

Conference Abstract – East Asian Learners

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Cultural Identity Change and the Repatriation of Taiwanese Academic Sojourners in the UK

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Living and working in close proximity to international academic sojourners, we all will instinctively, or indeed empirically, be conscious that the sojourn is, for many, a time of challenge to existing cultural schemata which frequently results in changes in construal of the self and the wider community. Some sojourners seem to have an inclination to adopt certain cultural scripts of the host country while others seem to become more affirmed in their own cultural backgrounds. The important implications of such change on the repatriation experience and ultimately the wider home community seem to be largely underrepresented in the literature. It is the aim of this study therefore to extend the existing body of knowledge in this regard taking the contextual focus of the Taiwanese academic sojourner returning from postgraduate study in the UK.

This paper discusses one of the key emergent themes of a recent doctoral study which takes Sussman's (2000) Cultural Identity Model of Cultural Transitions as a theoretical starting point from which to investigate manifestations of cultural identity change in Taiwanese postgraduate students in the UK. The implications of these changes are then considered through detailed qualitative analysis of the repatriation experiences of the same students. The findings are the result of semi-structured in-depth interviews with 35 repatriated Taiwanese academic sojourners and reveal most significantly a close correlation between the quality and quantity of contact with the host culture and the affective nature of the repatriation experience. Implications of these findings for UK higher educational institutions will be opened up to the audience for debate following the presentation.