importance of our findings within existing discourses on youth identity and space. Second, we look more deeply at how youth identities are shaped by cultural and spatial conditions within multiethnic suburbs and transnational families, using specific examples from the Silicon Valley in the U.S. and Hsinchu Science Park in Taiwan. Finally, we extend the case studies to investigate how youth themselves use the materials of their everyday suburban environments to express their cross-border identities.

Youth Identity as Articulated in Local Space

Youth culture and identity have been studied at length. According to Jonathan Epstein and Paul Hodkinson, respectively, three critical approaches have emerged, primarily within fields of sociology and cultural studies.⁵ These approaches include: the sociological

approach begun at the University of Chicago in the early twentieth century; the approach of the Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies (CCCS); the recent cultural studies approach to “Generation X.”⁶

In all three approaches, youths’ social psychology is the focus, while space plays a secondary, if not an altogether absent, role. Of the three, the Chicago School approach was the most spatially acute. They were, however, primarily concerned with deviant youth behaviors like drug use, gang membership, and crime, which they asserted were more likely to occur within ethnically concentrated, marginalized urban areas. The Chicago School’s environmentally deterministic theories suggested that urban environments served as not only as the stage, but actually the *cause* of youths’ anomic actions. The CCCS’s approach was concerned largely with symbolic space, rather than physical space. They argued that youth subcultures are created to claim symbolic social space. The material symbols of youth subcultures, like fashion and music, are therefore considered the landmarks of social landscapes for youths.⁷ This approach has been refined by postmodern cultural studies that subsume youth space analyses under the themes of fragmentation, fluidity, and consumerism. Youth identity and the spaces they inhabit are those most often dictated by popular media and consumer culture.⁸

Within all of these paradigms, everyday material landscapes and spatial practices of youth seldom receive any substantive theoretical focus, nor are they assigned any significant role in shaping youth identity and culture. In contrast, our work presents a series of cases in which everyday spaces are shown to play a critical role in how youth construct and sustain their variable social and cultural identities. Through deliberate acts and strategies of spatial occupation and manipulation, youth literally make spaces that legitimize and foster their own meanings and identities.

Another contribution of this work is to the existing critique of the dominance of Western thought in youth studies.⁹ Scholars in this camp tend to push towards a more inclusive, non-Eurocentric agenda in youth studies, especially through studies of marginalized groups and youth in the non-Western world. Their work has helped to identify the centrality of two opposing trends: the emergence of a so-called “global youth culture” and the localization of youth cultural practices.¹⁰ Global youth culture refers to fashions, trends, and practices shared by youth in many parts of the world.

These include the tendency for youth to wear the same clothing styles, watch the same television shows, listen to the same music, and adopt the same slang. Scholars stress the availability of new media and technology, in particular, in blurring the cultural borders between youth around the world. In contrast, scholars of local cultural practice suggest that youth identity formation is more powerfully impacted by specific local and cultural events, politics, and traditions. For instance, China's one-child policy, the post-9/11 Islamist revival, and Taiwan's competitive educational system have all had significant impacts on local youth subcultures.¹¹ Our research does not dismiss the importance of these debates between local and global cultural practices for youths, but rather focuses on how transnational Taiwanese American youth situate themselves within this local-global dichotomy by refashioning their local environments with aspects of their more globalized identities. We emphasize the characteristics of youth culture and identity, from the local to the global, from the real to the virtual, that emerge from their constant efforts to straddle and negotiate multiple borders between family and friends, nation-states, and multiple cultural values and meanings.

Finally, our work theorizes transnational youths' spatial practices as a contribution not only to the traditional fields of youth studies in sociology and cultural studies, but also to emergent literature on youth in urban studies, geography, environmental design, and city and regional planning. This literature tends to concentrate on youth in urban settings, often at the exclusion of any serious inquiry into suburban youth. This scholarly focus fails to recognize or legitimize the reality within the U.S. and increasingly in Taiwan that the suburbs are the predominant spaces of youths' everyday lives.¹² Far too little attention has been given to understanding the complex spaces that modern youth, particularly immigrant and minority youth, occupy. Our work bridges the disciplinary divide between the social sciences and urban studies, while also adding a critical non-Western perspective to the study of youth within their everyday suburban environments.

Transpacific Youth Geographies

Chinatown is for the old immigrant; 99 Ranch is for the new.

—Patricia Leigh Brown¹³

99 Ranch, also popularly known as Ranch 99 or Tawa Supermarket, is the largest Asian supermarket chain in the United States

with thirty-three stores nationwide. But unlike many Asian food markets, these stores cannot be found within traditional urban ethnic enclaves, like San Francisco's Chinatown. Instead, they serve a growing population of middle-class Asian Americans who now resides primarily in the suburbs. Nationwide, over 54 percent of all Asian Americans live in Census-defined suburban areas.¹⁴

Within the past half-century, this shift from urban to suburban residence has been a predominant geographic trend among American minorities, especially new immigrants. The suburbs have emerged as what Audrey Singer calls "new immigrant gateways," as opposed to the old gateways within urban centers.¹⁵ With the passage of the 1965 U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Act, new immigrants are now much more likely to be non-European, well educated, middle-class, and suburban. While no longer contained and restricted within urban centers, new immigrants are still more likely than other groups to cluster in suburban areas that Wei Li has termed "ethnoburbs."¹⁶ Among Asians, ethnoburbs tend to be dominated by economically and educationally successful groups, particularly immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

New immigrant suburbanites from prosperous Asian countries often engage in what Chang calls, the "transpacific commute," regularly shuttling back and forth across the Pacific for business and family obligations.¹⁷ Their daily lives weave in and out of multiple social and cultural worlds—including that of their home and host countries, to the point where the conception of "home" seems to blur or even transcend national borders. In the new vocabulary of transpacific transnationalism, scholars refer to "astronauts" and "spacemen" as part of a global elite that, as Li maintains, are "as comfortable crossing oceans as Main Street."¹⁸

There are a number of ways in which youth, especially Taiwanese youth, take part in these transpacific journeys. So-called "parachute" children are immigrant youth left in the United States with relatives, friends, or "caretakers" to pursue their education while their parents remain abroad. Competitive entrance exams for high school and college in Taiwan often prompt many youth who have not or are feared to not "make the cut" to be sent to the U.S. to complete their middle school or high school years, or simply to increase their chances of entering a reputable American university. Taiwanese foreign students also often come to the United States on temporary visas for their university education and return to Taiwan upon graduation. A group that has received far less attention in the literature are transnational or "fresh off the

place" youth, the children of families who regularly travel back and forth between multiple countries. Among these is many Taiwanese American children, born in the U.S., who are regularly sent overseas to attend Chinese language schools and Taiwanese-born youth who travel to the U.S. with their families for work or school. In our paper, we define both Taiwanese-born youth and American-born youth who regularly engage in transpacific commuting as the transnational. We argue that international travel, shared educational experiences, and suburban geographies link both groups together spatially, socially, and culturally. While differences certainly exist between them, compared to other youth who have grown up on either one side of the Pacific or the other, Taiwanese transnational youth share more in common than less.

The following case studies of Taiwanese transnational youth in the suburbs of the Silicon Valley and Hsinchu Science Park in Taiwan show how intricately linked transnational Taiwanese American youth geographies and identities are to parental and dominant cultural norms around higher education. Taiwanese transpacific youth are more likely to be from high-tech and well-to-do families who choose their residential location primarily on school rankings and place extreme pressures on youth to succeed educationally.

Silicon Valley, California

Asian immigrant geographies have been particularly impacted by work in high-tech industries. In Santa Clara County, an area often loosely defined as the Silicon Valley, the foreign-born population was 34 percent in 2000, largely made up of Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and Asian Indians.¹⁹ The Silicon Valley now has the fastest growing Asian population in the entire U.S.

In Fremont, a suburb in the Bay Area, new immigration particularly has shifted the racial and ethnic balance of the city within the last half decade from a 97 percent Caucasian majority in 1970 to a 46 percent Asian plurality in 2007.²⁰ New immigrants now make up 43 percent of the population, with majority of those coming from China and India.²¹ Asian immigrants, often employed in high-tech Silicon Valley sectors, are among Fremont's most economically successfully groups, with a median income of \$119,994, 29 percent above the city's median.²²

Silicon Valley Asians are also particularly likely to be transnational. Among Asian immigrant groups, Taiwanese engineers in the Valley are most likely to engage in transpacific commuting.

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【房屋類型】: 房屋
【售價】: 價格面議
【入住時間】: 隨時入住

屋主自售
 FREMONT MISSION SAN JOSE 學區走路至高初中小學, 4睡房2个半浴室.
 兩層樓 雙車庫另有BONUS ROOM 300SF. 售999,500元
 請洽510-493-8180 馬先生

Figure 1: Mission San Jose homes often appear in television and print ads in Taiwan. This listing for a single-family home emphasizes its location within the Mission San Jose school district, one of the top performing public school districts in the nation. (http://classify.yibada.com/sfhouse/view.php?house_id=1285343857, accessed October 1, 2010)

According to a 2002 report, approximately 38 percent of Taiwanese engineers employed in the Valley regularly travel to Taiwan at least once a year for business.²³

While many Taiwanese immigrant families may reside in the Silicon Valley for work, they tend to locate within Fremont because of its high quality schools. In 2010, *U.S. News and World Report* ranked Mission San Jose High School the thirty-sixth best academic school (among both public and private schools) and fourth best public open enrollment high school in the nation.²⁴ In 2010, its student body was 74 percent Asian. Hopkins Junior High School, a feeder school to Mission, had the highest API score for public junior high schools in both 2005 and 2007. Mission San Jose schools are regularly displayed in television and print ads in Taiwan and are prominently headlined in local real estate ads (Figure 1). Mission schools are such an important asset to Taiwanese families that they will often rent or buy much smaller homes than they can afford and shuttle several related family members through a single house in order to stay within the school district.

Clearly, Taiwanese high-tech families invest heavily in a high-quality education for their children. Believing in the old Chinese adage, “Don’t lose at the starting point,” many control the fate of their children’s education from day one. Over the past decade

of field observations and interviews with transpacific, high-tech Taiwanese families, we have identified a series of priorities held by most of these families for their children. These include:

- Being born in the U.S. and obtaining American citizenship
- English-speaking day cares and kindergartens
- Attendance in a highly ranked Taiwanese elementary or bilingual school to improve their Chinese language skills
- After-school Chinese schools and clubs to learn traditional language, dance, and customs
- International summer camps and vacations
- Attendance at an American middle or high school to prepare them for entry into prestigious American universities.

Pursuing the dream of the highest quality education for their children, many Taiwanese families sacrifice long distance commutes, and sometimes separation to help give them an early competitive advantage.²⁵

Driven by parental demands for more and harder classes, Mission San Jose High School now offers mostly honors and Advanced Placement courses, seven periods a day. Mission has maintained a nearly 100 percent exit exam pass rate for several years and, in 2010, graduated 31 valedictorians, all with 4.0 GPAs. A popular cheer affirms the common perception of Mission students: "Cosine, sine/Cosine, sine/3.14159/2400s on SATs/And yes, we all take 5 APs."²⁶

Such high stakes educational pursuits entail high costs for youth. Administrators at Mission note troubling trends in the numbers of students seeking permission to study at home because of stress and severe mental health problems.²⁷ One Mission teacher explained that students are so competitive that, while they may not want to go to a top private college upon graduation, they are "indoctrinated that anything less is failure." For Taiwanese students, in particular, she claims many of the students feel that their whole family success is riding on them, that "they're told it's either this or the Taiwanese Army."²⁸ Principal Sandy Prairie says it is not unusual to get a call from a parent in Taiwan, when a student gets a "C" on a paper. Students themselves report seeing a number of gray-haired, stressed-out peers, who throw away A- grades for fear of getting punished at home.²⁹ The intense pressure felt by Mission students, especially Asian immigrant students, to succeed led Mission San Jose High School to be one of the first schools



Figure 2: Hsinchu is a city of 400,000 in northwest Taiwan. More than one-third of the population works in Hsinchu Science Park, a high-tech suburb outside the city.

Photograph by Shenglin Elijah Chang

in the country to participate in the Stressed Out Students (S.O.S) Program. S.O.S. is a Stanford University-led program started by a former Mission grad that teaches students how to manage their stress, while also engaging parents in reducing the pressures on their kids to do well at all costs.³⁰

Hsinchu Science Park, Taiwan

Reflections of California's Silicon Valley can be found all over the world in high-tech, middle-class suburbs, like Hsinchu Science Park in northwest Taiwan. The Park employs a labor force of more than 180,000 of Hsinchu's 400,000 residents, out of which about 130,000 are employed in one of the Park's 430 high-tech firms (Figure 2). Indeed, the Park has provided plentiful job opportunities for young engineers and entrepreneurs in pursuit of lucrative high-tech careers.³¹

Before Taiwan became known as a global information technology (IT) leader, many Taiwanese engineers would simply emigrate to the U.S. for work or education and never return. But as Taiwan has emerged as one of the many centers of global technology and capital, families that emigrate to the U.S. are far more likely to return and settle in wealthy, globally-connected places like Hsinchu. Many of these young engineers are among the generation who made their fortunes from their IT stocks that reached their peaks in the mid-1990s in the Silicon Valley. Hsinchu engineers, especially those who have lived in the U.S., often favor living in one of Hsinchu's many gated communities, rather than moving to some of its denser urban neighborhoods.³²

The Park's youth are often raised between Hsinchu, the U.S., and other countries. Their parents are usually extremely enthusiastic about their children's English education, insistent that they receive a quality bilingual and bicultural education (Figure 3). Many of the Taiwanese-born Hsinchu youth have been traveling to summer camps in America and other countries since they were little. Parents often hire high-priced private native English-speaking tutors. In one case covered by *Business Weekly*, a family reportedly hired a private tutor to go abroad with the family every summer. They spent about two million Taiwanese dollars



Figure 3: Stanford American Language School in Hsinchu maintains a strict English-only policy. Among its four campuses, two are located close to the Hsinchu Science Park, making it a convenient and desirable location for transnational youth.

Photograph by Shenglin Elijah Chang

(equivalent to \$70,000 U.S. dollars) for two semesters of private bilingual school education, plus the cost of a private tutor during the summer.³³ For many American-born Taiwanese youth, Hsinchu is often the destination of their summer camps and vacations.

The National Experimental High School in Hsinchu Science Park is considered *the* school that all Hsinchu parents want their children to attend. The curriculum includes many standard American materials. Students learn American history, read American newspapers, and play American sports. They grow up going to Easter egg hunts, Halloween parties, and Thanksgiving dinners, practices unfamiliar to youth in other parts of Taiwan. “They spend more time speaking English than Chinese,” claim reporters Ya-Wei Lin and Wei-Yun Yang about Hsinchu youth.³⁴

Taiwanese transnational youth not only speak more English inside the real world, but also in their virtual worlds. Though many social networks sites are shared by youth in many parts of the world, language preferences and barriers influence social networks and Internet habits. Vincent, a local Taiwanese youth, explained the importance of PPT, a Chinese-only social bulletin board system for National Taiwan University students. “I met both my exes on PPT,” he states.³⁵ Meanwhile, Sara, Vincent’s close friend who is a Taiwanese American transnational, has never used PPC to meet friends and instead prefers chatting with friends on exclusively English-language versions of Facebook or Twitter.³⁶

Whether American-born or Taiwanese-born, Hsinchu’s transnational youth share similar educational experiences and lifestyles that connect them in both real and virtual space. Their school curricula, home landscapes, and social networking habits are much different from those of other local Taiwanese youth, who neither live in suburban gated communities nor speak English with such enthusiasm or ease. In Hsinchu, transnational youth are separated both physically and culturally from their local peers.

Transnational Youths’ “Glocal” Suburban Landscapes

While it seems clear that high educational attainment is a significant force shaping the experiences and identities of transnational youth in both the Silicon Valley and Hsinchu, we assert that youth also engage in processes of self-constructed meaning and identity-making within the shifting borders between their multiple home (as opposed to host and home) countries. In this section, we extend the case studies of Taiwanese transnational youth to look at how youth embed their local, everyday landscapes with the fluid

and multistoried identities they derive from continuously straddling both real and imagined national and cultural borders. In the U.S., we look at youth who spend their time hanging out in Asian malls and the types of identities, values, and meanings they derive from and articulate within these spaces. In Taiwan, we note the definitive lack of youth in the shopping malls and instead explore the phenomenon of American-born and Taiwanese-born youth congregating on soccer fields within gated communities. Both cases display how, within their educationally driven, transnational lives, Taiwanese youth cultivate spaces in their everyday environments that reflect who they are.

Asian Malls in the San Francisco Bay Area

The American suburban mall serves as a common trope for the mass consumer, mass culture-driven pursuits of modern youth. But in fact, youth often make these seemingly homogenous and ubiquitous landscapes into unique cultural markers. Within traditional suburban malls, youth often craft spaces of cultural display and experimentation within leftover, undefined, and interstitial zones. For many transnational Asian youth, such practices undoubtedly occur within traditional malls, but also increasingly in Asian malls, a more common feature of many multiethnic suburban communities.

Asian malls have adapted many of elements of the traditional American shopping mall, while also incorporating new forms. Their design includes a predominance of Asian stores, often with more flexible uses and configurations than other malls, and are typically owned as condos, rather than leased.³⁷ They serve as home to a large number of independent pan-Asian stores, as well as a host of local and national retailers, and are usually anchored by a supermarket.³⁸ They typically include professional and personal services as dentists, bakeries, banks, book and music stores, hair salons, clothing boutiques, restaurants and cafes, massage and acupuncture, travel services, and tea and herbal medicine shops.

Functionally, Asian malls serve not only as spaces of commerce, but also of cultural gathering, celebration, and socialization. Consumers often spend hours cruising the aisles of the grocery stores, checking in on local and international news, and eating and socializing with family and friends at local restaurants and cafés. Asian malls serve as such an important social hub that a trip to the Ranch 99 Market by a dating couple can serve as almost a couple's

official “coming out” to the larger community.³⁹ As further testament to their popularity, the federal government stationed 2010 Census takers at Ranch 99 supermarkets across the country. Affirming the social significance of Asian malls, scholar Roger Blackwell observes that many Asians “do not go to the mall to shop, but rather to take their weekend vacation.”⁴⁰

There are around 140 Asian shopping malls nationwide, nearly half of which are in California.⁴¹ The Bay Area is home to at least fifteen of these shopping centers, the majority of which are located in the Silicon Valley, particularly Fremont. Friday and Saturday nights are especially popular in Fremont’s “Little Taipei” mall, when pan-Asian families can be found lined up outside its more popular restaurants, like the Aberdeen Café and Café Ophelia (Figure 4). Multiple generations and cultures overlap in space and time with seeming ease. While pan-Asian teens listen to Taiwanese and Hong Kong pop music at boba milk tea, shaved ice, and frozen yogurt shops, elderly Chinese and Vietnamese stake their turf in parking lot benches to socialize and catch up on overseas news from the many Asian language newspapers outside Lion Supermarket.

Transnational Asian youth appear to be among the most popular Asian mall users. Many spend several hours at local malls



Figure 4: Fremont’s “Little Taipei” mall displays many of the typical characteristics of Asian malls in terms of both form and function.

Photograph by Willow Lung Amam

with friends taking pictures in Asian-style photo booths, cruising the local shops, and hanging out at trendy restaurants and cafés. For many, the mall represents a space that is both familiar and comforting, offering “authentic” Taiwanese goods. Popular Taiwanese magazines like *éF* and *Body*, movies, and music from such bands as Girl’s Generation and Super Junior can be found in mall book and music stores as well as in several local teashops and cafes. Tapioca Express and Quickly, two popular boba milk tea chains found in several Bay Area Asian malls, feature funky decor, hip Taiwanese pop music, and snacks.⁴² Constant streams of pan-Asian youth customers come in after school and on weekends to study, socialize with friends, and grab what many transnational youth refer to as “Taiwanese street food.”

Cafés with free wireless service, like Quickly, are particularly popular among transnational youth who use their cell phones and laptops to communicate not only with local friends and family, but also overseas. Most malls also offer places to purchase cell phones and cheap phone cards, make travel arrangements, and arrange money transfers. Flat-screen televisions in several cafés continuously broadcast news from overseas and about the local Asian American community. Taiwanese youth are constantly “linked in” to everyday life in Taiwan via the Asian mall.

Taiwanese immigrant youth, and other Asian American youth consumers, express sophisticated, modern, pan-Asian tastes that help to dictate the selection and availability of items within Asian malls. Popular music and film selections in most malls include a range of Japanese and Korean titles translated into Chinese, including many Japanese animation comics. Products with Japanese characters like Hello Kitty, Keroppi, and Kuromi that flood the Taiwanese markets are available in abundance at many mall shops. Even American products, translated and adapted for Chinese markets, like *Vogue* and *Marie Claire* magazines, have proven to be popular selections. Asian mall marketing studies note that Asian American teens display above average preferences for hip hop and surf wear.⁴³ Their sophisticated tastes for “modern” products, often lead transnational youth to complain about “cheap knock-offs,” “traditional” designs, and “dirty,” “smelly,” and “old fashioned” mall stores. Their preferences, often widely shared through blog and social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, are instead for mall stores that they describe as “modern” and “hip,” such as Fremont Auto Mall’s trendy Café Zen and Yoswirl (Figure 5).

Asian malls seem to serve as important spaces that reflect the liminal zone between cultures that transnational youth occupy. At the same time, Asian malls are dynamic spaces where youth can construct and constitute their own, sometimes tenuous, relationship to local space. Catering to their large youth clientele, Asian malls usually stay open later and offer a wider range of products and services than traditional suburban malls. They offer youth a safe spot at night and after school with spaces for dance and music performance, Chinese- and English-language lessons, and karaoke. In Richmond's Pacific East Mall, KTV Karaoke is a particularly popular transnational youth hangout that stays open until 2:00 AM, allowing youth to engage what scholar Rob Drew calls their "vocal alter egos." By selecting among KTV's 110,000 English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, and Korean music videos, youth are, as Drew claims, able to "position themselves physically, socially, and culturally through the choice of songs and renderings."⁴⁴ Youth simultaneously appropriate mall spaces that further crafts these spaces as reflections of cross-cul-



Figure 5: Café Zen inside Fremont's Auto Mall (an Asian mall) is a favored hangout for many transnational Taiwanese youth. It offers "modern" amenities like wireless Internet connections, and popular Taiwanese music, magazines, and videos that allow youth to "link in" to everyday life in Taiwan.

Photograph by Willow Lung Amam



Figure 6: A billboard inside a San Francisco Bay Area Asian mall shows how Asian youth claim space that reflects their cross-cultural ties.

Photograph by Willow Lung Amam

tural identities and experiences of simultaneously inhabiting both the local and global. Their simple acts of leaving love notes in Japanese anime style characters and Chinese graffiti on café billboards, breakdancing to Asian and American hip-hop beats, and skateboarding through the Ranch 99 parking lot, claim both real and symbolic spaces of transnational youth identity (Figure 6).

Gated Soccer Fields in Hsinchu, Taiwan

Unlike in the U.S., where malls have come to overshadow public spaces as the most popular youth hangouts, public space maintains a vibrant and active role in Taiwan. According to Ms. Mao, a Hsinchu community organizer, many teens, especially the increasingly popular breakdancing crowd, hang out in the Hsinchu Heart, the public place for “cool” youth. Others meet at movie theaters, shopping districts, KTVs, KFC, or McDonald’s, or at pubs and bars in Hsinchu or Taipei.

Interestingly, however, transnational youth do not fit the bill of the “typical Hsinchu youth.” Instead, these youth have co-opted spaces that reflect their cross-cultural identities and transnational experiences. Transnational youth are increasingly likely

to gather on soccer fields inside their protected gated communities. A decade ago, when we first investigated youth activities within transpacific families in Hsinchu, we observed Taiwanese transnational youth playing soccer and speaking English at soccer fields in the area known as Grant Silicon Valley Villa (Figure 7). A resident of the Villa, Mr. Wan commented that, “coming in our community on the weekend is like taking a walk in America. The youth playing soccer on the field all speak English.”⁴⁵

In 1998, Mr. Wan pointed to a common distinction among Villa youth: While the transnational youth play soccer and speak English, the Taiwanese local youth play basketball and speak Chinese. In 2009, Principal Huang agreed that it was still the case that “whether youth play soccer or basketball is a good way of identifying Taiwanese transnational and Taiwanese local youth.”⁴⁶ Huang has operated an after-school English program in the newly developed Taizhong Science Park, about a one-hour drive south of Hsinchu, for the past sixteen years. She argues that differences between soccer and basketball largely represent cultural, not class, differences. Among her sixty or so students, no one plays soccer, but they all adore basketball. Most of her students come from families of university professors, business professionals, or small



Figure 7: The green space in the gated Grand Silicon Villa neighborhood of Hsinchu is the soccer field where transnational Taiwanese youth often play soccer and express their multicultural identities.

Photograph by Shenglin Elijah Chang

business owners. But all of her students were born and grew up in Taiwan. Unlike Hsinchu's transnational youth of similar socio-economic backgrounds, her students did not grow up playing soccer, since there are no soccer fields in any nearby elementary, middle school, or high school campuses. But basketball courts are everywhere, made possible by the game's limited space requirements in Taiwan's dense urban areas.

English is another cultural divide that separates the Taiwanese local and transnational youth groups in Hsinchu. Principal Huang points out that most Taiwanese local youth are reluctant to use their English language skills, even though they have studied for many years. English is a core course in Taiwan's elementary schools and English after-school programs are popular and competitive. Still, Principal Huang comments that many of the students "grew up" in her school and were tutored by native English speakers, but still hesitate when they first encounter transnational youth on the ball fields.

Hsinchu's gated soccer fields appear to be a protected place where Taiwanese transnational youth spend time together nurturing their common cultural experiences, like speaking English. The bilingual school yards and open spaces of Hsinchu's gated communities embody the sense of detachment and difference felt by Taiwanese American youth from other local children. Local Hsinchu residents hardly encounter these Americanized youth in popular public places in Hsinchu city. Within their privatized and secure zones they claim as "home," transnational youth are able to articulate a more globally connected culture within local space.⁴⁷

To highlight their differences, however, is not to dismiss the qualities that these groups share. On both sides of the Pacific, songs like Super Junior's "Sorry-Sorry" and Wonder Girls' "Nobody-Nobody" are popular among both local and transnational Taiwanese youth. However, these shared interests in popular culture do not always translate to shared friendships, social networks, and spaces. Rather, local and transnational youth still maintain a social distance that lead many American-born Taiwanese, who come to Taiwan every summer and winter break, to feel a sense of boredom and isolation when displaced from their primary social networks.⁴⁸ While online connections with overseas family and friends help, they cannot replace these youths' fundamental need for social interaction within their everyday spaces and lives.

Conclusion: Locating Youth Space within a Global Diaspora
 Transnational youths construct their identities within local spaces as they constantly move back and forth between, and even straddle, multiple national and cultural borders. The emergence of high-tech, multiethnic suburbs offers youth new materials with which to articulate their experiences of negotiating multiple cultural spaces. This case study of Taiwanese transnational youth has shown that, while their geographies may be very much dictated by parental and cultural educational norms, they actively engage, claim, and mark their local spaces with symbols of their complex social and cultural identities. Asian malls that act as youth social hubs and exclusive soccer fields where Taiwanese American youth play out their multicultural identities are sites that show how transnational youths take part in defining the value and meaning of the spaces that constitute their everyday geographies of home.

Our research informs the existing scholarship in youth studies that transnational youth engender fluid, hybrid, and often multiple cultural identities. While they may act “American” in Taiwan, they may seem more “Asian” in the United States as they negotiate between their multiple home landscapes. Their lives, identities, and cultures are at once neither wholly Taiwanese nor American. Whether in suburban Hsinchu or the Silicon Valley, they are part of an emerging global elite that belongs neither to one society nor another, but rather to both simultaneously. This seeming contradiction forces youth to construct a new position through which to express their identity and culture, whether it be through the clothes they wear, the language they speak, or the spaces that they inhabit and claim as their own.

This process may not be an easy one. Transnational youth often feel a sense of ambivalence and unease about their roles as transcultural interpreters and sojourners. Nonetheless, transnational youths’ location at the national and cultural margins—their “in-betweenness”—makes their everyday landscapes all the more salient spaces for the expression of their multicultural identities.

Notes

1. Doreen Massey, “Spatial Construction of Youth Cultures,” Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine, eds., *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 1998): 123.
2. In other literatures, this mall typology has been termed “Chinese mall,” “pan-Asian mall,” or “Asian-themed malls.”

3. Shenglin Chang, *The Global Silicon Valley Home: Lives and Landscapes within Taiwanese American Trans-Pacific Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).
4. Field data was collected during two phases, from 1998 to 1999 and from 2007 to 2010. During the first phase, we interviewed high-tech families and conducted behavioral observations in the Silicon Valley and Hsinchu Science Park. In the second phase, we interviewed and surveyed educators and youth, conducted landscapes analyses, and observed various youth hangout locations in the San Francisco Bay Area, Hsinchu, and Taizhong.
5. Jonathon S. Epstein, "Introduction: Generation X, Youth Culture, and Identity," Epstein, ed., *Youth Culture: Identity in a Postmodern World* (Malden: Blackwell, 1998); Paul Hodkinson, "Youth Cultures: A Critical Outline of Key Debates," Hodkinson and Wolfgang Deicke, eds., *Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures, and Tribes* (New York: Routledge, 2007).
6. For works by the University of Chicago, see Robert Ezra Park, *The City: The Heritage of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925); Frederic Milton Thrasher, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927); Albert Kircidel Cohen, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (New York: Free Press, 1955). For works by the CCCS, see Dick Hebdige, *Subculture, The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979); Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (New York: Routledge, 1988). For works by recent cultural studies theorists, see Henry A. Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning* (South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey, 1988); Deena Weinstein, "Expendable Youth: The Rise and Fall of Youth Culture," Jonathon S. Epstein, ed., *Adolescents and Their Music: If It's Too Loud, You're Too Old* (New York: Garland, 1994).
7. Hodkinson.
8. *Ibid.*
9. See for example, B. Bradford Brown and Reed Larson, "The Kaleidoscope of Adolescence: Experiences of the World's Youth at the Beginning of the 21st Century," Brown, Larson, and T.S. Saraswati, eds., *The World's Youth: Adolescence in Eight Regions of the Globe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Pam Nilan and Carles Feixa, *Global Youth? Hybrid Identities, Plural Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
10. For works on global youth culture, see Alice Schlegel, "The Global Spread of Adolescent Culture," R.K. Silbereisen and L.J. Crockett, eds., *Negotiating Adolescence in Times of Social Change: Cross-national Perspectives on Developmental Process and Social Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). On localization of youth cultural practice see A. Bame Nsamenang, "Adolescence in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Image Constructed from Africa's Triple Inheritance," Brown, Larson, and Saraswati, eds., 2002; Mahmood Shahabi, "Youth Subcultures in Post-Revolution Iran: An Alternative Reading," Nilan and Feixa, eds., 2006.; Pam Nilan, "The Reflexive Youth Culture of Devout Muslim Youth in Indonesia," Nilan and Feixa, eds., 2006.
11. On youth culture and China's one-child policy, see Harold W. Stevenson and Akane Zusho, "Adolescence in China and Japan: Adapting to a Changing Environment," Brown, Larson, and Saraswati, eds., 2002. On

- the post-9/11 Islamist revival, see Nilan, 2006. On the Taiwan's competitive educational system, see Chang, 2006.
12. See for example Kevin Lynch and Tridib Banerjee, *Growing Up in Cities: Studies of the Spatial Environment of Adolescence in Cracow, Melbourne, Mexico City, Salta, Toluca, and Warszawa* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977); Joa McCord, *Violence and Childhood in the Inner City* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Valentine and Skelton, eds., 1998. For studies particular to suburban youth, see Donna Gaines, *Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); L. Hall, *Teenagers in Suburbia: A Case Study in a California Suburb* (unpublished manuscript, 1993).
 13. Patricia Leigh Brown, "In California Malls, New Chinatowns: Booming Asian-American Shops Serve as Cultural Centers," *New York Times*, March 24, 2003, A10.
 14. This number is based on a study by William Frey of the 102 most populated metropolitan areas, using Census 2000 data. See William H. Frey, "Melting Pot Suburbs: A Study of Suburban Diversity," Bruce Katz and Robert E. Lang, eds., *Redefining Urban and Suburban America: Evidence from Census 2000* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2003): 155-180. Frey's study indicates that Asian Americans have the largest percentage of suburban residents of any racial minority group.
 15. Audrey Singer, "The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways" (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004).
 16. Wei Li, "Anatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles," *Urban Studies* 35:3 (1998): 479; and Li, *Ethnoburb: The New Ethnic Community in Urban America* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009).
 17. Chang.
 18. Li, *Ethnoburb*, 39. Other examples in the transnational literature include: Wei Li, ed., *From Urban Enclave to Ethnic Suburb: New Asian Communities in Pacific Rim Countries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006); Johanna L. Waters, "Transnational Family Strategies and Education in the Contemporary Chinese Diaspora," *Global Networks* 5:4 (2005): 359-377; Francis Leo Collins, "Transnationalism Unbound: Detailing New Subjects, Registers and Spatialities of Cross-Border Lives," *Geography Compass* 3:1 (2009): 434-458; Hasmita Ramji, "British Indians 'Returning Home': An Exploration of Transnational Belongings," *Sociology* 40:4 (2006): 645-662; Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Chang.
 19. U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.
 20. U.S. Census Bureau, 2007. In 2007, Caucasians made up 32 percent of the population, Latinos 15 percent, and African-Americans 3 percent. Unlike most of the Silicon Valley, Fremont is not located within Santa Clara County. It is in Alameda County, adjoining Santa Clara at its northern edge. Many high-tech companies and their workers from the core of the Silicon Valley have located in this area since the 1980s.
 21. U.S. Census Bureau, 2007. In 2007, 37 percent of the Asian population in Fremont was Chinese and 34 percent were Indian. Fremont also includes

small populations of other Asian ethnic groups, including Filipinos, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese.

22. *Ibid.*
23. The report surveyed 2,000 foreign-born engineers (Taiwanese, Indian, mainland Chinese, and others) in the Silicon Valley. The survey focused on high-tech engineers, managers, and CEOs and the business trips they took. It did not collect information about return trips for other reasons or those taken by other family members. Based on our fieldwork, we believe that these numbers of trips would be much higher if these other factors were taken into account. See AnnaLee Saxenian, Yasuyuki Motoyama, and Xiaohong Quan, "Local and Global Networks of Immigrant Professionals in Silicon Valley" (San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California, 2002).
24. *U.S. News and World Report*, "Best High Schools: Mission San Jose High," available online at: http://www.usnews.com/listings/high-schools/california/mission_san_jose_high_school.
25. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average housing cost in Mission San Jose in 2006 was \$831,000.
26. Anonymous interview by Willow Lung Amam, Fremont, CA, March 16, 2010.
27. Lori Aratani, "Stressed Out Students," *Washington Post Magazine* Educational Review, November 5, 2007.
28. Anonymous interview by Willow Lung Amam, Fremont, CA, March 1, 2010. According to Orellana, Thorne, Chee, and Lam (2001), transnational families often stress the importance of education to enhance their families' future position. See M. F. Orellana, B. Thorne, et al. "Transitional Childhoods: The Participation of Children in Processes of Family Migration," *Society for the Study of Social Problems* 48:4 (2001): 20.
29. Anonymous interviews by Willow Lung Amam, Fremont, CA, March 5, 2010.
30. Aratani, 2007.
31. Hsinchu Science Park, "Hsinchu Science Park Annual Report 2008," R. Yen, ed. (Hsinchu: Hsinchu Science Park Administration, 2009). According to this report, annual sales revenue among high-tech companies in Hsinchu reached \$1.008 trillion NT (or about \$31.5 billion US) in 2008.
32. Chang.
33. Ya-Wei Lin and Wei-Yun Yang, "They Spend More Time Speaking English than Chinese: Bilingual Education Is Mushrooming, But Can Your Children Take It?," *Business Weekly* (April 2003): 104-109.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Interview by Shenglin Elijah Chang, 2010.
36. Interviewees explained other digital divides between Taiwanese transnational and local youth. For instance, Taiwanese youth more commonly use MSN for instant messaging, while transnational or American-born youth often prefer AOL. In terms of search engines, transnational and American youth tend to use Google, while local Taiwanese youth more commonly use Yahoo Taiwan.

37. For more on the design of Asian malls see D.C. Lai, "A Study of Asian-themed Malls in the Aberdeen District of City of Richmond, British Columbia" (Vancouver: Vancouver Centre of Excellence for RIIM, 2001).
38. Thomas Consultants Development Strategies, "Assessment of Asian-themed Retail: City of Fremont" (Fremont: Thomas Consultants Development Strategies, 2005).
39. Chang.
40. Patricia Leigh Brown, 7.
41. *Ibid.*
42. In the San Francisco Bay Area, Tapioca Express has 22 locations; Quickly has 43.
43. Thomas.
44. Rob Drew, *Karaoke Nights: An Ethnographic Rhapsody*. (Walnut Creek: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001): 22.
45. Interview by Shenglin Elijah Chang, 1998.
46. Interview by Shenglin Elijah Chang, 2009.
47. Michael Black studied a similar phenomenon in the San Francisco Bay area among Irish immigrant youth who regularly gather on public soccer fields. See Michael Francis Black, "Cultural Identity: Sport, Gender, Nationalism and the Irish Diaspora" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1997).
48. Interviews by Shenglin Elijah Chang, 2010.



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