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Home-leaving and Home-returning Behavior of

Taiwanese Young Adults

欲走還留?台灣青年的離巢與歸巢行為初探

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Life course transition to adulthood has changed toward a delayed and reversible pattern in most industrialized countries in recent decades. With intense discussion of the late-booming phenomenon of young adults in Western countries, little attention has been paid to the transition process for Asian youth. This paper investigates the home-leaving and home-returning behavior of Taiwanese young adults from age 19 to age 24, to reveal one of respects of the dynamic process of becoming adults in the context mixed with traditional culture and advanced modernity as in Taiwan. Drawing from four waves of longitudinal survey data of the Taiwan Youth Project, it is found that there exist significant differences between genders and areas in rates of leaving home and returning home during early adulthood. Young men tend to have higher rate of leaving home than young women in early adulthood. Urban youth tend to have lower rate of leaving home, but higher rate of returning home than rural counterparts. In addition, the results also indicate that young adults from blue-collar families are least likely to leave home in this stage. Despite that most of Taiwanese parents show strong preference of co-residence with their adult children, parental attitude does not have effects on young adults' home-leaving or home-returning behavior.

Introduction

Life course perspective has been intensely applied in the research of human development in recent decades. It highlights the dynamics of life process and the linkages between a series of important life events. These life events are closely connected to individual development and the family life cycle (Elder, 1994; Kulu & Milewski, 2007). Among various stages of life evolutions, the transition from adolescence to adulthood draws the most concerns in recent related studies. It is the critical period of time that individuals achieve important adult roles and build up their social identity. However, the transition process to adulthood has become more unpredictable and heterogeneous (Goldscheider et al., 1993; Jacob & Kleinert, 2008). For new generation, adulthood does not begin right after adolescence ends as it was supposed to be. The routes to adulthood become more diversified and even reversible for contemporary young adults (Furstenberg, 2010; Fussell et al., 2007).

To define “full adulthood”, there have been several markers ever discussed in literatures (Hogan, 1981; Modell et al., 1976; Settersten, 2007; Shanahan, 2000). Among them, leaving parental home signifies the first step toward adulthood for contemporary youth, then it entails a series of life events as finishing school, starting full-time job, entering marriage and starting childbearing. Accordingly, the timing of home-leaving is regarded as the most critical signal that would influence subsequent life course transitions. Normatively, young adults experience these events and achieve subsequent social and family roles accordingly. As proposed, there has been existed a timetable implicitly standardizing the order of major life events (Neugarten et al., 1965). Nevertheless, it becomes more and more prevalent that young adults delay their entry into adult world.

Previous studies report that leaving parental home at a very early age would lead to negative social and economic results due to the lack of preparation and maturation

for taking adult roles (Aassve et al. 2007; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1993; White & Lacy, 1997). However, there is no agreement on whether the postpone of home-leaving would lead to a positive or negative consequence. It is argued that delayed home-leaving allows young people to receive more parental support and capital which in turns be beneficial for future life development (White & Lacy, 1997). Studies conducted in Australia and Italy show a positive relationship between staying in parental home and individual educational attainment (Bynner et al., 2002; Rossi, 1997). Nevertheless, negative consequence of delayed home-leaving has been pointed out that it would hinder individual's perception of their adult roles and would cause an effect on self-evaluation (Schnaiberg & Goldenberg, 1989). It is also indicated that young adults experiencing independent residence before marriage tend to be more goal-oriented, but have weaker traditional family value than those staying at home until marriage (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1989; Waite et al., 1986). Leaving parental home may be either a constraint or an opportunity for young adults. There is no clear-cut conclusion. Other contextual factors must be considered as well.

In addition to the postpone of home-leaving, it is also pointed out that leaving home is a dragging along process, involving back and forth movement, rather than one-time separation (Hareven & Adams, 2004). It is proposed that the pattern of transition status today is featured as synchronic and reversible rather than linear pattern as it was. It is observed that young people moves around between one's own place and parent home (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998). Schnaiberg and Goldenberg (1989) call the generation as incomplete launched young adults. They do not have immediate life goals to achieve as the old generation did. However, the late-booming generation has altered contemporary family and labor force structure.

While the phenomenon of delayed home-leaving draws growing concerns and discussions in Western countries, merely little attention was paid in this aspect in

Asian societies. In contrast with the Western families, family solidarity is especially emphasized in Confucian societies in East Asia, such as South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, and the intergenerational co-residence is still prevalent in these countries (Chattopadhyay & Marsh, 1999; Ting & Chiu, 2002; Yi & Lin, 2009; Zhang, 2004). In some East Asian societies, parents are still willing to provide various kinds of aids to their adult children when needed (Zeng et al., 1994). With strong family ties knitted in the culture, it takes more considerations, sometimes compromises, to move out of parental home in early adulthood. Consequently, there exists ambivalence between leaving and staying in the nest for adult children, and struggle between letting go and keeping in for the parents.

Doing right things at the right time is socially expected in the process of life course transitions. However, there may be different definitions regarding the “right things” and “right time” for young adults between Western and Asian societies. Because of the long-lasting traditional culture of co-residence in many Asian societies, it is often overlooked in the research on home-leaving and home-returning patterns for Asian youth. It is the aim of this study to explore Taiwanese young adults’ home-leaving and home-returning behavior. A more comprehensive picture of transitional process to early adulthood of Asian youth will be presented.

Data, Measurements and Hypotheses

The data used in this study come from Taiwan Youth Project (TYP)¹. Taiwan Youth Project is a longitudinal research since 2000, following the life course development of Taiwanese youth from adolescence to adulthood. Two cohorts of samples, 1st and 3rd graders of junior high school in 2000, were drawn from both urban (Taipei City and Taipei County) and rural (I-lan County) settings based on a multi-stratified sampling frame. In addition to interviews on adolescent samples for each wave of survey, parental data were collected for certain waves of surveys. The data sets used in this study are mainly from four waves (wave 5 to wave 8) of survey data of the senior cohort (3rd graders in 2000, as called J3 samples), capturing young adults' development upon entering adulthood from age 19 to mid-20s. There are totally 1500 observations entering adulthood on wave 5, and that will be the base samples for the following analyses.

The major research interests focus on the observation of home-leaving and home-returning behavior of young adults. The rates of leaving home² for four consecutive waves of survey are first presented by gender and area. Reasons of leaving home are also explored. It can be anticipated that the wave-specific rates of leaving home may fluctuate throughout early adulthood, and young people may come and go sporadically. As a result, the general rates of leaving home and general rates of returning home are calculated by combining four waves of survey data. The general rate of leaving home is the proportion of young adults who ever left home during the period of age 19 to age 24. In the same manner, the general rate of returning home indicates the proportion of young adults who ever left home came back to parental home anytime during the same period of observation.

¹ Project website: <http://www.typ.sinica.edu.tw>

² For each wave of survey, samples were asked: "Are you currently living at home?"

Logistic regression models will be applied to determine the significant covariates explaining the likelihood of home-leaving and home-returning for Taiwanese youth in early adulthood. Several independent variables are examined in the logistic regression models. Based on socialization theory, young men are more socialized toward an independent role than women, thus it is hypothesized that young men are more likely to leave parental home and less likely to return home after their departure than young women in this stage. Likewise, the birth order may have an effect on the likelihood of home-leaving and home-returning since first-born children are assumed to be socialized toward autonomy than children of later parities. Moreover, an area difference is hypothesized in home-leaving and home-returning behavior. Young adults in rural areas are hypothesized to be more likely to leave home when entering adulthood than those in urban areas due to the limited opportunities for work or tertiary education. Parents' Jobs serve as an indicator of social class and act as a kind of family resources, which may push or pull young adults to leave home or return home. Finally, the measure of parental attitude on co-residence will be included in the analytic model to explore its effect on young adults' home-leaving and home-returning decisions. It is hypothesized that parents showing preference of co-residence with adult children will increase the likelihood of leaving home and decrease the likelihood of returning home of young adults.

Results

The wave-specific rates of leaving home in early adulthood are presented in Table 1. It is found that the highest rate of leaving home for young women appear at age 20 (41.3%), while the highest rate for young men comes later at age 22 (42.5%). Young women show higher rates of leaving home in the first two years of entering adulthood, but young men surpass in the following two waves. The rates of leaving

home drop to the lowest points at age 24 for both young men (31.9%) and young women (26.8%). The findings suggest that the home-leaving behavior of Taiwanese youth does not follow a linear-growing pattern as age increases. On average, the rate of leaving home is 35.4 percent at age 19, and it increases to 41.1 percent at age 20 and 22. Finally, it drops below 30 percent at age 24.

Table 1 Rates of Leaving Home in Early Adulthood

	W5	W6	W7	W8
	Age 19	Age 20	Age 22	Age 24
Sex				
Male	33.8	40.7	42.5	31.9
Female	37.1	41.3	39.7	26.8
Area				
Taipei City	31.4	35.4	36.7	26.8
Taipei County	28.5	31.1	31.6	22.9
Yi-Lan County	54.5	65.2	64.8	44.7
Total	35.4	41.0	41.1	28.9

The differences in rates of leaving home across areas are salient. Young adults from rural I-lan have higher rates of leaving home than their urban counterparts throughout four waves of observation. There are 54.5 percent of rural youth left parental home at the first year of adulthood, compared with that of 31.3 and 28.5 percent of youth from Taipei City and Taipei County. The rate of leaving home of rural youth keeps increasing to 65.2 percent at age 20 and 64.8 percent at age 22, but it drops to only 44.7 percent at age 24. The rates of leaving home of urban youth are comparatively lower. The highest rates of leaving home of youth from Taipei City (36.7%) and Taipei County (31.6%) appear at age 22.

The reasons for leaving home are further explored as shown in Table 2. Although leaving parental home is symbolized as the first step toward autonomy in Western

societies, it is certainly not the case for Taiwanese youth. The findings suggest that the majority of Taiwanese youth left parental home due to involuntary grounds. The major reasons of leaving parental home are the far distance of school or workplace. Only a small percent of young adults left parental home for pursuing autonomy. It is logical to conjure a sizable rate of home-returning when these involuntary explanations disappear.

Table 2 Reasons for Leaving Home in Early Adulthood by Gender

	Age 20		Age 22		Age 24	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%
School/workplace too far from home	77.5	84.9	71.0	84.5	68.7	79.4
Required to live in a dorm	14.4	8.5	6.6	3.9	0.4	0.0
Pursuing autonomy	3.0	4.8	10.8	5.7	3.6	2.9
Married	---	---	---	---	0.4	9.3
Military Service	---	---	---	---	21.8	1.5
Other reasons	5.1	1.1	11.7	6.0	5.2	6.8

Table 3 shows the general rates of leaving home and returning home by gender and area. These figures pool the wave-specific rates of leaving home to general indicators of home-leaving and home-returning in this stage. Overall speaking, urban men have higher general rates of leaving home, but lower rates of returning home than urban women. The scenario goes opposite way for rural youth. More than 90 percent of young women from I-lan County have ever left parental home in early adulthood, higher than the 82.7 percent of young men. However, there are more proportions of young men returning home (54.9%) after their departure than young women (45.5%) of I-lan County. It implies that the push effect in rural settings may be more significant for young men than young women. On the contrast, the pull effect seems more salient for urban young women, especially for those from Taipei City.

There are more than 70 percent of them returning home. The returning rate also reaches 64.7 percent for young women from Taipei County.

Table 3 General Rates of Leaving Home and Returning Home in Early Adulthood by Gender and Area

	Leaving Home		Returning Home	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Taipei City	63.6% (136)	53.2% (108)	50.7% (69)	71.3% (77)
Taipei County	61.4% (244)	49.4% (188)	58.5% (110)	64.7% (99)
Yi-lan County	82.7% (162)	90.2% (156)	54.9% (89)	45.5% (71)

Logistic regression models are constructed for further comprehension of home-leaving and home-returning behavior of Taiwanese youth. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of major independent variables in the analytic models. It is interesting showing that a majority of Taiwanese parents have a preference of co-residence with their adult children before marriage. There are still more than half of these parents showing such preference after marriage.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics for Major Explanatory Variables of Leaving Home and Returning Home

Variables	N	%
Sex		
Male	773	51.5
Female	727	48.5
Area		
Taipei City	451	30.1
Taipei County	664	44.3
Yi-Lan County	385	25.7
Birth Order		
First-Born	625	41.7
Later-Born	874	58.3
Parent's Job		
Professional	432	28.8
Clerk/Service	258	17.2
Laborer	533	35.6
Retired/Jobless	275	18.4
Parental Attitude toward Co-residence before Marriage		
Preferred	1461	97.4
Not-Preferred	39	2.6
Parental Attitude toward Co-residence after Marriage		
Preferred	800	53.7
Not-Preferred	689	46.3

Table 5 presents the analytic results of logistic regression model of leaving home. After controlling other explanatory variables, gender, area and parental job serve as the significant variables in this analysis. The results confirm earlier hypotheses that young women are less likely to leave parental home than young men, and urban youth are less likely to leave parental home than rural youth. Compared with other family backgrounds, youth from blue-collar families are least likely to leave parental home. However, birth order and parental attitude on co-residence, either before or after

marriage, do not show significant effects on the decision of home-leaving.

Table 5 Logistic Regression Analysis of Leaving Home of Taiwanese Youth

	B	Exp(B)
Gender (Male)		
Female	-.304	.738*
Area (Yi-Lan County)		
Taipei City	-1.587	.204***
Taipei County	-1.670	.188***
Birth Order (Later-Born)		
First-Born	-.106	.899
Parent's Job (Laborer)		
Professional	.434	1.543**
Clerk/Service	.364	1.438*
Retired/Jobless	.385	1.470*
Attitude on Co-residence before marriage (Not preferred)		
Preferred	.494	1.639
Attitude on Co-residence after marriage (Not preferred)		
Preferred	.002	1.002
Intercept=	2.112	
-2 log-likelihood=	1676.872	
Pseudo R-squares=	.127	
N=	1398	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 6 shows the analytic results of logistic regression model of returning home. After controlling other explanatory variables, only area and parental job have significant effects on the likelihood of home-returning. The gender difference disappears in explaining the likelihood of home-returning. The results indicate that young women are more likely to return parental home than young men, which confirms the hypothesis proposed earlier. Compared with young adults from I-lan County, urban youth are more likely to return parental home. The effect of parental

jobs is significant when comparing between white-collar and blue-collar families.

Young adults from professional family background are less likely to return parental home than those from blue-collar background. Contrary to earlier hypothesis, families with higher social status enhance the probability of branching out young adults, rather than keeping them with parents.

Table 6 Logistics Regression Analysis of Returning Home of Taiwanese Youth

	B	Exp(B)
Gender (Male)		
Female	.200	1.221
Area (Yi-Lan County)		
Taipei City	.468	1.597*
Taipei County	.496	1.641**
Birth Order (Later-Born)		
First-Born	.216	1.241
Parent's Job (Laborer)		
Professional	-.415	.660*
Clerk/Service	-.072	.931
Retired/Jobless	-.372	.689
Attitude on Co-residence before marriage (Not preferred)		
Preferred	-.471	.624
Attitude on Co-residence after marriage (Not preferred)		
Preferred	-.011	.989
Intercept=	-.165	
-2 log-likelihood=	1195.055	
Pseudo R-squares=	.034	
N=	892	

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Discussion

In this paper, data from the longitudinal Taiwan Youth Project are used to analyze the transitional process of home leaving and home returning behavior during early adulthood in Taiwan. Several important factors are identified in explaining young

adults' home-leaving and home-returning behavior; they are: gender, area and parental job. Leaving home is considered to be a first marker of entering adulthood for Western youth; however, it works more like a strategic movement rather than the declaration of autonomy for Taiwanese youth. In Taiwanese family culture, leaving home is closely tied with marriage. Adult children do not branch out until a very late age, and it may be a sensitive issue within families. The cultural meaning of "leaving home" should be taken more deliberate interpretation.

The role of parental attitude does not show out in this study. However, it would be important to look into the parent-child relationships during the transition process. The family congruence or conflict during the transition process may cast an effect on adult children's home-leaving and home-returning decision.

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