

**THE UNEXPECTED TRANSFORMATIONS OF
CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Studies

School of Social Sciences

University of Adelaide

November 2010

Contents

Contents	ii
Table of Figures	vi
Abstract	vii
Declaration	ix
Acknowledgements	x
Introduction.....	1
PART I – CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT.....	8
1 The historical and social context of Chinese students studying overseas.....	9
1.1 Chinese education and study abroad	10
1.1.1 Education and study abroad before 1949	10
1.1.1.1 Classical education	10
1.1.1.2 Chinese students abroad in the 19 th century.....	12
1.1.1.3 Chinese students studying abroad in the early 20 th century	13
1.1.1.4 Education reform before 1949.....	14
1.1.2 Education and study abroad between 1949 and 1978	15
1.1.3 Education and social mobility in the post 1978 period	17
1.1.3.1 The current structure of the education system, including recent trends, private education	17
1.1.3.2 Re-stratification in Chinese society	19
1.1.3.3 The economic and social ‘returns’ on education	20
1.1.3.4 Competition for education	21
1.1.3.5 Expansion of education	22
1.1.3.6 The one-child policy	24
1.1.3.7 Chinese students overseas after 1978.....	25
1.2 International education and Chinese students	28
1.2.1 The Australian context.....	28
1.2.2 Chinese students in Australia	30
1.2.3 Research about international students.....	34
1.2.3.1 Market oriented research	35
1.2.3.2 Research to support the needs Chinese international students overseas....	37
1.2.3.3 Outcomes of the international education experience – the bigger picture....	39
1.3 Conclusion	42
2 Theoretical framework – Bourdieu and the study of Chinese international students.....	44
2.1 Bourdieu.....	45
2.1.1 Capital.....	45
2.1.1.1 Economic capital	46
2.1.1.2 Cultural capital.....	46
2.1.1.3 Social capital	48
2.1.2 Conversion of capital, field and habitus.....	49
2.1.3 Capital, field, habitus and the reproduction of inequality.....	50
2.1.4 Applying Bourdieu’s concepts to education and social change in China	52

2.1.4.1	Graduate unemployment and decline in value of educational qualifications	54
2.1.5	The limitations of Bourdieu's concepts when applied to Chinese international students	55
2.2	Bourdieu across borders: transnational perspectives	56
2.2.1	The transnational accumulation of capital I: Chinese overseas students before 1949	58
2.2.1.1	The deployment of capital in internationally focussed fields	61
2.2.1.2	The contribution of early overseas education to social reproduction	61
2.2.1.3	The spatial dimension of capital accumulation	63
2.2.2	The transnational accumulation of capital II: Chinese international students in the 21 st century	64
2.2.2.1	Economic capital	65
2.2.2.2	Institutionalised cultural capital	66
2.2.2.3	Objectified cultural capital	70
2.2.2.4	Social capital	71
2.2.3	Globalisation, post-modern values and embodied cultural capital	72
2.2.3.1	Post-modern values as embodied cultural capital?	75
2.2.4	Habitus, family background and the deployment of transnationally generated capital	77
2.3	Conclusion	79
PART II – METHODOLOGY		80
3	Study design	81
3.1	Rationale for selection of participants	82
3.1.1	Rationale for collecting qualitative data only from students	82
3.1.2	Rationale for interviewing students while they are students	83
3.1.3	Rationale for limiting sample to university (coursework) students	84
3.2	Recruitment of participants	86
3.3	Description of the interviews	88
3.4	Data analysis	91
4	Characteristics of sample	94
4.1	Age of participants	95
4.2	Gender	96
4.3	Region of origin	97
4.4	Family background	98
4.5	Participants' education in China	101
4.6	Participants' education in Australia	104
4.7	The future: further study and migration	106
PART III – FROM DEFICIENCY TO DISTINCTION: OVERSEAS EDUCATION IN THE LIVES OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS		109
5	Deficiency and Desire: Experiences of education in China and the attraction of Australia	110

5.1	PART I – Deficiencies: Individual failure and the failure of education in China.....	111
5.1.1	Surviving school: problems with the Chinese education system.....	112
5.1.1.1	Hours of study	112
5.1.1.2	Styles of learning & teaching and individual personality	114
5.1.1.3	Perceived inflexibility of Chinese schooling	115
5.1.1.4	Pressure	116
5.1.2	Experiences and consequences of academic underachievement	117
5.1.2.1	Paths to (relative) failure	118
5.1.2.2	Paying for access to ‘better’ education in China	123
5.1.2.3	Leaving China later	126
5.1.3	Systemic problems: the mismatch of school and family values	128
5.1.4	Escaping China	136
5.1.5	Conclusion	137
5.2	PART II – Desires and the foreign allure: Expectations and attractions of Australia	139
5.2.1	Building competitive advantage and employment prospects	140
5.2.2	The value of learning English	146
5.2.3	The attraction of Western culture: Curiosity, challenge and personality	147
5.2.4	Keeping options open – Migrating and <i>Guanxi</i>	150
5.3	Complexities	154
6	Experiencing, growing and becoming: Life in Australia	158
6.1	Practicalities of living and learning in Australia.....	159
6.1.1	Challenges of Australian life: English, culture and friends	159
6.1.1.1	Communicating with homestays and housemates.....	160
6.1.1.2	Finding Australian friends.....	162
6.1.1.3	Communicating at school and university.....	163
6.1.2	Studying at school and university	164
6.1.2.1	Quantity and level of work required.....	165
6.1.2.2	Styles of teaching and learning	168
6.2	Being Independent.....	172
6.3	Getting Wise	176
6.3.1	Exposure to difference.....	176
6.3.2	Accepting difference	178
6.3.3	Reassessing China.....	180
6.4	Growing and changing	183
6.4.1	Becoming adults	184
6.4.2	The importance of the Australian environment on participants’ development	186
6.4.2.1	The release of true personality.....	186
6.4.2.2	Being Western before coming to Australia.....	188
6.4.2.3	Absorbing Australia	191
6.5	Being satisfied and content.....	193
7	Finding distinction: Life beyond an overseas education	196
7.1	Visions of the future: More opportunities for mobility and career	197
7.1.1	The possibility of permanent residence	198
7.1.1.1	Field of study and applying for permanent residence	198
7.1.1.2	Permanent residence and permanent migration.....	200
7.1.1.3	Permanent residency for convenience.....	203
7.1.2	The increase in career options upon return to China	204
7.1.3	Diversity of career choices	206

7.1.4	Working between Australia and China	207
7.1.5	Social mobility, material wealth and class	208
7.1.6	Aiming for a comfortable lifestyle	209
7.1.7	Embracing options and opportunity	210
7.2	Achieving the vision: Communicating, understanding and becoming	211
7.2.1	The value of an Australian qualification and speaking better English	211
7.2.2	The embodied cultural capital of interculturality	216
7.2.3	Interculturality as personal transformation	221
7.2.4	Maintaining transformation and maintaining Chinese identity	224
7.2.5	Interculturality for social change in China	226
7.2.6	Conclusion	228
8	Conclusion.....	230
	Appendices.....	239
	Appendix 1: Index of references to participants.....	239
	Appendix 2: Biographies of participants.....	240
	Appendix 3: Table of parents' occupations by class categorisation	266
	Appendix 4: Participant information sheet in English and Chinese	267
	Appendix 5: Consent form in English and Chinese	269
	Appendix 6: Complaint form.....	271
	Appendix 7: Original participant recruitment poster	272
	Appendix 8: Revised participant recruitment poster in English and Chinese	273
	Appendix 9: Original interview protocol.....	275
	Appendix 10: Revised interview protocol	276
	Bibliography.....	277

Table of Figures

Figure 1 – Students in regular institutions of higher education (new enrolments) 1978-2007 (Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China).....	23
Figure 2 – Students leaving China to study abroad and returning 1978-2008 (Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China).....	26
Figure 3 – Chinese international students in Australia 1988-2008 (all sectors) (Source: Australian Education International)	31
Figure 4 – Chinese international students in Australia 1997-2008 by sector (Source: Australian Education International)	32
Figure 5 – Chinese international students in South Australia 1999-2008 (Source: Australian Education International)	33
Figure 6 – Chinese international students in South Australia by sector 2002-2010 (Source: Australian Education International)	34
Figure 7 – Scale for plotting participant’s and their family’s relative social positions	91
Figure 8 – Number of participants, by age (n=39)	95
Figure 9 – Number of participants by age and gender (n=39)	96
Figure 10 – Number of students interviewed, by province (n=39)	97
Figure 11 – Parents’ class by employment sector (n=39).....	100
Figure 12 – Grandparents’ class (n=39).....	101
Figure 13 – Location of participants’ senior high school (n=39)	102
Figure 14 – Perceived chance of getting in to a Chinese university, by quality of university possible (n=39)	103
Figure 15 – Participants’ first level of study in Australia (n=39)	104
Figure 16 – Participants’ length of time in Australia, by starting sector (n=39).....	105
Figure 17 – Participants’ major at time of interview (n=39).....	106
Figure 18 – Intention to apply for permanent residence by length of time spent in Australia (n=39)	107
Figure 19 – Intention to undertake postgraduate studies by first level of education undertaken in Australia (n=36).....	108

Abstract

This thesis explores the contemporary phenomena of Chinese students going abroad to pursue their education. Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' is used to examine the broader social context of the international student experience. Most previous studies have focussed solely on this group's immediate concerns.

Part One argues that studying abroad has played an important role in China's education system for almost 150 years and is consistently linked with the accumulation of certain kinds of cultural capital and social reproduction. Bourdieu's conceptual framework explains these phenomena well but does not adequately account for transnational education undertaken in an era characterised by rapid social changes and globalisation.

Part Two outlines the design of this qualitative study into the lives of Chinese international students in Adelaide, Australia, and summarises relevant demographic characteristics. Part Three provides an analysis of the students' experiences including their lives in China before they went overseas (Chapter Five), their experiences in Australia (Chapter Six) and their perceptions of the roles that their overseas education will play after graduation (Chapter Seven).

The key findings include that these students saw themselves as being on a journey from what they and their families saw as major deficiencies or lack of opportunity in China as well as a means to overcome personal shortcomings. Their families believed that by studying overseas their children would be able to generate enough capital to find the success which would otherwise have been denied to them.

In Australia the students gained not only the capital they anticipated, but also transformed in ways they had not and could not have expected. They became more independent and confident. Importantly, they also became happier and more contented than they had been in China. This

inadvertent reconfiguration of their values can be seen as a shift from being almost solely modern and achievement-oriented to reflecting post-modern Western cultural values.

These unexpected transformations provide these students with unplanned further capital which arises from their capacity to function interculturally. Their new ability to confidently cross borders and take up highly valued jobs mediating between cultures gives them a key distinction over counterparts.

Bourdieu's concepts remain powerful tools for an analysis of the phenomena of Chinese international education but this work finds that a greater level of flexibility and acceptance of uncertainty needs to be introduced to take into account any unexpected outcomes of international education, the influences of global culture and the cultural differences between China and Australia.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Glen Stafford and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Acknowledgements

My deepest thanks go to my supervisors Dr Shoko Yoneyama, Associate Professor Margie Ripper and Dr Gerry Groot. With good humour and patience they have given me tireless guidance, inspiration and encouragement. They supported me when I set off down new avenues and they lit the way when I could not see how to move forward. Their unswerving commitment has brought out the best in me, and I have been truly fortunate to have three of the finest on my side.

To the students who participated in this study and shared their lives with me, I am sincerely thankful. Without them this project could not have come to fruition, and without their willingness to candidly respond to my curiosity it would not have been the project it is.

My fellow postgraduates at the Centre for Asian Studies have been outstanding. They have provided friendship, intellectual stimulation and the confidence that projects such as this do, eventually, get completed. In particular Joel Rathus and Shoo-lin Siah have been a constant source of support (and distraction) throughout, and for this I thank them.

I am grateful to my colleagues at the Centre for Asian Studies and the University of Adelaide for their encouragement and enthusiasm. Special thanks go to Professor Purnendra Jain and Professor Mobo Gao for the opportunities and support they have given me.

To my family and friends who have steadfastly believed in my ability and have gently encouraged me along the way, thank you.

My wife Jasmine has been my unwavering companion on this journey. Throughout the many challenges she has never hesitated in her confidence in me, and I could not have carried out this project without her love and support. And the arrival of our son Edward, while not exactly speeding up the process, has made it all the more worthwhile.

Introduction

From the mid 1990s to 2003 when this project began there was a large and rapid increase in the number of international students from mainland China¹ coming to Australia to continue their education. This increase was seen in all sectors, but particularly in schools and universities. Not only were Chinese school leavers venturing abroad to further their education, but students who had not yet finished high school were also doing so. The aim of this thesis is to develop a better understanding of these students and the role their overseas education plays in their lives and communities. The thesis examines the historical and social context in which the current rush to study abroad is taking place, explores the Chinese educational experiences and backgrounds of the students, shows how their experiences in Australia have affected them, and reveals what they think the future now holds.

This thesis therefore takes a broader view of the international education of Chinese students than most other studies which limit the frame of reference to the time the students are studying abroad. By examining their experiences of international education in this way it is possible to gain a more thorough understanding of the function of their international education in their lives and the communities in which they live. Moreover, developing such an understanding is necessary to better equip policy makers and practitioners with the knowledge to appropriately manage and support Chinese students abroad, as well as provide guidance as they graduate and embark on their careers.

In the midst of the great influx it may be possible to overlook the immediate need for this understanding. With the rapid growth of the Chinese economy and the consequent rise in disposable income, it can appear quite natural that families who are finally in a position to invest in international education choose to do so. And on the surface what the students and their families gain may also seem straightforward. An anecdote: when I was embarking on my doctoral research my supervisor, Dr Gerry Groot, invited the then Australian Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr

¹ In this thesis 'China' and 'Chinese' refers to the People's Republic of China, excluding Taiwan, Macao and Hong Kong.

Kevin Rudd MP to launch his first book. I was asked to meet Mr Rudd's car as it arrived, and in our ensuing conversation he asked what my research interests were. I explained that I was interested in what was going on with so many Chinese students coming to Australia, and Rudd quickly responded 'Ah, *zhuangqian*' (to make money). Somewhat taken aback I mumbled something in reply about it being a 'bit more complicated' than that. This is indeed the point: there is much more to the story as to why so many Chinese students are suddenly both able and choosing to study overseas than families simply investing in education in order to shore up their financial position. Moreover, there is more behind their experiences in Australia than what on the surface seems to be the Australian priority when it comes to international students – making money.

In most places in the world it is unusual for parents to send their fifteen and sixteen year old children to schools thousands of kilometres away, and to a country with a culture and education system foreign to all their experience. Moreover, they do not usually send their children away for seemingly indefinite periods and with no clear idea about when they will return. Even the Chinese students whose first program of study in Australia is at the undergraduate level are relatively young – generally in their late teens. Given that the overwhelming majority of Chinese international students are their parents' only children it seems that there must be significant social, educational or other pressures on families for them to countenance such long term separation.

The money involved is also considerable. If students first venture overseas at the high school level, costs can run into hundreds of thousands of dollars. The question of why people who are clearly already privileged, as those who can afford study abroad must be, feel that they need to go through such potential emotional and financial sacrifice does not appear to have an easy answer. Even if the reason is simply that they may think they will be able to 'make money', if the costs are substantial then the opportunity cost still has to bear some relationship to presumed returns. Nevertheless, families are continuing to invest their money and send their children abroad in numbers never seen before in Chinese history.

In order to gain a more complete picture of the drivers behind the rush to study abroad, the students' experiences overseas, and the benefits they will gain, this thesis draws on the conceptual

framework developed by Pierre Bourdieu, in particular the notions of capital and habitus. These concepts are relevant as they provide a toolbox for understanding the function of education within society, in particular as it relates to social reproduction and exclusion.

As the Chinese economy has moved towards operating a little more in line with market principles the opportunity structures for gaining social mobility have also changed. Old and new groups within Chinese society are in the process of marking out their positions based on new socio-economic realities. Chinese society is in flux, changing quickly, and the decisions for Chinese students to study in Australia are being made in this milieu. Bourdieu explicitly links the experience and function of education to social mobility and class reproduction, and what we see in China is a situation where new educational decisions are being made in a context where social positioning appears to be an important factor.

Bourdieu's theories, however, were developed in relation to a society within a singular nation-state, indeed, equating society with nation-state. In the context of increasing globalisation, where Chinese (and other) international students cross borders and continue their education in societies different from their own, it is therefore necessary to re-examine Bourdieu's concepts and reinterpret their applicability.

Chinese international students provide an excellent case study for a re-examination of Bourdieu's ideas. This is because this student exodus represents a significant sociological phenomenon; the differences between Chinese and, in this case Australian culture, provide a good platform for observations of cultural interactions and transformations; and, more practically, Chinese international students are readily accessible in Australian universities.

In order to gain a broader and more nuanced understanding of this group than available in most other research, this thesis examines the lives and experiences of Chinese international students from a variety of backgrounds studying at university in South Australia. Utilising a qualitative methodology it investigates the circumstances which led to the students leaving China, their family backgrounds and experiences of education in China, and it explores their experiences in Australian

education and society and how they feel they have changed and developed as a result. Finally it looks at the students' views about the role their Australian education will play in their lives in terms of career, lifestyle and social position. In turn, these experiences, with reference to the social contexts which the students both come from and arrive in, allow us to reassess the applicability of Bourdieu's ideas in contexts which stretch beyond the borders of an individual nation-state.

Following this introduction this thesis is divided into three parts. **Part One** (Chapters One and Two) addresses the historical, social and theoretical context for this study. **Part Two** (Chapters Three and Four) discusses the design of the study and details some demographic characteristics of the students involved. **Part Three** (Chapters Five to Seven) provides an analysis of the qualitative research carried out to address the questions raised above. The conclusion is found in Chapter Eight.

Chapter One provides an overview of the historical and social context of Chinese international education, from a Chinese and Australian/international perspective. This discussion allows a greater understanding of the context for the motivations, experiences and expected futures of Chinese international students as discussed in the analysis of the qualitative data later in the thesis. The chapter begins by tracing the development of Chinese education and the education of Chinese overseas from classical times until the start of the post-Mao reform period in 1978, and outlining how education, in particular study abroad, has long been linked to social mobility. The chapter continues by addressing the post-1978 social and educational changes that re-established access to education as a key factor in social mobility, and provided the social and economic foundation for the current exodus. This is followed by an analysis of the development of the international education sector in Australia, without which there would be no opportunities for Chinese students to access an Australian education, and a discussion of the contemporary trends of Chinese students coming to Australia. The chapter concludes with a review of literature addressing international students and their experiences abroad and argues that there is little existing research which incorporates an analysis of the students' backgrounds before they go abroad and the likely effects of their education on them in the future. It is therefore necessary to undertake this analysis in order to ascertain the function of an international education in the lives of

Chinese students and, in turn, the place of internationally educated students in Chinese society and beyond.

Chapter Two outlines the conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu as applied in this study. Bourdieu's concepts of social, economic and cultural capital, as well as field and habitus are introduced in the first section of Chapter Two. It is argued that while these concepts provide useful tools for this study they need to be reassessed in light of the transnational nature of the education being undertaken by Chinese international students as well as the growing influence of globalisation. In relation to Chinese students studying abroad the chapter argues that Bourdieu's concepts can be mobilised to understand Chinese international students of previous generations and today, and provides an analytical framework for further analysis arising from the findings in qualitative section of the thesis.

Part Two of this thesis begins with Chapter Three, the study design. This chapter explains that a qualitative methodology utilising in-depth open-ended interviews is an appropriate research method for this study as it provides an opportunity to explore the first hand experiences of the Chinese international students themselves. Such experiences inform the students' perceptions and actions, both of which are important for understanding the role that their education in Australia has on their lives, and, by extension, their communities. The chapter also describes the selection criteria for participation in the interviews and how participants were recruited. It concludes with a description of the interviews and an overview of the approach taken to analyse the interview data.

Chapter Four contains basic demographic data of the participants in the study in order to provide context for later analysis. It shows that among the 39 Chinese international students interviewed there is a diverse range of backgrounds, both socially and educationally. Moreover, there is a relatively even gender split, the participants come from across China, they have been in Australia for varying periods, and most are intending to apply for permanent residence. More information about individual participants is contained in Appendix 2.

Part Three consists of three chapters which provide an analysis of the interviews carried out for this study. Chapter Five primarily deals with the participants' experiences in China which led to them deciding to pursue education in Australia. The analysis indicates that a mix of perceived deficiencies in both the participants themselves and the Chinese education system meant that they would not be able to achieve their (and their families') educational goals if they had stayed in China. Going abroad was also perceived to have its own intrinsic benefits in terms of opening up more options and being able to experience Western culture. The chapter argues that each participant's unique pathway to an overseas education represents a combination of perceptions of deficiencies within China and desires believed to be able to fulfilled abroad.

Chapter Six addresses the experiences of the participants after arriving in Australia. In particular the chapter analyses how their experiences have resulted in them feeling that they have grown and developed, becoming more independent, broadminded and mature. These changes constitute a transformation which in most cases was quite unexpected, but very welcome indeed. As a result of these unexpected transformations the students are now satisfied and content with their lives in a way that would not have been achievable in China.

Chapter Seven explores what the participants believe they will achieve in the future, and how their experiences in Australia will contribute to this. The chapter starts with an analysis of the participants' plans for the future, including their hopes for permanent residency and how they view their career options. It is argued that while the communication skills and qualifications gained in Australia are important it is the participants' development of a highly valuable interculturality which gives them distinction over their counterparts and will allow them to achieve highly.

The final chapter of the thesis is Chapter Eight, the conclusion. It argues that the study abroad experience not only provides Chinese international students with the outcomes they expect but transforms them so they are empowered to pursue their lives to places not otherwise possible. The nature of the outcomes of studying abroad in turn has implications for inequality both between those who can and ca not be international students and among those who can. Finally, the chapter discusses Bourdieu's concepts in light of the findings of the study. It is argued that Bourdieu's

concepts retain their explanatory power, but the transnational context of international student mobility and the influence of globalisation introduce a much higher level of complexity into processes of social reproduction and social positioning.

**PART I – CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN HISTORICAL,
SOCIAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT**

1 The historical and social context of Chinese students studying overseas

The arrival of Chinese international students at Australian high schools and universities from the mid-late 1990s onwards represented a new phase in both the overseas education of Chinese students, and the reception of international students, Chinese in particular, into Australian educational institutions and society. This chapter examines the literature concerning the historical and social factors in China drawing students to study overseas, the context of their reception and experiences in Australia and their future prospects. The Chinese international students in Australia, including the participants in the study in Parts Two and Three of this thesis, came to study in Australia as a direct consequence of the intersection of historical developments in China and in Australia and their experiences and perceptions are inevitably shaped by them.

The first part of this chapter is concerned with the Chinese context for the departure of students to study overseas. Within China studying abroad has been part of the Chinese education 'system' to varying extents for the last one hundred and fifty years. Throughout this time Chinese students have been attracted to international qualifications to differing degrees, and gaining access to them has been easier or more difficult depending on the economic and political climate. International qualifications have also been consistently rewarded within Chinese society during this period. Over the past thirty years since the implementation of the reforms in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, and the last fifteen years in particular, the economic situation in China has improved to the extent that an international education is, for the first time, a realistic possibility for large numbers of Chinese students. In addition, there has been an increase in the social and economic returns for investments in education, and international education in particular, representing a continuation of the traditional linkage between educational achievement and social status in Chinese society. In 2008 there were a total of over four hundred and forty thousand Chinese students pursuing their studies abroad (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2010), a number unprecedented in Chinese history.

The second part of this chapter addresses the place of international students in the Australian education system and explores the literature which examines the implications of their presence on Australian campuses, as well as the students' experiences of Australian education and society. In the late twentieth century in particular, the concept of 'international education', encompassing the international movement of students and teachers, as well as the development of their international awareness, has gained prominence, and students from mainland China are an integral part of this. The recruitment of international students has important financial implications for receiving institutions, and their presence in these institutions and in Australian society more generally has had transformative effects on all involved. This section also reviews existing literature on students' experiences of international education and the outcomes derived from it.

1.1 Chinese education and study abroad

1.1.1 Education and study abroad before 1949

Education has played a greater role in the development of society in China than perhaps anywhere else in the world. Throughout China's history, the selection of elites has alternated between hereditary and meritocratic processes and as such education long been intimately linked to social mobility and social status. Having an education was the primary way the bureaucratic elite gained and reaffirmed their status and almost the only way a person from a non-elite family could raise theirs. Investing in the education of a family member who could pass an exam was a ticket to life-long job security, higher status and social and political power.

1.1.1.1 Classical education

The Chinese imperial examination system started during the Tang dynasty (618-906), became entrenched during the Sung (960-1279), and was abandoned in 1905 as part of the Qing dynasty's (1644-1911) attempts to modernise in the face of overwhelming and irresistible pressure from within and without. Ostensibly the main function of the examination system was to provide a meritocratic mechanism to select official appointments. This did not, however, mean that it was common for non-elites to compete with elites for these positions. The intensity of training required

in order to pass the exams and their impractical content (non-vernacular forms, both spoken and written, ancient classical texts) meant that only children of families (clans or lineages) with the resources available to invest in their education could realistically expect to succeed. Peasants, artisans and, until the late imperial period, merchants, were structurally excluded from the examination process, even if they were legally entitled to participate. As Elman describes, the imperial examination system served to shape and reproduce the political, social and cultural status quo in China throughout the time they were in force (Elman 1991a). The examination system legitimised the status of the elites by providing a justification for the maintenance of their position – the inability of non-elites to succeed in exams was interpreted as reflecting the non-elites' inferiority rather than indicating a lack of the social, cultural and economic resources necessary to succeed. Where examinations did provide an avenue for social mobility it was more often *within* the elite, rather than between different social groups (Elman 1991a, 18). Nevertheless, despite its limitations as a progressive social institution (Elman 1991b), the examination system provided a pathway for social mobility, or at the very least *appeared* to do so, however much it functioned in the interests of elites.

In the later Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911) teaching within the education system was largely devolved to private tutors, academies and lineage schools, all of which were accessible only via wealth and connections. The state schools which had been established under previous regimes diminished to the point where they were left as primarily centres of Imperial examination (Elman 1991a, 10-11). Education in China, and the examination system in particular, has thus long been popularly linked to pathways into the ranks of the elite, while at the same time masking the structural lack of opportunity for non-elites. Moreover, the primacy of an educational qualification has long been entrenched and represented a gateway to a career, and social mobility and power.

Towards the end of the 19th century serious questions started to be raised about the usefulness of the classical learning mandated by the imperial examination system in light of increasing threats from more modernised powers. The examinations were finally abolished in 1905, and their place as a selection tool among elites was quickly taken by study abroad (Wang 1966, 64).

1.1.1.2 Chinese students abroad in the 19th century

Although the imperial examination system continued until 1905, attempts to remedy some its maladies began earlier. One notable, and for this study particularly relevant, example is that of the Chinese Educational Mission which operated in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and sent Chinese boys to the United States of America in order to learn about the West and Western technological innovation. The Mission was conceived by Yung Wing,² himself the first Chinese graduate of a Western university (Yale) to return to China (La Fargue 1942; Wang 1966, 42). In 1872 Yung Wing, confident in his belief of the value of a Western education, convinced the Chinese government to send the first organised group of young students (aged 10-16) to study overseas, and the first 30 out of an eventual total of 120 left China to study at various levels in Hartford, Connecticut. The main reason for the government officials accepting the suggestion at the time was the growing realisation that China had fallen behind the West technologically and needed to catch up. They hoped that the students of the Chinese Educational Mission would bring back advanced Western knowledge to help China's development in areas such as science and engineering, particularly naval engineering (Wang 1966, 42). Due to growing concern among China's conservative bureaucrats about the students' 'Americanisation' they were recalled early by the Chinese government in 1881. The officials' negative perceptions of the program may have been influenced by the students' non-attendance at compulsory Chinese language lessons, removal of their queues³, adoption of American dress and participation in sport. On their return they felt they were badly treated by the authorities, but in the end they achieved more than would have been predicted by their relatively modest origins, among them a premier, cabinet ministers, admirals, ambassadors, engineers and university presidents (Huang 2002, 32). Despite being removed from their studies before they had the chance to receive their qualifications, they demonstrated that success was possible without needing to undergo the full extent of traditional classical training that the Chinese education system required.

Following the Chinese Educational Mission, various groups of students were sent overseas by the Chinese government in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Students were sent to

² pinyin = Rong Hong

³ Manchu (Qing) mandated hairstyle consisting of shaved forehead and braided ponytail.

Europe, the United States and Japan (Wang 1966, 41-73), primarily to learn the skills necessary to contribute to the modernisation and strengthening of China, particularly of the military. Other students to go abroad in the nineteenth century included those who were sponsored by Christian missionaries in China, the earliest to do so, as well as a small number of self-supporting students who it seems started going in the late 1890s (Wang 1966, 78, 82).

1.1.1.3 Chinese students studying abroad in the early 20th century

In the early decades of the twentieth century various government supported schemes to send students overseas were established, many of them administered by provinces. One of the most well known is the 'Diligent-Work-Thrift-Study Movement' which facilitated around two thousand students to work and study in France between 1912 and 1921. Although the movement was beset by problems regarding the quality of the students and of the funding, some of the students involved in it went on to play important roles in the Chinese Communist Party, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping being notable examples (Wang 1966, 109). The most popular destination during this period, however, was Japan, which attracted both subsidised and self-supported Chinese students in numbers estimated to total more than thirty thousand between 1900 and 1937 (Wang 1966, 119). The United States, in comparison, received around twenty thousand students from China between 1854 and 1953 (Wang 1966, 120). Over time the proportion of state-subsidised students studying overseas gradually fell as numbers of self-supported students rose, and the rationale behind the students' desire to study overseas shifted from being to support and strengthen China, to more self interested reasons (Wang 1966, 149). Wang cites a number of commentators from the 1940s indicating this. One 'prominent educator', for example:

...declared in 1948 that foreign study had become a routine part of higher education for those students who could afford it – "just as they proceeded from the primary school to the middle school, so they went abroad after they finished college." Thus by implication, foreign study had become associated more with a student's means and social status than with any particular goal or mission.

(Wang 1966, 149)

According to Wang, the students who studied abroad in the 19th and early 20th century and returned to China had advantages over those trained in China (Wang 1960, 852), and made significant contributions to China in many areas (Wang 1966). Areas where returnees found the most success were 'higher education, central government, and industries under the latter's control' (Wang 1960, 852). In total the numbers of Chinese students studying overseas in the period of Wang's survey, 1872-1949, numbered in no more than the tens of thousands (Wang 1966). Many of those who returned from overseas in the first decade of the twentieth century could sit for special examinations, with, according to Wang, 'successful candidates rapidly climb[ing] the mandarin's nine-rung ladder' (Wang 1960, 845). Overseas education had thus 'become the decisive stage of education' (Wang 1960, 845).

Wang argues that the overseas education of Chinese students in the early twentieth century reduced opportunities for social mobility as the high cost of studying abroad meant it was only available to a tiny proportion of the population – the vast majority of whom could not afford even primary school education. Moreover, students wanting to study abroad were generally required to already have studied in China before departing (Wang 1966, 152). Wang asserts that because of this, positions of influence which came to increasingly require the possession of overseas credentials were therefore open to an even smaller group of candidates than under the previous imperial examination system (Wang 1960, 844).

1.1.1.4 Education reform before 1949

Not only did study abroad develop in place of the imperial examination system – a new domestic education system was also introduced with levels of schooling deemed broadly equivalent to the previous levels of examination and, as noted by Wang, an overseas education was placed at the pinnacle. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century this education system was in a continual state of reform and reorganisation under various influences from abroad (Pepper 1996). It has always been from within the domestic education system that students have ventured abroad. The condition of the Chinese education system, the experiences of students within it, and the possibilities for students from it, to a large extent influence their decisions whether or not to study overseas.

The first attempt at a modern education system in 1904 was based on the Japanese model which was, in turn, based on the German system (Pepper 1996, 57). During the 1920s as a result of various influences, including those of US educationalist John Dewey who visited China from 1921-1922 and the Chinese scholars returned from the United States, the domestic education system was again reformed to be more in line with the American system (Dow 1971, 25-27; Pepper 1996, 91,61). During the first half of the twentieth century, however, the Chinese education system was still oriented towards the acquisition of qualifications through gateway examinations reminiscent of the imperial examination system. The system was top heavy and inefficient, with limited access to basic education for the vast majority of the population, and an excess supply of higher education. Even more than under the imperial system, education was primarily available only to those with significant existing economic means.

1.1.2 Education and study abroad between 1949 and 1978

The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 marked the beginning of a period of considerable change and upheaval in the Chinese education system. Initially drawing heavily on the experience of the Soviet Union, the new Communist government enacted policies aimed at extending educational opportunities to previously disadvantaged groups such as workers and peasants. One element of this was an attempt to establish an alternative, irregular, education system which included students undertaking work alongside their academic studies, the income from their labour partially funding their education (Unger 1980). The regular academic education system focussing on preparation for university entrance, however, maintained its predominance both in terms of structural importance and demand from families who viewed anything else as inferior (Pepper 1996, 345).

Two significant reforms introduced to the regular education system during the first decade of Communist government were the introduction of the 'key point' school system and nationwide university entrance exams. Key point, or *zhongdian*, schools received more resources and were able to recruit higher quality students who were, in turn, more likely to succeed in the university

entrance exams. The schools themselves were initially chosen from among the high quality schools in existence before 1949 and as such they 'played an important role in perpetuating the elitist traditions' of the pre-Communist era (Pepper 1996, 206). Rather than perpetuating the old elites, however, the new system provided greater educational opportunities for new elites. This was in part due to policies introduced in the early 1960s promoting preferential access to education for students from 'good' classes (e.g. workers, peasants, revolutionary cadres and soldiers) while those from 'bad' classes (e.g. landlords and capitalists) faced more hurdles, although the extent to which this occurred (and to whom, exactly) depended on the political climate at the time (Pepper 1996, 332). The regular education system also continued to be dominated by, and provide opportunities for, the educated intellectual class, a dominance which would continue for two decades until the Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution began in 1966 with a student-led mass movement which, among other things, swept away support for the education system as it had developed to that point. Although the mass movement phase led to significant disruption of all levels of education, particularly at the tertiary level, it culminated in a series of reforms which increased access to education among previously disenfranchised groups, particularly in the rural areas. This time, however, the reforms were carried out on the education system as a whole, rather than by attempting to establish a complementary irregular education system as had been attempted in the 1950s. Policies included the abolition of the key school system and university entrance exams and the establishment of elementary and secondary schools throughout rural areas (Hannum 1999, 199). At the tertiary level students were required to participate in manual labour, with many being 'sent down' to work in rural areas. While many more students were able to access basic education, the rapid expansion, along with the shortening and revision of the curriculum, meant that quality could not be maintained. While these policies remained in place, however, the Chinese education system went through a period of de-stratification (Broaded 1983).

For most of this time Chinese students continued to pursue studies overseas. Immediately after 1949 the Soviet Union and other Communist countries were the main destinations, with more than ten thousand Chinese students studying abroad in the 1950s (Yao 2004, 6). Very few, if any,

Chinese students ventured overseas during the early years of the Cultural Revolution, and around fifteen hundred went abroad between 1972 and 1976, the majority to study languages (Beijing University School of Education and Zhongshan University Institute of Higher Education 2005, 10). It is unclear on what basis students were chosen to study overseas during this period, but most would have been sent by their work units for specific purposes. It was only after the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 that numbers of students studying abroad again started to increase, in line with the 'reform and opening up' policy inaugurated by Deng Xiaoping and others in 1978 (Beijing University School of Education and Zhongshan University Institute of Higher Education 2005, 9).

1.1.3 Education and social mobility in the post 1978 period

The current rush to study abroad among Chinese students arose out of the educational and social reforms enacted in 1978 following the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution. The first reform was the re-regularisation of the education system, details of which will be discussed below. Other economic and social changes have resulted in the 're-stratification' of Chinese society, with increasing wealth gaps between rich and poor. Education continues to play a role in this re-stratification as educational qualifications are increasingly important for gaining employment and status. In this environment studying abroad has again come to the fore, and its status as the pinnacle of potential educational achievement has been reinforced.

1.1.3.1 The current structure of the education system, including recent trends, private education

The present Chinese education system is based on a 6-3-3 model, with six years of primary education, three years of junior high (*chuzhong*) and three years of senior high school (*gaozhong*). *Gaozhong* is pre-university level, at the conclusion of which students participate in the national University Entrance Exam, known as the *gaokao*. China's national policy is to have nine years of free education, encompassing primary and junior high school, and although this has yet to be fully realised in rural areas most urban children receive at least this minimum. In addition to the academic, university-entrance, stream, there are various vocational or technical options available

to students. These include technical schools attended at the completion of junior high school, and technical colleges at the tertiary level. Although it is possible to attend an academic university after completing a program at a technical college, this is difficult and requires great determination.

Although university entrance is possible after attending any senior high school, it is helped significantly if a student is able to attend a key point, or *zhongdian*, high school (such schools were re-established after the Cultural Revolution). Moreover, attending a key point senior high school is more straightforward if a student has attended a key point junior high school. Key point schools are 'model' schools which have greater resources and are considered to provide a better education. Entry to senior high school is generally competitive, with placements dependent on the exam at the end of junior high school, the *chukao*. The key point schools are able to select the students with the best exam results, and this, compounded with their higher levels of resourcing, means that they are more successful in preparing students to achieve well in the university entrance exam, the *gaokao*. Inter-student competition does not end with entry to a good school. Students are streamed into classes within schools and ranked within classes. This results in students having a relatively objective understanding of their comparative position and therefore their likelihood of satisfactory progression to the next level of education.

The student experience of the education system is therefore dominated by two gateway exams, the *chukao* and the *gaokao*. Poor performance in either of these can mean the closure of doors to academic success. In many senior high schools, however, it is possible to purchase a place (or get one through connections) if a student has not been able to gain entry purely on the results of the *chukao* (Tsang 2003, 165). It is also possible to move out of the state school system and attend a private, or 'people-run' (*minban*) school of which there are many varieties. These range from community schools to elite boarding schools, all of which charge fees. It is generally considered, however, that the quality of education and examination preparation received in such a school falls below that of a key point school. Within this system there is still significant inequality of opportunity, the implications of which will be addressed below.

One result of the education reforms since 1978 is that Chinese education, and higher education in particular, is becoming more marketised, with an increasing proportion of students required to pay fees for their tertiary studies (Bai 2006, 140; Yin & White 1994). In line with this, and in some ways similar to what has been experienced in Australia, the fraction of non-government funding has increased and the education system 'is guided by market forces to a large extent' (Chow & Yan 2006, 143). Thus for Chinese students and their families the idea of paying fees in order to continue with the next level of education is not at all foreign, particularly if the standard pathways are not available. Continuing education overseas can therefore be seen as another avenue through which families can pay fees in order to access educational opportunities.

1.1.3.2 Re-stratification in Chinese society

In the period between 1949 and 1978 a series of distinctions marked the difference between different status groups in China. These included residential (rural/urban), economic (state/collective), employment (cadre/worker) and political (revolutionary/anti-revolutionary) (Bian 2002, 92-93). People who were urban state cadres with a revolutionary political label were thus considered the highest status and were primarily managers and professionals. Potential leaders were recruited from this group and were highly dependent on the state for their status. Urban state workers were also systematically advantaged over most other sectors with a guaranteed 'iron rice bowl' of life-long employment. At the other end of the spectrum were the farmers in collectives who had very little chance of social mobility at all and were denied the economic and mobility privileges of urban residents (Bian 2002, 92-95). Despite these divisions, China's redistributive policies meant that by the late 1970s it was one of the most socio-economically equal countries in the world (Bian 2002, 98), albeit one of the poorest.

Since the implementation of market reforms in 1978 these categories have undergone substantial change, inequality has increased and a process of 're-stratification' has occurred (Lui 2005). Education and international education have played an important role in this social transformation. The most obvious change is the increasing income and status gap between urban and rural people and the accentuation of disparities between coastal and inland regions (Cao & Nee 2005, 464; Chang 2002). Also, the position of the urban working class has been substantially diminished with

reform of the state sector resulting in the loss of jobs and along with them the guaranteed benefits such as housing and health services (Bian 2002, 96).

The consequence of these changes is that the urban elite have access to proportionally greater levels of economic capital, and are therefore better able to access opportunities within the increasingly marketised education system than their poorer counterparts. In particular, the new urban elites, like the elites in the early twentieth century, are in the best position to meet the significant costs associated with studying abroad. Despite the seemingly large numbers of Chinese students currently undertaking their education overseas, tuition fees can be many times the average annual salary in China and are beyond the reach of the vast majority of the population.

Education is not, however, the only factor at play in China's re-stratification, indeed it is but one of many. The role of *guanxi*, or connections, in this process is of particular interest here. Using *guanxi* to find employment is a well established tradition in China, and it has taken an even larger role in how jobs are found in the post reform period (Bian 1994, 999). More recently, however, research shows that while *guanxi* networks remain important, 'job seekers with college degree are less likely than those without such credentials so receive job information from *guanxi* networks' (Zang 2003, 125). That is, the higher the education, the less people rely on using connections to find work. This is not to say that such educated people did not use their networks, just that they used them in different ways, for example getting into, or knowing that it was good to get into, elite schools (Zang 2003, 126).

1.1.3.3 The economic and social 'returns' on education

Part of the process of re-stratification in Chinese society is a rise in the importance of education in the employment market. Those people with more education are now more likely to be able to reap greater financial rewards (Cao & Nee 2005, 478-481; Li, H 2003). Although there has been considerable debate about the causes of these developments (e.g., Wu 2002a; Wu & Xie 2003), there does appear to be consensus that there are increasing returns to education, particularly in non-state firms (Heckman & Li 2004; Wu 2002a, 1091; Zhao & Zhou 2001) and that education is playing a larger role in determining an individual's income (Bian & Logan 1996, 755; Maurer-Fazio

2006). This is in contrast to the pre-reform period where factors such as political background were most important and, in 1978, education had no effect on income at all (Bian & Logan 1996, 752). As a consequence those with more education have been in the best position to capitalise on the changes in the Chinese economy. Educated managers, professionals and private entrepreneurs have been able to position themselves in the growing market-based sectors of the Chinese economy, earn higher incomes and consolidate their relatively higher status over other groups such as farmers and workers. In doing so, according to Cao and Nee (2005, 464), they are even beginning to undermine the positions held by China's former political elite. Together, managers, professionals and private entrepreneurs are reaping the benefits of the reforms and are in the process of becoming a new middle class, albeit not one which has yet developed a clear identity (Bian 2002, 98).

1.1.3.4 Competition for education

As education has become more and more valued in China's market economy, competition and demand for education has increased. In the pre-reform period, access to education was related to political factors (Zhou et al. 1998) but now those with the greatest financial resources seem to have the most success. This process has also resulted in a reduction in the equity of access to education, further tying education to social stratification. In terms of accessing higher education, the chances of farmers' children attending university are falling and the chances of people with professional or cadre parents seem to be rising, although the situation for new entrepreneurs is less clear (Zhang & Liu 2006).

A major factor behind the inequities of access to education is the increase in fees introduced during the reform period. These fees have been applied across China, in all sectors of education, from the outright tuition fees imposed at universities to various kinds of fees for services and courses at every other level (Chan & Mok 2001, 28), although recent policies have removed many fees for primary and junior high school (Jingjing & Ross 2008). In higher education fees now exceed the average urban annual income and are four times the average income in rural areas (Huang 2005, 45). The fees which have been imposed across the Chinese education system have come about as a response to the government's policy requiring educational institutions to operate in an

increasingly marketised education environment. Just as a market for goods and services has developed which requires companies to compete for and reward the most productive labour, an educational market has also developed which can only be accessed through the fruits of productive (middle class) labour, i.e. economic capital.

1.1.3.5 Expansion of education

In order to meet the increased demand for credentials and training, however, there has been a significant expansion of the education system. This growth has been at the lower end of the system with the implementation of nine years of compulsory schooling as well as at the top with increases in the number of higher education places. These increases, however, have not been evenly spread geographically. According to Lin and Zhang, 80% of urban junior high school graduates have access to senior high school while in rural areas only 5-10% of graduates have such access (Lin & Zhang 2006, 273). This 'bottleneck', as Lin and Zhang describe it, has been exacerbated by the rapid expansion of both primary education and tertiary education. The most spectacular increases have been in the higher education sector.

Following gradual expansion for most of the 1990s, from 1999 the Chinese government instituted a policy to rapidly increase the number of tertiary places available to high school graduates resulting in an increase of new enrolments from 1.04 million in 1998 to 5.65 million in 2007 (see Figure 1, below) (National Bureau of Statistics of China). According to Bai this expansion was officially driven by the need to meet the 'demand for highly qualified manpower' (Bai 2006, 131), although it was more likely to do with a desire to postpone a growing youth unemployment problem by enrolling them in tertiary education courses and in the process of doing so provide the country with an economic boost (Bai 2006, 132).

NOTE:
This figure is included on page 23
of the print copy of the thesis held in
the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 1 – Students in regular institutions of higher education (new enrolments) 1978-2007
(Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China)

With this expansion of higher education and the increase in fees, university entrance has become relatively more attainable for urban high school graduates. Urban residents are now even more advantaged in the competition to access still relatively scarce higher educational qualifications (Bai 2006, 140), and middle class urban residents more so again.

Nevertheless, demand for tertiary places has continued to grow and in order to meet this demand many lower quality institutions have been established or had their status upgraded (Bai 2006, 140-141). Also, rapidly increasing enrolments in existing institutions has led to resources becoming more thinly spread. The student-teacher ratio, for example, has more than doubled from 8.4 in 1998 to 17.23 in 2008 (National Bureau of Statistics of China). This combination of increasing tertiary places and the lack of resources led to students being able to gain entry to university but still not being able to get what is perceived to be the quality of education (or qualification)

necessary to gain adequate employment. This in turn has resulted in even more demand for places in elite institutions. As noted by Limin Bai:

A belief has spread across all sectors of society that only graduates from key universities count. While “mass higher education institutes” have become more accessible, the university entrance examinations have become a battlefield for entrance to the elite universities, which is viewed as the only way to secure a future career.

(Bai 2006, 141)

Another result of the increase in university enrolments has been an increase in unemployment among graduates with tertiary qualifications (Bai 2006), further compounding the perception that the value of degrees has decreased in a pattern reminiscent of what Ronald Dore described as ‘diploma disease’ (Dore 1976). A further outcome of the increased demand for education is the growing private sector, again accessible primarily by the elites who have greater access to economic capital and are thus able to afford the fees. It has been suggested that the development of private schools and colleges, attended by the beneficiaries of the recent social mobility in China may, in turn, be further contributing to increased social stratification (Cheng & DeLany 1999).

1.1.3.6 The one-child policy

Another factor which has affected the demand for education and the ability of families to invest in it during the post-1978 reform period is the ‘one-child policy’. Implemented in 1979 as a population control measure, it, along with other factors, succeeded in reducing the birth rate from 2.75 in 1979 (Kulkarni & Rani 1995) to around 1.6 in 2000, well below the replacement rate (Retherford et al. 2005).⁴ One consequence of the one-child policy has been a levelling out of gender based differences in parents’ educational expectations for their children, with girls now having similar expectations placed on them as boys (Tsui & Rich 2002; Veeck et al. 2003). Liu has found,

⁴ Probably the most significant unintended consequence of the one-child policy has been the emerging gender imbalance, with the male/female ratio rising from 1.11 during the 1980s to 1.23 in the latter half of the 1990s, according to one study (Ding & Hesketh 2006) – the ‘normal’ range is between 1.03 and 1.07 (Festini & de Martino 2004, 358). The National Bureau of Statistics of China’s National Sample Survey on Population changes would indicate that this trend is getting worse, with in 2007 there being 123.59 males in the 0-4 year old age group for every 100 females (National Bureau of Statistics of China).

however, that gender based expectations persist despite parents believing that they have similar expectations for academic achievement. These include the beliefs that it is important for girls to be feminine/beautiful, boys masculine, and that boys are naturally more intelligent than girls. Liu argues that such stereotypes can have detrimental effects on achievement, identity, and, hence, career options for both boys and girls (Liu 2006, 502). Liu further found class differences in the kinds of gender stereotypes held by parents, with those from higher socio-economic backgrounds having developed their views about girls to include the desire for them to be high achieving, as well as beautiful (Liu 2006, 501). Parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds, on the other hand, were more likely to hold more traditional views. Nevertheless, one of the reasons for a relative lessening of the differences in expectations between genders is that without a developed welfare system, parents' financial security in old age depends on the earning potential of their children, regardless of gender (Tsui & Rich 2002, 75). Tsui and Rich also ascribe the increased level of educational spending witnessed in the post-reform period to this factor, along with the concentration of resources inherent in single-child families when compared to families with multiple children (Tsui & Rich 2002, 79, 86). This concentration of resources had led to a phenomenon which has seen these children popularly titled 'little emperors'. Despite concerns about the negative consequences of a generation of spoilt, over-protected children, recent research has indicated that such fears were not warranted as Chinese only children do not do worse than their counterparts with siblings in terms of health and other psychological and social measures (Festini & de Martino 2004, 358).

1.1.3.7 Chinese students overseas after 1978

Immediately after 1978 the Chinese government enacted policies to encourage students to study overseas. Most students in the late 1970s and early 1980s were state subsidised, and numbers were limited – official statistics record 860 students studying abroad in 1978 and 2124 in 1980 (National Bureau of Statistics of China). From the mid to late 1980s numbers of self supported students began to increase, although official statistics need to be used with caution. A graph of the

increase in student leaving China to study abroad between 1978 and 2008 is shown in Figure 2.⁵ According to Zhao (1996) the availability of opportunities to study abroad in the 1980s acted as a 'safety valve' which served to temporarily release political pressure from disaffected young people – pressure which culminated in the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations at a time when opportunities to study abroad were perceived to be restricted. After 1989 numbers of students studying abroad decreased slightly before starting to rise again in 1992.

NOTE:

This figure is included on page 26 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 2 – Students leaving China to study abroad and returning 1978-2008 (Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China)

This phase of Chinese students studying abroad which started to accelerate in the mid-late 1990s had its origins in an environment of increasing social stratification where educational qualifications were gaining greater importance in social mobility. Xiang and Shen note that in such an atmosphere 'domestic degrees are devalued, [and] foreign universities become more desirable', and that 'although the actual rewards of overseas education are uncertain, it is clear that degrees from average colleges in China cannot lead to desirable jobs' (Xiang & Shen 2009, 517). It may be natural, then, to expect that many students would choose to study overseas once they had the

⁵ As discussed by Zhao (1996), overseas student numbers in the 1980s are likely to have been significantly underreported in these figures, particularly for self supported students.

means to do so. At the same time rapidly rising wealth meant that many more families could afford to pay for their children to study overseas, and with usually only one child to send their money could go further.⁶ During this period state-subsidised students continued to be sent to study overseas but their numbers did not increase in line with self supported students and remained at around three thousand per year (Beijing University School of Education and Zhongshan University Institute of Higher Education 2005, 61).

In the late 1990s younger Chinese students started to go overseas to complete their high school education. Known as *xiao liuxuesheng* (little overseas students), their overseas studies were seen as an attempt to avoid the university entrance examination (e.g. Hai 2001). The phenomena of high school students studying overseas received more public criticism in China than that of tertiary students studying overseas, with commentators highlighting the high costs (in the sense that the money spent was lost to the Chinese education system) and the various academic and social problems encountered by students (Du 2001).

As more students went abroad, more graduates also started to return to China, although, as demonstrated in Figure 2, at a much lower rate than they were leaving. This led to debate within China about the problems of a 'brain drain' and how best to encourage quality graduates to return (Overseas Section of the Department of International Affairs of the Ministry of Education & Intellectual Development Research Institute of the Shanghai Educational Sciences Research Academy 2003), but did not result in policies which restricted the movement of students out of China (Beijing University School of Education and Zhongshan University Institute of Higher Education 2005).

The above discussion demonstrates that the overseas education of Chinese students has deep historical and social significance in China. From the time the first Chinese students ventured overseas the desire and opportunity to study abroad has been intricately linked to the prevailing social, political and economic environment. Moreover, opportunities to study abroad have been

⁶ Anecdotal reports also indicate that studying overseas was a way to transfer money gained illicitly out of China (Yao 2004, 11).

concentrated among those with the most financial resources, and overseas qualifications have been able to be converted back to social and economic advantages once the students have returned, thus contributing to the stratification of Chinese society. It appears that the only period when substantial de-stratification occurred in China was during the Cultural Revolution, a time when virtually no Chinese students studied abroad.

An investigation of the phenomenon of Chinese students studying overseas therefore requires an analysis that goes beyond looking solely at the economic and material benefits students gain to an appreciation of the role their education plays in their lives, and also in the communities in which they live before during and after their studies. Such analysis has been lacking in most studies of contemporary Chinese international students, although Xiang and Shen (2009) is a notable exception. By examining the backgrounds of Chinese students and in particular their experiences abroad this thesis aims to provide further insight into how the overseas education of Chinese students may be contributing to social change and stratification in China.

1.2 International education and Chinese students

1.2.1 The Australian context

China has a long history sending students overseas but Australia also has a long history of receiving international students. This history is popularly thought of as beginning in the 1950s with Australia's involvement in the Colombo Plan, an element of which involved the Australian government funding Asian students to study in Australia (Oakman 2004). Before this, however, Australia had been receiving private international students in small numbers since the beginning of the twentieth century. Even during the Colombo Plan era, privately funded students outnumbered those studying under the scheme (Oakman 2002, 90). Numbers, however, were very limited, and their presence was not particularly controversial. During the 1960s and 1970s the Australian government shifted its focus away from the Colombo Plan towards other methods of providing aid-based educational scholarships for students from developing countries.

During the early 1970s the Australian government abolished fees for tertiary education in Australia (Marginson 2001, 205). Prior to this overseas students had been charged the same for their education as Australian students. In order to recoup some of the costs of administering self-funded students following the elimination of tertiary fees, the Australian government introduced the Overseas Student Charge (OSC). The OSC was set below the full average cost of tuition, and so in effect the Australian government continued to subsidise all international students' Australian education, whether they were on direct scholarship or not (Back et al. 1996; Goldring 1984, 33).

In the early 1980s two investigations were held into the provision of education to international students. In 1984 a committee chaired by John Goldring released its report *Mutual Advantage: Report of the Committee of Review of Private Overseas Student Policy*. This recommended a continuation of the aid-based strategy of providing subsidised education to international students, and specifically rejected the concept of full-fee recovery. Among other reasons this recommendation was based on the committee's scepticism that students from developing countries would be able to afford the significant costs involved, and the belief that it would be untenable to allow international students to gain entry to Australian universities through the payment of fees when Australian students could not (Goldring 1984). In the same year, the Committee to Review the Australian Overseas Aid Policy, chaired by R. Gordon Jackson, recommended the opposite; the abolition of the OSC, and the reformulation of international education as a trade rather than an aid-based enterprise (Jackson 1984).

The recommendations of the Jackson committee were adopted. A policy was introduced in 1985 which permitted educational institutions to charge international students full fees, and at the same time the government phased out the OSC and its implicit subsidy (Back et al. 1996). The introduction of full fees for international students coincided with the reintroduction of fees for Australian university students in the form of a Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), and a general shift towards a more marketised tertiary education system. These policies reflected the economic context of the time which was marked by increased privatisation and market rationalist ideals in all areas, including education policy.

In the early 1990s the Australian government was criticised by foreign government officials for treating the recruitment of international students as a matter of trade (Back et al. 1996). The government subsequently reformulated its approach to emphasise the 'internationalisation' aspect of the international student policy, that is, that the presence of international students played a part in the broader internationalisation of Australia's education system, rather than simply being a money making endeavour (Back et al. 1996). This emphasis on internationalisation has been restated by education ministers from successive federal Australian governments since this time (Beazley 1992; Gillard 2009; Nelson 2003).

From the 1990s and into the twenty first century, numbers of international students studying at all levels in Australia increased significantly. As government direct grant funding to the University sector decreased in real terms during the late 1990s universities came to rely more and more on fees from international students to fund their operations. Numbers of international students increased from around 50,000 in 1995 to almost 550,000 in 2008 (Australian Education International 2008; Back et al. 1996). Despite the rhetoric about international students being part of internationalisation strategies, the financial aspects of their presence remain central. This can be seen most readily in media reports and government statements emphasising the importance of international students in terms of their part in an X-billion dollar industry (e.g. Gillard 2009). Moreover, threats to the international student industry, such as those arising from a spate of apparently racially motivated attacks on international students in 2009, are expressed as threats to a very important export earner, rather than threats to the education sector's internationalisation strategy. As *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported, for example, 'The future of the \$15.5 billion overseas student industry is under threat after the Chinese Government went public with concerns about violence against its students in Australia' (Gilmore 2009).

1.2.2 Chinese students in Australia

During China's pre-reform period Australia was not a preferred destination for Chinese students, and Wang's seminal study of China's intellectual engagement with the West until 1949 does not provide any examples of Chinese students studying in Australia; Japan, the United States and

Europe were the destinations of choice. Chinese students only started to come to Australia after the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1972, although in very low numbers until the Australian government's implementation of an export based education policy in 1986 (Gao & Liu 1998, 27-28). As with Chinese students going to all other countries in the early 1980s, most were funded by Chinese government scholarships to gain skills and expertise in areas of need within China at the time. From 1986 until 1992 Chinese students started to arrive in Australia in increasing numbers, the majority to study English language programs rather than full degrees (Gao & Liu 1998, 29). A total of more than forty thousand Chinese students studied in Australia in this period, and most of them were permitted to stay after the Australian government granted them permanent residence in the aftermath of the Tian'anmen massacre of June 1989 (Shu & Hawthorne 1996, 81). More than half of the students were married, their average age was 35, and a significant majority needed to work to support themselves (and pay their substantial tuition fees) (Gao & Liu 1998, 32).

The next wave of Chinese students started to arrive in the mid-late 1990s when a younger cohort came to Australia, primarily for tertiary education, although it was also around this time that even younger students from China started to arrive in Australia to undertake secondary schooling. In 2008 there were over 129 000 Chinese international students studying in Australia across all sectors, compared with as few as five thousand only ten years earlier, as shown in Figure 3:

NOTE:
This figure is included on page 31
of the print copy of the thesis held in
the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 3 – Chinese international students in Australia 1988-2008 (all sectors) (Source: Australian Education International)

The higher education sector (which in most cases equates to universities) has seen both the most consistent growth and the highest numbers of Chinese international students enrolling. The school sector has seen more uneven growth with Chinese international student numbers appearing to have levelled off, as shown in Figure 4:

NOTE:
This figure is included on page 32
of the print copy of the thesis held in
the University of Adelaide Library.

**Figure 4 – Chinese international students in Australia 1997-2008 by sector⁷ (Source:
Australian Education International)**

Since 2001 China has been the country from which most international students originate, and thus is seen as thus a very important country for Australia's international education sector.

⁷ Significant changes in data collection methodology between 2001 and 2002 mean that care needs to be taken when drawing conclusions from the graphs in figures 4-6. There was no 'Other' category prior to 2002. Data collection before 2002 was also not consistent, particularly with the attribution of students to sectors. The overall trend of significant increases in numbers of Chinese students, however, is clear. ELICOS = English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students, VET = Vocational Education and Training

South Australia, the site of the research for this study, has seen similar increases in numbers of Chinese international students as has the rest of the country. Like institutions across Australia, South Australian universities, schools, and other education providers have been recruiting students within China and as a result have managed to secure significant enrolments of Chinese students. The increase in numbers of Chinese students studying in South Australia is indicated in Figure 5:

NOTE:
This figure is included on page 33
of the print copy of the thesis held in
the University of Adelaide Library.

Figure 5 – Chinese international students in South Australia 1999-2008 (Source: Australian Education International)

The sectors in which Chinese students in South Australia study broadly reflect the national trends, with most in higher education and English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELIOCS). South Australia has comparatively fewer students in Vocational Education and Training (VET) than other states, however the number in schools is similar to the national situation. Figure 6 details the increase in Chinese student numbers by sector in South Australia.

NOTE:
This figure is included on page 34
of the print copy of the thesis held in
the University of Adelaide Library.

**Figure 6 – Chinese international students in South Australia by sector 2002-2010 (Source:
Australian Education International)**

At the same time as Chinese students have been arriving in Australia in increasing numbers, so have international students from other countries. As a result, the Australian international education sector has grown into Australia's third largest export earner, and is now of considerable importance to the Australian economy (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2010, 3).

1.2.3 Research about international students

The presence of large numbers of international students, in particular Chinese and other Asian students, and their economic impact on Australia has led to a certain amount of research aimed primarily at trying to understand student experiences in Australia and the challenges they face within, and pose for, the Australian education system. Similar research has been conducted internationally wherever international students have studied.

Existing research into international students can be divided into three broad categories. The first is that which can be considered 'market' oriented research, the primary aim of which is to furnish the

education sector with information to assist its marketing decisions and strategic approach to student recruitment. The second category is research focusing on the experiences of international students within the overseas education system, often with the aim of identifying strategies for educators to understand and accommodate them. Third is a much smaller body of research which aims to put international education into a broader context in order to understand its various outcomes, personally, socially and historically. The implications of the presence of international students are also addressed in research into the internationalisation of education. This research explores the structural changes resulting from the globalisation of education, of which the transnational movement of students is a part, in particular the development of global markets in education (eg. Marginson 2004; Mazzarol et al. 2003).⁸ These three areas of research provide insights into the experiences of international students which are relevant for this study. However, most research about international students to date has focussed on particular aspects of either the international student experience or the international student industry with very few studies relating the experiences of international students while overseas to their experiences at other times in their lives either in the past or the prospective future.

1.2.3.1 Market oriented research

Most published market research into international students is conducted by national or sectoral level organisations in countries for which international education is a significant business. The United States, for example, annually publishes the *Open Doors* report which provides information and statistics on both in and outbound international student mobility, and reports that in 2007/2008 there were 81,127 Chinese international students (tertiary) studying in the US, an increase of 19.8% over the previous year (Institute of International Education 2008). Reports such as *What does the future hold? China country report: the outlook for international student mobility* published by the British Council (Economic Intelligence Unit 2008) offer education providers from the United Kingdom more detailed information about the outlook for the Chinese international student market. It predicts that numbers of Chinese international students studying in the UK will peak in 2013, citing the decreasing numbers of young Chinese people (a result of China's one child policy) as the

⁸ As this work focuses on institutional and system level developments rather than on the student experience it is not directly related to the present study and outside the scope of this thesis.

main reason. The report also mentions that the high rates of student failure in the *gaokao* mean that strong demand for higher education offshore is likely to continue. Similar research is also carried out by counterparts in countries such as Canada (e.g. Bloom et al. 1999), New Zealand (e.g. Ho et al. 2007; Ward & Masgoret 2004) and Australia, as described below.

Australian market oriented research is generally commissioned by Australian Education International (AEI), which is part of the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, or by IDP Education Australia, a company part owned by 38 Australian universities and responsible for recruiting international students to study in Australia. This research covers areas such as the current situation and financial importance of the international education sector (eg. Giesecke 2002; Kenyon & Koshy 2003), future projections, market information, as well as the development of market strategies. Very little quantitative research has been carried out with international students in Australia so this market research is valuable for developing a better understanding of the profile and ambitions of international students in Australia.

We learn from this research that the international education industry in Australia is claimed to be worth an estimated \$15.5 billion to the Australian economy; that China is projected to remain the primary source of higher education international students in Australia well into the future, with numbers expected to double to more than 80,000 between 2005 and 2025 (Banks et al. 2007, 39); and that 'demand for international higher education from China is being driven by unmet demand for domestic higher education, aspirations for improved return on investment in education expressed as enhanced employment and career prospects, and migration' (Banks et al. 2007, 45). In research originally commissioned by Australian Education International (Mazzarol et al. 2001), Mazzarol and colleagues found that the factors influencing Chinese students to study overseas were 'better understanding of the West' (91% of respondents indicated it was an important factor), 'overseas course better than local' (62%), 'difficult to gain entry at home' (39%), 'intention to migrate' (38%), and 'course not available at home (33%)' (Mazzarol & Soutar 2002, 85). Other research has found that the difficulty of gaining entry to university at home is an even more common motivation than found by Mazzarol et al. Yang found that 85% of a small sample of Chinese students studying in Australia had not been able to 'gain admission to the university of

their choice in China', and that the majority reported that getting access to a quality international education was the most important reason for studying overseas (Yang 2007, 8). Yang also found that the two primary motivating factors which drew Chinese students to study in Australia, as opposed to another overseas destination, were the prospect of migration and lower costs (Yang 2007, 9).

Other market focussed research examines what students are influenced by in their decision making processes, and how institutions are able to better position themselves in the market. For example, a study by Prugsamatz and colleagues investigated what information sources most influenced Chinese international students' expectations of service quality in their future institutions, and found that 'past experiences, advertising and word of mouth' were the most influential (Prugsamatz et al. 2006, 141). The authors recommended pursuing 'strategies such as ensuring positive past experiences for students which would subsequently drive positive word of mouth' (Prugsamatz et al. 2006, 141).

1.2.3.2 Research to support the needs Chinese international students overseas

While market oriented research gives us some basic understanding about why Chinese students may want to come to Australia, another body of research is concerned with understanding what happens to them, and how best to meet student needs after they arrive. Much of this work has been developed by practitioners working directly with international students, particularly in the early years of accommodating international students in Australia (eg. Samuelowicz 1987, 121).

Noted areas of difficulty for international students are language issues and the need for more support for international students in relation to their English skills (Ballard 1987, 115-116) and in their adjustment to Australia's different learning environment and teaching styles. In particular, the challenge of teaching (Asian) international students who are often stereotyped as repetitive rote learners in a context where critical thinking is valued is raised by a number of researchers as a significant issue (Ballard 1987, 116; Samuelowicz 1987, 130).

Subsequent research has, however, challenged the perception that Asian, and in particular, Chinese, students rely on rote learning techniques, suggesting that it is instead a mechanism which facilitates deep learning, rather than simply superficial learning (Kember 2000; Watkins & Biggs 1996), although debates about the details of this continue (Saravanamuthu 2008). Other research has also challenged the stereotypes of Asian students as passive, non-participants in Australian learning environments such as university tutorials (Renshaw & Volet 1995). More recent studies have moved towards emphasising the importance of facilitating the development of international students' intercultural competencies in the course of their overseas educational experience (Carroll & Ryan 2005).

While it is incumbent upon educators to learn how to integrate international students into their classrooms and on their campuses, it is clear that many international students have difficulties adapting and adjusting to their new environment, both within and outside of their educational institutions. Indeed, the adjustment of international students has been a concern since the nineteenth century (Lewins 1990, 82). Common issues identified in various contemporary studies include the challenges faced by international students adapting to a different language, overcoming cultural difficulties, making friends with locals, and various factors concerning adjustment to the new academic environment (Hedges 2003; Rao 1979, 89; Robertson et al. 2000; Sen 1970, 104; Zhang 2002).

Much of the research investigating these aspects of international students' experience approaches it from a psychological perspective, and with particular reference to culture shock theory (Westwood & Barker 1990, 252; Zheng et al. 2004). Burns, for instance, found that first year international university students exhibit higher levels of stress than their local counterparts, and recommends that they be provided with more support from their educational institutions (Burns 1991). Although the causes of their stress were similar to those of local students, the levels of stress were exacerbated by issues of language, 'support networks, social isolation, study method deficiencies and the socio-cultural-emotional difficulties...involved in cultural adjustment' (Burns 1991, 71). The importance of providing adequate support services to international students was also highlighted as early as 1984 in the Goldring Review of Private Overseas Student Policy

(Goldring 1984, 147-158), but it did not warrant a mention in the recommendations of the Jackson Review of the Australian Overseas Aid Program, upon which overseas student policy was eventually based (Jackson 1984, 90-96).

Other studies have detailed attempts to establish programs aimed at assisting international students overcome some of the problems they face, in particular with the challenge of socialising with locals (eg. Eisenchlas & Trevaskes 2003). These highlight the relationship between the levels of social interaction international students are able to achieve with local students and positive academic and adjustment outcomes (Smart et al. 2000, 12; Westwood & Barker 1990).

While this research is necessary in order to meet the immediate educational, social and psychological needs of Chinese students while they are studying overseas, most studies do not explore their lives before and after their time as students. An exploration of the students' lives, experiences and family backgrounds before they became international students is particularly lacking. In many studies international students in general and Chinese or 'Asian' international students in particular are treated as a homogenous group with few intra-group distinctions. In order to gain a more nuanced understanding of Chinese international students this study therefore also explores their lives and expectations before they arrived in Australia. By doing so it is then possible to examine their experiences in Australia in light of the social contexts from which they originate. Such an analysis is rare in the existing literature.

1.2.3.3 Outcomes of the international education experience – the bigger picture

Literature examining the outcomes of international education, and in particular outcomes for tertiary full-fee paying international students in Australia, is also scarce (Cuthbert et al. 2008, 259). There have only been a very limited number of studies tracking the career outcomes of former international students who had studied in Australia, the majority of them concerning Indonesian students. The consensus is that international study does provide career advantages, although there are questions about the appropriateness of what was studied in Australia for the conditions encountered upon returning home (Cuthbert et al. 2008, 266).

Other research gives insight into the more personal aspects of the outcomes of an international educational experience, although little of this research directly concerns Chinese international students in Australia. Various studies have demonstrated that experiences of international education can increase students' levels of intercultural development and understanding, leaving them more interculturally aware and able. Two general themes emerge from this research. First, the longer the experience abroad, the deeper the impact on the student (Kehl & Morris 2008), and second, that gaining a greater intercultural awareness is a process of adjusting and adapting which encompasses various phases, depending on the theory being mobilised to describe it (Savicki et al. 2008).

Bochner, Lin and McLeod have shown in their study of American students studying in an explicitly cross-cultural environment that such exposure can develop their intercultural perspective, although the extent to which it is developed depends to a certain extent on the amount of previous international experience (Bochner et al. 1979). More recently, various studies of students studying in 'international schools', usually for the children of expatriate families from developed countries living in developing countries, have identified similar traits. These children have been termed 'third culture kids' to describe the 'in-betweenness' of their sense of cultural identity, neither wholly of the culture of the country they grew up in, nor entirely of their parents' culture (Useem & Downie 1976). Due to these children's diverse and international upbringing, their acculturation has been intercultural and they are open to other people, cultures and languages (Straffon 2003). Moreover, they are able to capitalise on their interculturality and are more likely to follow international careers (Lam & Selmer 2004; Willis et al. 1996). Similar studies of tertiary level exchange and international students indicate that their intercultural skills also increase as a result of studying abroad (Carlson & Widaman 1988; Williams 2005). Their experiences, like the experiences of the 'third culture kids', have also been shown to help the returned students in their careers, in particular in moving to positions with an 'international orientation' (Opper et al. 1990, 211).

It is clear that for the mainly Western international students examined in these studies an international education can provide intercultural competencies which are of value. If Chinese international students are also able to develop these competencies then they may in turn help them

achieve globally oriented careers. There is less direct evidence in the literature, however, that long-term, fee paying, Asian students such as Chinese international students, also develop such competencies. One reason for this is that most studies of international students' experiences to date have dealt with their identity construction or their psychological adjustment in isolation from questions about how their changes affect their career paths and subsequent social positions. These studies do demonstrate that the ways in which the students change are somewhat dependent on their pre-existing psychology (Zheng et al. 2004) as well as their educational and cultural backgrounds (Zhang 2002, 35), findings which further underline the need to understand the students' backgrounds before leaving their home countries. Nevertheless, there remains a need to examine whether Chinese international students with their unique pathways to overseas education and unique experiences while overseas are also able to develop the level of intercultural awareness and competency that their counterparts in other studies have. This is an area which this study explores.

Other outcomes of international education include its effects on the identities of the students involved. Research addressing these issues suggests that students change in complicated ways as a result of their intercultural positioning as international students (Kenway & Bullen 2003). According to Doherty and Singh, students develop their identities in line with the cultural possibilities or the environment they are in and as such find themselves taking up essentialist positions, conforming to the 'Asian' student norms expected of them in their learning environments. (Doherty & Singh 2005, 11). They, like McKay and Wong (McKay & Wong 1996), view the positions the students take as strategic choices adopted in order to best capitalise on the investments they are making in their international education. This investment is viewed on an individual scale with the returns conceived in terms of the original aims of studying abroad, developing English skills and getting a qualification (Doherty & Singh 2005, 11).

Further than this, however, is the possibility that a change in identity, however strategic it may be, may in and of itself be valuable. The identities students develop have been conceived as 'hybrid', with the effect of leaving them a 'stranger' in both their home country and where they are studying (Koehne 2005, 114-115). Being in-between two cultures can be difficult, particularly on return

(Sussman 2000, 360), but it can also provide opportunities. In his study of returned Indonesian international students, Cannon found that their distinctiveness was believed to be beneficial, noting that 'belonging to this "third place" gives the respondents a basic position from which to claim a distinctive and advantageous outcome, particularly in this rapidly globalising world' (Cannon 2000, 373). Waters' study of former international students returned from Canada to Hong Kong reported even clearer benefits for being 'in between' cultures. These students are able to find value in their embodiment of a Canadian or Western 'style' which they believed provided them with distinction over local graduates (Waters 2006b, 186-187).

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the personal outcomes for international students, few relate these outcomes to broader social changes in the students' countries of origin or otherwise where they might live in the future. To do so is necessary in order to assess what effects the experiences of international students have will have on their lives after they graduate. In the case of China this is particularly important as it is going through a period of considerable social change and rearrangement of social structures.

1.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the historical and social context of Chinese students studying overseas from both the Chinese and international perspectives. It has demonstrated that the overseas education of Chinese students has deeper historical, social and personal importance than just an individual quest to *zhuangqian*, or to make more money. Historically, Chinese students who studied abroad have played transformative roles in the development of China, and, as the continued push by the Chinese government to entice foreign educated graduates from overseas back to China indicates, they may be continuing to do so. The review of the literature has also shown that Chinese international students currently studying in Australia have left an environment of considerable social change, in which the value of an international education has traditionally been high, and in which the value of education in general is again on the rise. Moreover, today's fee-paying Chinese international students are purchasing their overseas education at a time when

educational attainment is being increasingly linked to access to economic resources, a process which is contributing to a re-stratification of Chinese society.

At the same time, the presence of Chinese international students on Australian campuses is contributing to the internationalisation of Australian education and the economic strength of both educational institutions and the Australian economy more generally. The research reviewed in this chapter has demonstrated that outcomes for the institutions and the students themselves from this process are multifaceted. While institutions and practitioners have had to learn to understand international students in order to successfully cater for their needs, international students have needed to adapt to a new educational and social environment in Australia. In doing so the literature indicates that the students may gain intercultural competencies and learn to position themselves between the cultures of Australia and China, for better or worse.

The literature, however, lacks research specifically addressing the experiences of Chinese international students, and in particular research which relates their experiences overseas to the broader social contexts they came from before they left China and are likely to live in after they graduate. Without such an understanding many facets of the impact of their experiences will be overlooked. This study therefore explores these aspects of the lives and experiences of Chinese international students in Australia. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, the following chapter starts to draw these themes together as it develops the theoretical framework for this study of Chinese international students in Australia.

2 Theoretical framework – Bourdieu and the study of Chinese international students

This chapter outlines a theoretical framework for addressing the causes and consequences of Chinese students' rush to study overseas in relation to the social change engendered by China's economic reforms. This framework centres on the potential outcomes of overseas educational experience in light of how and why students and/or their parents make the decision to study overseas. These outcomes affect not only the students and their families but they also affect and are affected by the societies they are in before, during and after their overseas experience.

In exploring the impacts and outcomes of overseas education, this chapter utilises the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and in particular his notions of capital, habitus and field. These concepts have been widely used to examine the role of education in society and its effects on class reproduction and social stratification. They have also been used, although less commonly, in international contexts such as strategies of migrants and migrant communities (eg. Ong 1992, 2000). It is rarer still that they have been applied to the experiences of international students and the strategies of their families (although notable exceptions are: Huang 2002; Waters 2006a; Waters 2006b; Xiang & Shen 2009). Utilising Bourdieu to examine Chinese international students' experience facilitates the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the potential outcomes of Chinese international education, both for the students and their communities.

This chapter begins with an outline of Bourdieu's work, why it is relevant to this study, and its possible limitations in explaining the transnational dimension of Chinese international students' experiences. It then addresses how Bourdieu's concepts can be used to analyse outcomes for previous generations of Chinese international students before turning to how the concepts may apply to the students who are the focus of this study.

2.1 Bourdieu

Central to Bourdieu's concerns are questions of how an individual's experiences, in particular their education both in the home, school and more broadly, contribute to their social chances and in turn help to constitute the social world in which they live (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 14). Also, Bourdieu is interested in how, through experience and inheritance, groups of people accrue the economic, cultural and social 'capital' to achieve advantage over, or 'dominate', others, and in the process of doing so create and utilise structures which perpetuate their domination. Bourdieu suggests that a key factor in the process of reproducing domination is the experience of education and the function of education systems (Bourdieu 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron 1977). The potential that overseas education has in reproducing or establishing this domination is a key area of enquiry for this study. More generally, Bourdieu's ideas are useful for examining the less tangible outcomes of studying overseas for the students involved, particularly in relation to their chances of social mobility through their development of personal attributes and values which assist them in attaining higher status. This section begins with a brief overview of some of Bourdieu's key ideas, starting with 'capital' before moving on to 'field' and 'habitus'. It then addresses some issues raised when using these concepts in this study of the life experiences of international students.

2.1.1 Capital

For Bourdieu, the concept of 'capital' describes the resources that an individual can mobilise in their struggle for position within a social space, or 'field'. Part of this capital is derived from the 'habitus', the dispositions, that have been acquired, or socialised, in their life (see 2.1.2 for further discussion of field and habitus), but it also includes other resources, such as material goods and status which also have certain value in a field (Mahar et al. 1990, 13). The specific value of any 'capital' is dependent on where it will be used, and 'capital rewards gained in one field may be transferred to another' (Postone et al. 1993, 5). In sum, having more, or higher value capital allows an individual to claim a higher position in a social field. Strategies to gain more capital are therefore linked to social mobility, gaining a higher social position, or social reproduction, maintaining a social position. For Bourdieu, capital exists in different forms, economic, cultural and

social, with one form of capital being convertible to another (Bourdieu 1986). Although utilising these divisions, described in *The Forms of Capital* (Bourdieu 1986), may appear somewhat rigid and prescriptive, they provide useful analytical tools for the questions with which this study is concerned.

2.1.1.1 Economic capital

'Economic capital' refers to the economic resources which are available to an individual in a particular social context. This form of capital comes the closest to the orthodox economic meaning of the word capital as it 'is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights' (Bourdieu 1986, 243). In Bourdieu's approach, however, economic capital also has symbolic value and can be converted to non-economic forms of capital such as cultural and social capital, for example through the purchase of access to elite education.

2.1.1.2 Cultural capital

Most other, non-economic, resources can be classified as 'cultural capital', a concept developed by Bourdieu to try to 'explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes' (Bourdieu 1986, 243). As the concept of cultural capital is used to assess the effects of education on different groups of people it is directly relevant to this study which, at its heart, concerns the effects of Australian education on Chinese international students. Cultural capital can be sub-categorised into 'embodied' cultural capital, 'institutionalised' cultural capital and 'objectified' cultural capital, each of which will be described below.

Embodied cultural capital

Embodied cultural capital refers to the 'long lasting dispositions of the mind and body' (Bourdieu 1986, 243), the culture or cultivation into which an individual has been socialised through their upbringing and education. For Bourdieu, the earliest phase of this socialisation is carried out in the family. This phase is most important and enables the embodiment of subsequent socialisation such as that which occurs through schooling. The dispositions implicit in embodied cultural capital include language, ways of speaking, taste and other cultural traits which vary within a particular

social context. The value of embodied cultural capital will also vary according to where it is used. An accent denoting rural origins, for example, may assist in undertaking rural activities but may mark the holder as an outsider in, say, the urban business class, thus limiting opportunities for success in that environment. In this way embodied cultural capital is a form of 'symbolic capital'. For Bourdieu, the hidden way embodied cultural capital is transmitted, i.e. within the family, is an important element in the reproduction of class characteristics because it avoids outside control (Bourdieu 1986, 246).

Objectified cultural capital

The 'objectified' state of cultural capital is also to some extent embodied and refers to an individual's ability to 'consume' cultural goods such as objects of art and machines (Bourdieu 1986, 247). This kind of cultural capital, therefore, is both symbolic and material. It provides value when used in 'fields of cultural production' (Bourdieu 1986, 247), such as the arts, science and technology. Objectified cultural capital is therefore comprised of the skills and abilities which are of value in certain social contexts. For Chinese international students the purely practical aspects of being able to speak English fluently may be valuable in areas such as international business in China where English proficiency is used when dealing with overseas customers and clients. Similarly, being able to undertake accounting tasks may be valuable in Australia for those wishing to maintain employment as accountants (the skill is necessary in addition to the qualification). As such these skills can be considered to be objectified cultural capital.

Institutionalised cultural capital

'Institutionalised' cultural capital refers to the possession of socially legitimised credentials such as academic qualifications. Obtaining approved credentials is dependent on both embodied and objectified cultural capital (attributes, tastes, skills and abilities), but the academic qualification itself has value. For Bourdieu, such a qualification represents a 'cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture' (Bourdieu 1986, 248). Being institutionally recognised, an academic qualification can be exchanged for a guaranteed value on the labour market, depending on the scarcity and status of the qualifications. As the scarcity of qualifications changes over time, Bourdieu notes, 'the investments made (in time

and effort) may turn out to be less profitable than was anticipated when they were made' (Bourdieu 1986, 248), so the economic 'pay off' for education is also fluid and dependent on elements of the social context in which it is obtained and 'traded'. For example, where a certain qualification was once deemed sufficient for entry into a particular social group or position, as the number of people with that qualification rises, so may the requirements for entry, resulting in diploma inflation and an undermining of the exchange value of basic qualifications. The example of Chinese international students demonstrates some of the more formal aspects of qualifications as institutionalised cultural capital. First, Australian government and university regulations dictate that an Australian high school certificate is sufficient to provide entry to university education (providing certain standards are reached) while a Chinese high school certificate cannot. This is one reason why many Chinese students commence their overseas studies at the secondary level in Australia. Second, for the purposes of immigration, the Australian government places a higher value on Australian qualifications than on overseas qualifications, providing their possessors with a greater chance of migrating.

2.1.1.3 Social capital

'Social capital' refers to the networks and relationships between people which, in sum, constitute a group (Bourdieu 1986, 248). These groups (e.g. relatives, workmates and club members) acknowledge that they have certain obligations or rights arising from their membership, and it is this which serves to institute the group. To maintain the group, members exchange 'gifts, words, women, etc.' (Bourdieu 1986, 250). Knowing the correct form through which these exchanges should be conducted requires knowledge of the group and skill to operate within it, dispositions are developed and rewarded in the same manner as for embodied cultural capital; through socialisation (Bourdieu 1986, 250). For Bourdieu, the nobility represents the epitome of social capital as it 'guarantees a particular form of social relationship in a lasting way' (Bourdieu 1986, 251). Social capital can be inherited either through the inheritance of a title or through socialisation into a group. Having such social capital allows a group member to draw on the resources available from relationships within the group, particularly from group members who are richly endowed with other kinds of capital.

2.1.2 Conversion of capital, field and habitus

As mentioned above, the purpose of having capital is to be able to claim a position for oneself in a social field. Bourdieu defines a field as consisting 'of a set of objective historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 16). A field is therefore the social context where action takes place, but it gains its structure from the positions taken by those who hold capital. Depending on how much capital an individual has they will be able to take a certain position in that field. In order to gain the necessary capital one form of capital can be converted into another, and this is a crucial aspect of how positions in fields are gained and maintained. All of the forms of capital can be, according to Bourdieu, converted to economic capital. Social capital, for example, requires people to spend time and money building and maintaining relationships through the exchange of gifts, favours and affection. Cultural capital, on the other hand, can be gained according to how much time is available to develop it, time that is 'bought' through the ability to devote a family member, usually the mother, to the process of inculcation (and in the process sacrificing the economic rewards that her waged labour may have provided) or through investment in as much education as possible (Bourdieu 1986, 252-254). The holders of more cultural and social capital are, in turn, in a better position to generate economic capital than those with less. Capital, therefore, is not only transmitted between generations, but certain forms of capital can be converted into others. This is significant for Bourdieu as the conversion process is hidden and as such not seen as being a transmission of value by observers. In contexts where the obvious transmission of valuable capital such as titles and money, for example, may not be beneficial, being able to draw upon other forms of capital to maintain position in the social structure becomes important (Bourdieu 1986, 252-254). Second generation political leaders in democracies, for example, often justify the inheritance of their political titles based on their academic qualifications and experience which they have obtained through privileged access to opportunities available by virtue of their (usually) father's position.

By using capital to take, or struggle for, a position in turn alters the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 17-18). This happens as the struggle for position entails a change in the 'relative weight of forms of capital' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 18). The movement between and among the forms

of capital affects the structure of the field, determining whether it is 'transformed or conserved' (Mahar et al. 1990, 8). A field is thus dynamic and allows for a range of possibilities as actors can either follow, challenge or change the 'rules' through which the field operates (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 18).

Also central to Bourdieu's conceptual framework is the concept of 'habitus', which 'consists of a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation and action' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 16). According to Mahr, Harker and Wilkes 'habitus refers to a set of dispositions, created and reformulated through the conjuncture of objective structures and personal history' (Mahar et al. 1990, 10). The personal history referred to here is an individual's life long experiences through which they inherit dispositions from and through their family, as well as through other social interactions, including their education. These habitus forming experiences are embedded in fields, and Bourdieu used these two concepts to present a model of society which moved beyond the seemingly irreconcilable duality of structure and agency which had previously dominated sociology. Inevitably, as the habitus arises from a particular environment it reflects that environment. The habitus, in turn, also structures that environment (Postone et al. 1993, 4), as Bourdieu writes, habitus 'tends to reproduce the conditions of its own production' (Bourdieu 1996, 272). Moreover, as Reay notes, 'when habitus encounters a field with which it is not familiar, the resulting disjunctures can generate change and transformation' (Reay 2004, 436). Cultural capital, particularly embodied cultural capital, is very closely related to, and indeed derived from, habitus. Habitus refers to what the dispositions are, and cultural capital refers to the value they have in terms of facilitating a position to be claimed in a field.

2.1.3 Capital, field, habitus and the reproduction of inequality

For Bourdieu, there is a nexus between education, capital, habitus and field which is related to social inequality and stratification. Bourdieu and Passeron assert that education, both familial and institutional (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, 5), effects cultural and social reproduction (Bourdieu &

Passeron 1977, 54) by perpetuating power relations between classes. It does this by reproducing the 'cultural arbitrariness' of social formations (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, 10).

At the most general level, for example, the education received in both the home and school in China is likely to help inculcate a habitus which reflects the dispositions necessary to operate in the Chinese social space. More specifically, the education received in an elite Chinese home and an elite educational institution is likely to inculcate a habitus which provides the cultural and social capital needed to operate successfully in an elite field in China. The children of political leaders, for example, are more likely to develop the cultural and social capital necessary to succeed in the political field than children of farmers. Educational institutions have a central role in this process of reproduction. An educational institution reflects and transmits the culture of the group of which it is a product of, helps to inculcate the habitus of that group in the children of the group and thereby contributes to the reproduction of the group. Where a dominant group has the opportunity to have its values and habitus reproduced, then their domination will also be reproduced. This is particularly the case because, Bourdieu and Passeron claim, the culture of a dominant group such as the Chinese elite mentioned above will be generally perceived (misrecognised) as the legitimate culture. In turn, the style of education of the dominant group will gain legitimacy and have its position reinforced as the dominant style of education (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, 22). This perpetuates inequality because the further the early experiences of students are from the dominant culture, the less likely it is that the inculcation they receive in their later education will be productive, that is provide a habitus reflective of and useful in dominant fields (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, 43). For example, even if children of poor farmers do have access to an elite education it is unlikely they will develop a habitus which will give them the same cultural capital as children of elites. Exposure to formal education does still contribute to the development of habitus and may work to convert it to a more valuable kind than that inculcated in the family (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, 43), but those who start closer to the top find it easier to develop the habitus necessary to reach the top. In this sense institutional education maintains the relative position of the groups of people experiencing it.

The relevance of Bourdieu's conceptual framework to this thesis therefore is that it provides a toolbox of concepts which can be used to investigate the relationship between education, in this

case overseas education, and its social and cultural antecedents and consequences. In particular, the concept of capital in its various forms can be mobilised to analyse the strategies and outcomes of studying overseas more broadly than could a cost/benefit equation which measures the returns to education and educational investments purely as a financial equation without regard to the other cultural and social benefits (or costs) accrued. By doing so, we can also assess the usefulness of Bourdieu's concepts in an examination of how studying overseas relates to social reproduction and transformation.

2.1.4 Applying Bourdieu's concepts to education and social change in China

Based on this brief introduction we can start to use Bourdieu's concepts to examine China's re-stratification discussed in the previous chapter. The process of stratification can be represented as a cyclical system resulting in the entrenchment of groups already possessing certain kinds of capital within the 'field' of Chinese society. First, as the cost of education has risen it has become increasingly restricted to those with greater economic capital (see 1.1.3.4). Second, access to education and employment is related to social capital in the form of connections, *guanxi*, which operates both directly in terms of preferential treatment for family, friends and contacts, and also in the exchange of information about educational and employment opportunities (see 1.1.3.2). Third, as educational qualifications become more important those who have access to a higher quality and more prestigious education are in a better position to develop cultural capital of greater value in the more market oriented employment environment of the post reform period (see 1.1.3.3). As an example of this trend can be seen in the phenomena of government workers choosing to 'jump into the sea' (*xiahai*) of business, as they are able to capitalise on their education and experience to a greater extent in the market environment (Wu 2002b).

Bourdieu's concepts therefore provide useful tools to explain the social changes arising in China as a result of the market reforms discussed in Chapter One. The two groups who have been advantaged by the reforms have gained their dominance due to the growing importance in Chinese society of the kinds of capital they possess. These groups are business owners and senior private sector employees, and officials, professionals and academics. Both of these groups are in a

position to capitalise on current social changes. Business owners and senior private sector employees are able to invest the economic capital, which is increasingly concentrated in their hands, and mobilise the social capital they possess to gain access to education and develop their cultural capital. Officials, professionals and academics are also able to build on their high levels of cultural capital, gained in part due to their earlier access to higher levels of education, and social capital to access education and employment and thereby gain further economic capital. As we saw in Chapter One the skills and abilities developed as a result of greater access to educational opportunities constitute objectified cultural capital which is of greater value in a market environment, and the qualifications obtained represent the acquisition of institutionalised cultural capital. Moreover, as educational institutions are increasingly dominated by certain groups they come to reflect the characteristics of those groups, thereby further excluding others. Not only does this result in a concentration of economic capital in the elites, but it also results in a concentration of social and cultural capital in the elites as non-elites increasingly find it difficult to access the educational opportunities and social networks necessary to develop such capital. This process has the effect of creating a feedback loop which reinforces the social and economic advantages of the middle and upper classes and excludes other groups without access to such capital. Although many factors are involved, the consequences of these processes can be seen in the increasing levels of inequality in China, with the gini coefficient currently at the relatively high level of 0.47 (Chen 2010).

We can see here an example of how different forms of capital, such as those developed through the education received by professionals and managers, can be exchanged and can increase in value in an environment undergoing significant social and political transformation. In the pre-reform era such education was certainly valued but political status was more important. In the period since the reforms the political and economic environment has changed and more value is being given to the cultural capital gained through education, the kind of cultural capital present in higher quantities amongst the elites.

2.1.4.1 Graduate unemployment and decline in value of educational qualifications

Bourdieu also helps us to understand how although the relatively privileged educated urban classes in China have been in the best position to capitalise on educational opportunities, the relative value of educational qualifications is declining (Bai 2006, 136), and a higher education is now no guarantee of a job, let alone a good job (Bai 2006; Lin & Zhang 2006). The increased rate of youth unemployment which was delayed by the implementation of the policy to expand higher education in the early 2000s subsequently resurfaced when those students graduated three or four years later. This resulted in a very large pool of relatively highly educated labour searching for jobs in an economy which had not yet restructured to the extent that it could absorb them. Also, graduates congregated in the high growth coastal cities on the understanding that higher qualifications should afford higher salaries, further flooding the job market (Bai 2006). In these circumstances not all university qualifications were treated equally and students graduating from less prestigious institutions, second or third tier universities or other private colleges, found that their degrees, tainted with the 'low quality' stigma, were worth very little. Subsequently, the institutionalised cultural capital available from elite institutions came to be even more highly valued and competition to gain entry into them increased even further. The importance of the name of university on the student's certificate was perhaps most clearly demonstrated in 2006. A trend before this time had been for established universities to set up private subsidiary colleges with lower entrance requirements but awarding degrees with the parent university's name on it. A central government policy disallowing this practice resulted in serious levels of dissatisfaction among students and even provoked student demonstrations. Without the 'big' name, the students considered that their qualifications were next to useless (The Economist 2006). This means that the cycle of class entrenchment through access to education on the basis of possession of economic, social and cultural capital is being further restricted so that the type of education (elite or higher quality) has become increasingly important. Moreover as inequality in China has increased at the same time as university places has increased it is clear that it is not just the institutionalised cultural capital of having a qualification which matters, other kinds of capital such as embodied cultural capital and social capital, the transmission of which are most hidden from outside view, are also critical.

2.1.5 The limitations of Bourdieu's concepts when applied to Chinese international students

It is important to note that Bourdieu's theories of social reproduction imply a relatively closed hierarchical model of class and a specific field of operation. The models above presuppose that the various kinds of capital are used in the same or related fields to those in which they were developed. In Bourdieu's model the embodied cultural capital developed while at educational institutions reflects the cultural capital of the 'dominant' classes which is, in turn, reflected in the educational institutions. The educational qualifications received are institutionalised cultural capital in so far as they are legally and 'institutionally' recognised in the place where they were gained. The social capital in particular is valuable in the social fields in which the holders position themselves, in this case within China. Given this, the question arises as to how we can use Bourdieu's concepts to understand a situation where cross-border and cross-cultural interactions are taking place as is the experience of the Chinese international students who are the focus of the study. In particular, the foreign (Australian) education system Chinese international students inhabit does not appear on the surface to provide cultural capital that would be valuable in the fields in which the students find themselves on their return to China (if they do, indeed, return). This is because, if Bourdieu's reasoning as outlined above is followed, the Australian education system has its role in effecting social reproduction in the social space in which it is located, in particular for people with a habitus developed in the same social space.

Put simply what Chinese international students (whose habitus was developed in China) experience in Australia will be very far removed from that which they were exposed to through their upbringing and education in China. Being very far removed from Australian culture and relatively old by the time they start to be exposed to an 'Australian' social field, the students are unlikely to be acculturated to the extent that their habitus will equip them with cultural capital necessary to succeed in Australia. In this context it is less clear how international students will gain value from their education in an overseas institution which has the function of reproducing if not the dominant culture in the social space where it is located then at least a distinctly non-Chinese culture. International students are unlikely to have the time or youth to successfully assimilate the values

required to be members of the elite, let alone find success in social fields in the place of their education overseas.

If students who have studied in Australia return to China, even if they have come from a dominant or elite group, Bourdieu's logic indicates that their lack of exposure to the elite levels of Chinese education, being quite important in terms of development of their cultural and social capital as discussed above, may in fact undermine their cultural capital upon return. This is particularly the case if, in the process of being educated in Australia their habitus has moved even further away from that of the locally educated Chinese elite. As a result, if this line of reasoning is followed, they will not feel like 'fish in water' (Archer & Francis 2006) anywhere, neither in a dominant group in Australia nor China. They will lack the cultural capital which will equip them to belong to either Australian or Chinese elites, and they will have reduced their opportunities for the socialisation necessary to develop social capital.

The problem is that if students studying abroad are not able to develop capital of value in their struggle for position in either China or Australia, then they should not be studying overseas. But they are, in ever increasing numbers. It is clear, then, that Chinese students and their families do, in fact, see significant value from studying overseas, and this necessitates a rethink of how Bourdieu's concepts can be applied to the experiences of international students and international education more broadly. In particular, it is necessary to explore how an international education can provide Chinese international students with opportunities to develop various forms of capital, and also how and in which social fields this capital may have value. Moreover, it is necessary to extend the possibility of social fields across national borders to allow the concept of transnational social fields.

2.2 Bourdieu across borders: transnational perspectives

Fortunately, there is a growing body of literature which examines the possibilities and limitations of Bourdieu's conceptual framework when applied transnationally, some of which addresses the

application of his concepts to the question of international education. This literature is generally situated within the discourse on transnationalism and globalisation.

The observation that Bourdieu is a 'methodological nationalist' has been made by Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003) as well as Weiss who noted that Bourdieu 'limits the perspective of sociology to an analysis of national societies' (2006, para. 7). Weiss claims that it is only possible to understand those who move across borders, such as the international students in this study, if this methodological nationalism can be overcome. She writes:

Instead of forcing migrants and structurally transnationalised persons into the frame of the nation-state, we must determine where their resources (e.g. qualifications) are acknowledged. If their resources are transnationally valid and if they can gain physical, social and political access to most parts of the world, their transnational versatility will be an important structural aspect of their class position (Weiss, 2005). If their resources are devalued by a change of nation-state, or if they fail to reach a location of their liking, the nation-state system becomes an important aspect of their class position.

(Weiss 2006, para. 17)

Weiss does not appear to question Bourdieu's concepts as such, but rather argues that applying them in a transnational context necessitates a broader perspective. Habitus, for example, does not in itself require a fixed national frame of reference, but it is necessary to acknowledge its inter-cultural antecedents where they exist, although this will result in a much more complex analysis as there are likely to be more variations of experiences in cross-cultural settings (Weiss 2006, para. 28).

Bringing in this complexity is precisely what Johanna Waters achieved in her studies of Hong Kong students at the University of British Columbia in Canada. She too has argued that in studies of transnational subjects it is necessary to incorporate a spatial understanding of how they deploy their cultural capital. She has also argued that transnational movements, in her case the movement of international students, can play a role in 'social reproduction and exclusion in local

and transnational contexts' (Waters 2006b, 189). In Waters' study such reproduction arises from the development of social networks among students when they are overseas and also when they subsequently return to Hong Kong – people who themselves could only access these networks as a result of their already privileged middle-class positions (i.e. they could afford to study overseas). In this way capital accumulation occurs across borders and without a transnational view of this accumulation it is impossible to understand the social dynamics of the students' decisions.

In a similar vein, Aihwa Ong describes the way that Hong Kong capitalists are able to mobilise their cultural capital transnationally, in particular between Hong Kong and San Francisco, in order to maintain their dominant status in their communities (Ong 1992). For Ong and Nonini, the compression of space and time characteristic of the current phase of globalisation calls for 'new kinds of social organisation that require intercultural communication and are deterritorialised, flexible, and highly mobile' (Ong & Nonini 1997, 10). Having the skills to operate in this new environment, particularly in the context of the Chinese diaspora, they argue, is a kind of capital in Bourdieu's sense of the word, which can be converted into power (Ong & Nonini 1997, 22). Leslie Sklair takes this one step further in his discussion of the transnational capitalist class, born out of economic globalisation and working to, in Bourdieu's words, 'reproduce the conditions of its own production'. Sklair's approach, however, utilises a Marxist view of class and pays less attention to the cultural aspects of reproduction than Bourdieu (Sklair 2002).

2.2.1 The transnational accumulation of capital I: Chinese overseas students before 1949

An analysis of the experiences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century groups of Chinese overseas students discussed in Chapter One demonstrates that bringing this transnational perspective to Bourdieu's conceptual framework can be fruitful in the context of Chinese international education. Drawing directly on Bourdieu, Hui Huang, who examined the students of the Chinese Educational Mission discussed earlier, described how they exemplified the ways that cultural capital could be both gained from studying overseas and simultaneously contribute to the value of overseas education as cultural capital in China (Huang 2002). When the organiser of the mission, Yung Wing, first attempted to recruit students he had difficulty convincing families that

sending their children to America was worthwhile. This was because the potential benefits of studying overseas and gaining Western knowledge were unknown, thus implying that such study was not expected to be of value in China (La Fargue 1942, 33). Nevertheless, the first cohort of students' subsequent successes, their own efforts at promoting overseas education both in their own families and more broadly, as well as the growing demand within China for Western knowledge to underpin China's modernisation, helped to convince others of its benefits (Huang 2002, 38). In later years of the educational mission program invitations to apply for scholarships were actively sought by the wealthy (La Fargue 1942, 34).

Huang attributes the returned students' success to the development of overseas qualifications as the institutionalised form of cultural capital (Huang 2002). Indeed, this is clearly the case as the status of overseas qualifications was formalised with examinations which were developed to allow returned overseas students to enter the civil service, and, after the abolition of the civil service examinations in 1905, government officials were predominately chosen from among those educated in the West (Huang 2002, 46). Still, the value of this new kind of institutionalised cultural capital varied depending on the social context in which it was used (Huang 2002). Early overseas students found success harder to come by when working in foreign agencies and in business but they achieved much more when working for the Chinese government (technical areas) or in educational institutions. Huang attributes their success in these contexts to the fact that the students possessed the skills necessary for the new, modernising, aspects of China's economy, allowing space for the students to rapidly rise to the top (Huang 2002, 47-49).

However, the contingent nature of the Western educated Chinese students' success can also be explained by their development of unique kinds of embodied cultural capital and social capital. The students of the Chinese Educational Mission were only able to find success in sectors which they themselves had been instrumental in creating such as in modern higher education, the railways and telegraph systems. These sectors were not traditionally Chinese, but their development within China required those working in them to have an understanding of Western science and technology as well as knowledge of the Chinese context, and an ability to work on both levels. This goes beyond the technical and formally recognised aspects of their training, their institutionalised

and objectified cultural capital, and enters the realm of their embodied cultural capital and their habitus, which, being 'neither Chinese nor Western' (Huang 2002, 37), were very suitable to the tasks set for them in these new emerging areas.

Wang's (1966) description of the overseas educated T.V. Soong provides an illustration of the kind of success that could be built upon experience in the West. After a diverse and international childhood, Soong was sent to America to study at Harvard, and as a result later found significant success reaching various high level posts including Minister of Finance for the Nationalist Guomintang government from 1923-1933. Wang attributes part of this success to Soong's 'amorphous mixture of Chinese and Western influences' (Wang 1966, 441), and recounts a description of him by a 'British public figure':

Of middle height, powerful and graceful in build, with a face of great oriental beauty, an expression now of brooding meditation and now of vivid animation, he combines as few have done much of the best of the East and the West.... His English enables him to speak and write, not only easily and well, but with brilliance.... He is temperamental and sensitive, moods of black depression alternating with gay courage; he has great personal charm and a genius in personal relations, reflected in intimate friendships not only with those of his own race but with such Westerners as Frederick Whyte, Tony Keswick and, perhaps above all, L. Rajchmen.

(Quoted in Wang 1966, 440-441)

Working as he was in an area of Chinese economic life which was in dire need of reform, Soong was able to draw on his Western training to manage China's finances as well as draw on his relationships with Westerners, as described above, as necessary in an environment where they maintained significant influence. The habitus that Soong had developed in the course of his extensive overseas experience was thus able to provide him with the embodied cultural capital with which to succeed in his chosen field.

2.2.1.1 The deployment of capital in internationally focussed fields

Overseas educated students struggled in other sectors which did not require such specific Western knowledge or which were more rooted in Chinese society, such as business (Wang 1966, 477). Similarly, students who had undertaken military training in America found it very difficult to find a place in the Nationalist army under Chiang Kai-Shek as it was dominated by relationships developed in the Chinese (and Japanese) military academies (Sacca 2003). Students returning from America lacked these connections, or social capital, and thus were unable to progress. Indeed, it was only in the fields where understandings of both Chinese and Western culture were necessary that people such as T.V. Soong and the students from the Chinese Educational Mission found success.

Also, returned overseas students developed networks amongst themselves, best exemplified by the returned students of the Chinese Educational Mission who kept in contact with each other with regular reunions throughout the rest of their lives, not an established custom in China at that time (La Fargue 1942). A consequence of the development of fields where both the qualifications and dispositions of the Western educated Chinese acted as necessary cultural capital for success resulted in the partitioning off of these sectors from the vast majority of the Chinese population who had no way of accessing the economic capital needed to undertake overseas study.

2.2.1.2 The contribution of early overseas education to social reproduction

As the mix of students studying overseas changed from scholarship funded to self-funded students the connection between opportunity to access study abroad and levels of economic capital in the family increased. Wang believes that most of the first wave of overseas students in the late nineteenth century, the majority of whom were on scholarship, were poor as only well off families could afford to send their children without government support (Wang 1966, 78-79).⁹ In later years, however, the number of scholarships decreased sharply. In 1905, for example 61% of Chinese students in America were on scholarship, compared to an estimated 3% in 1942, and even this

⁹ Wang's use of the word 'poor' is clearly relative. As literacy was a prerequisite for subsidised study abroad, and China had a literacy rate of approximately 20% at the end of the Qing dynasty (Pepper 1996, 53), such opportunities to study abroad were only available to a small minority.

many Wang considers to be an exaggeration (Wang 1966, 151). With so few scholarships available it again effectively became impossible for a farmer or working class family to afford to send their child overseas (Wang 1966, 153). For Chinese students in the first half of the twentieth century, studying in the West¹⁰ subsequently was the most prestigious and became the domain of the wealthy families with children of government employees, lawyers, professionals or industrialists having the greatest access (Wang 1966, 154), as Wang comments:

As members of China's wealthiest class, the students in America were far less sensitive to cost factors than those in Japan; and perhaps because study in America was so expensive, much more value was attached to it. It appears that the prestige accorded foreign education was not unrelated to snobbish motives...

(Wang 1966, 155-156)

Families with access to economic capital could invest in overseas education for their children and this education in turn gave them the cultural capital which, symbolic of high status, could be converted back to economic capital. On their return the overseas students themselves were instrumental in developing the value of their form of (overseas acquired) cultural capital. Although their economic influence was relatively small they played a large role in the establishment of the new Western-based education system within China after the imperial one was abolished in 1905. The new education system was expensive and top heavy with little attention paid to schooling for poorer people or in rural areas, a situation which exacerbated class inequality. As Wang described, it 'restricted the peasants' opportunities to advance and better themselves and isolated the elite from the masses' (Wang 1966, 500).¹¹

¹⁰ Studying in Japan was still relatively cheap and as such accessible to the less wealthy (Wang 1966, 154-155).

¹¹ It was this isolation from the masses and from traditional Chinese values, caused in part by their over-specialisation, which led the new intellectuals, characterised by their overseas education, to ignore matters of national interest and concentrate on their own enrichment – factors which, according to Wang, contributed to 'the rise of totalitarian rule in China' (Wang 1966, 503).

2.2.1.3 The spatial dimension of capital accumulation

The experiences of the early wave of overseas educated Chinese students demonstrate that it is possible to apply Bourdieu's conceptual framework in a transnational context such as international education. Moreover, using the concepts can help develop a better understanding of how study abroad can play a role in the production of classes and provide value redeemable in certain fields in the student's country of origin, although this value is contingent on the fields in which it is applied on return to China.

For the capital developed by the overseas students who returned to China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to be seen as valuable, however, an alignment of factors relatively unrelated to the mode of acquisition of the capital was necessary. In Bourdieu's description of the modes of accumulation of non-economic capital, the capital is usually acquired from exposure to and experience in the fields where the capital has value. The dispositions of embodied cultural capital, for example, are inculcated as a result of transmission within a family which itself has that cultural capital, or within an education system which reflects the cultural capital of the dominant groups within the field, and social capital can be developed through existing networks. Moreover, institutionalised cultural capital is typically developed in an institution which is itself embedded in a social context which gives the qualifications it awards their value.

In the case of the capital acquired overseas for redemption in China, however, this is not so. It is entirely possible that Chinese overseas students may develop attributes, values and even skills which are not valued on their return. Indeed, this was the reason that the first group of students of the Chinese Educational Mission were recalled as the officials feared that they had become too Americanised and thus of little use. When the decision to go overseas is made, the way the students develop, the habitus they embody as a result, and the consequences that this may have on the value of their capital, cannot be predicted, particularly for the first cohort.

Nevertheless, upon their return to China the students were able to redeem their cultural and social capital and claim successful positions for themselves in Chinese society. The reason for this is that China at the turn of the twentieth century was consciously attempting to modernise and the cultural

capital the returned overseas students brought back with them had clear value in the modernising sectors of Chinese social and economic life. Being able to master the means of production of modern industries meant that their objectified cultural capital was highly valued. Being able to communicate freely, including with Westerners, within these modern fields meant that their embodied cultural capital was valued. Among other Chinese this kind of Western-developed cultural capital was rare. These returned students were able to position themselves at the forefront of China's modernisation, and were subsequently able to reap the benefits.

We can see in this example that the acknowledgement of the transcultural antecedents of cultural capital enhances our understanding of capital accumulation processes. Moreover the stories of early Chinese overseas students give us an insight into the role that such education can play in a context of rapid social change, in this case amidst a backdrop of the demise of imperial China and its attempts at forging a modern future. Not only does studying overseas have an effect on the individuals involved, it can also facilitate broader social change and the establishment and entrenchment of new forms of inequality.

2.2.2 The transnational accumulation of capital II: Chinese international students in the 21st century

This discussion now turns to how Bourdieu's concepts can be mobilised in a study of the experiences of Chinese international students at the beginning of the twenty first century. We have already seen that it is necessary to examine where capital has value not just within different fields within a country, but in different fields in different countries, as Weiss comments, 'we must determine where their resources (e.g. qualifications) are acknowledged' (Weiss 2006). In order to do this we need to be aware that after their studies in Australia Chinese international students may be *physically* located in China, in Australia, or moving between both or across other parts of the world. If they return to China they may find themselves in positions which have more or less need for certain elements of the capital they developed while overseas. If instead they choose to remain and settle in Australia this is also the case. For example, some overseas educated students may work in explicitly transnational fields such as international business, be they working from China or

Australia (or living in both), while others may have much less direct international and intercultural connections. In all of these cases students will deploy the capital they develop as a result of their investment in their education. In order to fully understand the students' investments it is thus important to know how the capital that they develop has different functions in the different social fields they may occupy. This section addresses the role that capital, expressed according to Bourdieu's division of economic, cultural and social capital, may play in the education of Chinese international students, and its outcomes.

2.2.2.1 Economic capital

Economic capital is a prerequisite to privately funded international education although it may also be an outcome of that education. It is clear that a Chinese family which has enough money to send a child overseas for any part of their education must be substantially above the average socio-economic level. For example, to study a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Adelaide (a typical degree program undertaken by Chinese international students) at the time the interviews for this study took place requires annual fees of A\$16 400. With the addition of living expenses and airfares the total cost is perhaps double that amount (The University of Adelaide 2007). A very conservative estimate therefore would indicate that it would cost at least A\$30,000 per year to support an international student studying in Adelaide. As mentioned previously the absolute cost increases even further if overseas high school, foundation or postgraduate courses are undertaken prior to a university degree. Of course, students' employment in part-time work can reduce the amount of money required from their family, but such employment in the host country is unreliable, competes with study time, and there is little chance that such income could completely cover the student's expenses. To put this cost in perspective, studying in Adelaide costs at least 6 times the average annual income for people living in Beijing, one of the highest income cities in China, and more than 11 times the average annual income for the whole country.¹² At these rates studying overseas is only for well-off families, and it may still be necessary for them to borrow money from banks or extended family in order to finance it. Given the large investment required, and the fact

¹² The A\$30 000 figure is very conservative as it is comprised of a relatively low cost course and a low estimate of living costs. Annual income values are taken from the National Bureau of Statistics of China (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2005) and the calculations based on an exchange rate of AUD\$1=RMB6.02.

that Chinese students continue to study overseas in significant numbers, it is evident that families expect some kind of return. These returns are discussed below in relation to the other forms of capital.

2.2.2.2 Institutionalised cultural capital

As discussed previously, institutionalised cultural capital refers to the 'legally guaranteed value' (Bourdieu 1986, 248) of an academic qualification. We saw that in the early twentieth century there were clear policies, mandated by the Chinese government, which favoured people who possessed overseas qualifications, indicating that at that time an overseas qualification did act as institutionalised cultural capital. A century later, international qualifications have clear value as tertiary qualifications are now internationally recognised to a much greater extent.¹³ In order to examine the transnational value of overseas academic qualifications as institutionalised cultural capital their potential value in China and Australia will be discussed below.

Value of overseas qualifications in China

We can explore the value of overseas qualifications in China by looking at the prevalence of overseas trained people in certain fields in China – an indication that there is an institutional bias towards employing those with overseas qualifications in those occupations¹⁴ – as well as more directly by looking at the preferential policies towards returnees with overseas credentials. In his 2003 survey of the educational backgrounds of Chinese provincial leaders, Li notes that many have overseas qualifications and that there is pressure from the Central government to appoint such returnees to leadership positions (Li, C 2003, 7-8). He also notes that the career paths of returnees are different from those of leaders who had not studied overseas. Those with overseas education were more likely to have worked in 'university administration, academia, foreign affairs, banking and finance' (Li, C 2003, 7). Again, these are the sectors which were established early in the twentieth century as the domain of the early wave of the overseas educated.

¹³ See for example *The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific*, to which China is a signatory (UNESCO 1983).

¹⁴ Although, of course, the possession of other kinds of capital and cultural capital may contribute to this, as will be discussed below.

From the start of the reform period until the early 2000s only one in three Chinese students educated overseas returned to China ('Pay Close Attention to the Return of Overseas Students' 2003), and the Chinese government has long been concerned with reversing the 'brain drain', and has enacted policies to help achieve this (Zweig et al. 2004). Starting in the early 1990s these policies included giving returned scholars greater residential and employment mobility, free housing and other financial incentives (Zweig et al. 2004, 738-740). The Shenzhen municipal government, for example, established the Shenzhen Overseas Scholars Incubator Park, providing preferential treatment for returnees to develop 'high-and-new' technology enterprises (Liu 2003). By 2002, this park alone had attracted more than one hundred companies run by scholars returned from many countries and doing business in a wide variety of fields (Lu 2003). Universities have also worked hard to attract returnees with foreign PhDs, rewarding them with benefits over holders of domestic PhDs such as better promotions, research funding and housing (Zweig et al. 2004, 745-748).

Beyond these examples of an overseas qualification having a guaranteed value through the development of government policies, its value as institutionalised cultural capital is harder to demonstrate in concrete terms. There is clearly a popular conception that studying overseas is valuable and the fact that former overseas students are making it to relatively high positions supports this (Zweig et al. 2004, 757). Also, the rhetoric surrounding the government call for overseas students to return and the benefits provided to them provides overseas qualifications with symbolic value in addition to their practical worth.

When Chinese commentators have analysed overseas education over the last two decades there have been two contending arguments, both of which are aimed at trying to stem the perceived brain drain that results from what the government sees as too many people remaining overseas following their education. The first line of argument is that it is vital to encourage overseas educated experts to return to China in order to help China's modernisation and development (e.g. Lu 2003). The second and more recent view is that overseas educated students are often unemployed and have great difficulties when they return to China – the most explosive of these was an article criticising 'overseas student rubbish' (Chen 2003). Admittedly the targets of these contrasting analyses are different. In the first instance the commentaries are referring to the highly

trained technical specialists, often with PhDs from elite (mostly) American institutions. In the second, however, they are referring to students who return following their overseas secondary education and/or undergraduate qualifications – qualifications often gained as a result of not being able to compete within China with the best Chinese students. Nevertheless, despite being faced with conflicting messages the demand for overseas education has continued to increase.

From this it appears that certain kinds of highly specialised overseas qualifications are valued as institutionalised cultural capital, but there is little evidence to indicate that lower level overseas qualifications are any more highly valued than local qualifications. Of course, this is not to deny that normal undergraduate overseas qualifications do have some kind of value as institutionalised cultural capital as there is also nothing to indicate that the qualifications are valued any lower than local qualifications. The value of both, however, appears to have been declining in recent years. Until the 1990s all local university graduates were guaranteed a job – the clearest expression of value as institutionalised cultural capital possible – but since 2000 and in light of the higher proportion of Chinese students going to university this has been less certain. The growing numbers of media reports discussing the chronic unemployment problems of local graduates also reflect the continuing decline in value of their qualifications (e.g. Xinhua 2007). At the same time, similar reports have been common in the Chinese media about the difficulties of finding jobs for people who have returned from overseas with their degrees. Overseas qualifications may, therefore, provide a certain amount of institutionalised cultural capital, although it is not clear from the literature and local media that they provide any more than local university degrees. The correlation between increasing access to both local and overseas qualifications and the decline in their perceived value supports the notion of a market for the cultural capital available from education, as Bourdieu comments, in this case with reference to high school education:

Newcomers to secondary education are led, by the mere fact of having access to it, to expect it to give them what it gave others at a time when they themselves were still excluded from it. In an earlier period and for other classes, these aspirations were perfectly realistic since they corresponded to objective probabilities, but they are often quickly deflated by the verdicts of the scholastic market or the labour market.

(Bourdieu 1984, p?)

As the students currently leaving China for their overseas education can be considered relative latecomers to the international education market it is therefore possible that their expectations may not be met.

Value of overseas qualifications in Australia

In the Australian employment market Australian qualifications clearly act as institutionalised cultural capital. Possession of Australian qualifications helps Chinese international students, the majority of whom decide not to return to China, to gain Australian residence, employment and, eventually, citizenship. For Chinese students wishing to migrate to Australia (or through Australia to a third country) an Australian qualification acts as capital as no other possession or attribute could, apart from cash (enough of which can facilitate migration through the business migration program).

Indeed the history of Chinese (and more generally Asian) students in Australia is intricately linked to migration (Shu & Hawthorne 1996). Australian government policies have encouraged this and there are now very close connections between the skilled migration program and priorities for the higher education sector (Ziguras & Siew-Fang 2006). Australia is actively seeking skilled migrants and rewards holders of Australian qualifications with preferential treatment in their applications for residency.¹⁵ In this way an Australian degree acts as institutionalised cultural capital as it has a 'legally guaranteed value' (Bourdieu 1986, 248) which international students can use to migrate, even if the value of the institutionalised cultural capital may be subject to change in line with

¹⁵ This preferential treatment is in the form of more points in the points based migration assessment process and eligibility for particular visas. Although policy changes in 2010 have aimed to delink international student visas from migration, this preferential treatment remains.

government policy shifts. With the majority of Chinese international students not returning to China at the completion of their studies there is a neat synergy between what appears to be an important outcome of international education for both the students and the Australian government.

Unfortunately there are few examples in the literature which address international students as 'migrants', let alone Chinese international students. This may be due to the migration pathways of international students differing from 'typical' migration experiences, perhaps due to the uncertainty about their status and migration intention at the time that they leave their home country. It is difficult to determine when, for example, a Chinese student who comes to Australia for their education and only returns to China for short holidays before applying for residence actually 'migrates'.

2.2.2.3 Objectified cultural capital

Unless students have a particular interest in artistic pursuits, it is unclear how studying overseas can provide them with the dispositions which help them 'consume' cultural goods in the aesthetic sense in a way which provides value in fields in the future, be they in China, Australia or transnationally. On the other hand, looking at the other side of the objectified cultural capital coin, we can see great value in the skills the students are able to develop. Although Bourdieu writes about this in terms of the ability to operate machines, etc., in the new economy based on knowledge and communication other skills become more important, particularly in fields with a global orientation. The most obvious of these is the ability to communicate effectively in English. Studying overseas clearly provides the opportunity to develop this skill. There is a strong demand for English skills in China, and there is also a perceived demand for the skills associated with the supposedly more advanced qualifications available overseas. In China's growing market economy, international students are potentially in a position to capitalise on such objectified cultural capital if their English language skills have developed enough. In addition, objectified cultural capital in the form of technical and professional skills learnt overseas may have value in China, depending on the demands of the labour market. In Australia, fluency in English is a necessity if employment or migration is considered and students may also be able to use their skills, such as in accountancy, where there is a clear demand for such people with such skills.

2.2.2.4 Social capital

We saw previously that in the early twentieth century the students who returned to China were able to form groups and gain value through their membership as returnees came to dominate certain sectors of Chinese society. Returned students are again gaining prevalence in fields such as higher education (Wang 2003). It has not yet been demonstrated, however, that their dominance or, indeed, any of the success they may find upon their return is due to their development of social capital while overseas. Indeed, few studies have touched upon this aspect of their experience. One exception, however, is Johanna Waters' study which found that Hong Kong students' experience in a particular Canadian university provided opportunities to develop and join networks with other former international students upon return to Hong Kong (Waters 2006a). In this case the networks existed and were known to the students before they went to Canada. Returning to Hong Kong and eventually claiming network membership was an expected outcome of their overseas study.

For the Chinese international students studying in Australia there are a number of opportunities for them to develop social capital. Whilst in Australia they are in a good position to form networks with other Chinese international students, as well as with students from other countries. They are also potentially able to develop relationships with Australians. The question arises, however, as to whether and where such social capital can be realised, and this depends on which fields the students position themselves in.

The most obvious potential benefit to Chinese students of gaining an overseas education is for those expecting to position themselves in a transnational business field. The opportunity to develop networks with others who are also expecting to do as such may be of value. Drawing upon social capital developed in Australia after returning to China is more problematic. Unlike the students from Hong Kong in Waters' study there is a greater level of diversity of places of origin and destination for mainland Chinese international students and it is not clear whether international students are able to develop the intensity of relationships and groups which would allow them to be of practical benefit to each other on their return. Moreover, with only one third of Chinese

international students returning to China investments made in developing social capital for use in China carry a substantial risk of not being realised.

2.2.3 Globalisation, post-modern values and embodied cultural capital

Just as at the turn of the twentieth century, China is again going through a period of rapid social change. While at the start of the twentieth century China was going through a process of modernisation, at the start of the twenty first century its development is driven and defined by globalisation; global trade, global finance, and global culture. It is the forces of globalisation that facilitate the border crossings now being undertaken by 'transnationalised' people such as Waters' international students and Ong's Hong Kong capitalists discussed previously. These forces, however, have also resulted in social changes that go beyond the simple act of allowing movement between places. These changes necessitate a further reconsideration of Bourdieu's concepts.

Modernity theorists Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman describe the world as being in a time of 'second' (Beck), 'liquid' (Bauman) or 'post' modernity characterised by constant flexibility and uncertainty. This is in contrast to the relative stability of the previous phase of modernity which constitutes the basis of Bourdieu's theory. Where before an individual's identity and place in society was a factor of where and to whom they were born, the development of one's identity is now an ongoing project which must be constantly revised amidst the flux of globalisation (Bauman 2000, 7; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 4). Beck and Bauman have called this task of building one's own identity in the post-modern world 'individualisation' (Bauman 2001; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002). Bauman writes:

What the idea of 'individualization' carries is the emancipation of the individual from the ascribed, inherited and inborn determination of his or her social character: a departure rightly seen as a most conspicuous and seminal feature of the modern condition.... Modernity replaces the *determination* of social standing with a compulsive and obligatory *self-determination*.

(Bauman 2001, 144)

The options available to an individual and the possibilities they can imagine for themselves are no longer primarily derived from their own experience of life, their family habitus and the fields they inhabit. Rather their options, possibilities and indeed, their identities, are also informed by the flows of global culture, the mass-media, the internet and the various consequences of the compression of space and time which globalisation entails. It is the speed of change and diversity of this change that requires individuals to be on their guard and ready to define and redefine themselves in order to grasp the best possible social position for themselves. For anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, this means that culture is becoming less about habitus and more about 'conscious choice, justification, and representation' (Appadurai 1996, 44). He goes on, however, to note that:

Bourdieu's idea of the habitus can be retained, but the stress must be put on his idea of improvisation, for improvisation no longer occurs within a relatively bounded set of thinkable postures, but is always skidding and taking off, powered by the imagined vistas of mass-mediated master narratives. There has been a general change in the global conditions of life-worlds: put simply, where once improvisation was snatched out of the glacial undertow of habitus, habitus now has to be painstakingly reinforced in the face of life-worlds that are frequently in flux.

(Appadurai 1996, 55-56)

In a post-modern world those who are in a position where they can, indeed, undertake the tasks of forming their own identities and capitalising on the options and possibilities presented to them are at an advantage over those who cannot. With a multitude of options available individual action and determination is required in order to decide which is the best. One's habitus, the dispositions embodied in an individual in the course of the upbringing and education, no longer provides all the answers. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim comment:

If they are not to fail, individuals must be able to plan for the long term and adapt to change; they must organize and improvise, set goals, recognize obstacles, accept defeats and attempt new starts. They need initiative, tenacity, flexibility and tolerance of frustration.

(Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 4)

The corollary to this is that individuals who cannot do this are left disadvantaged, unable to compete as well as those who can. Moreover, in a globalised world, the ability or inability to move globally is closely related to inequality (Beck 2007, 695-696). According to Weiss:

In a globalizing world, spatial autonomy becomes a second factor structuring class relations [in addition to economic resources]. Those who are able to choose optimal environments for themselves and their resources are in a superior position to those who are limited by a nation-state frame.

(Weiss 2005, 714)

Mastering flexibility and border crossing, or becoming post-modern and global, appears to be a key to success in a post-modern globalised world. The accumulation of cultural and social capital of value in particular geographically situated fields may no longer be enough. From the research of Ronald Inglehart and others we can see that the values of post-modernity are, however, not spread evenly throughout the world (Inglehart 2000). For Inglehart the individualistic, quality of life oriented post-modern values arise in highly developed countries demonstrate where individual survival is taken for granted. With the necessities of life secure, modern, materialist goals no longer have the same immediate urgency and are replaced with other, post-modern, priorities. According to Inglehart:

Postmodern values emphasize self-expression instead of deference to authority and are tolerant of other groups and even regard exotic things and cultural diversity as stimulating and interesting, not threatening.

(Inglehart 2000, 223)

Individuals in developing countries, on the other hand, have values classified as more 'modern' than post-modern. Their orientation remains relatively more focussed on achievement and material gain than on self-expression and enjoyment (Wang 2007). Values, however, change. Inglehart argues that as countries develop the values of their people move from being modern to post-

modern (Inglehart 2000). This value shift even occurs in East Asian countries with a historically achievement oriented Confucian heritage (Wang 2007). Therefore, as China develops Chinese people are likely to increasingly display the post-modern values which will, in turn, facilitate their taking of advantaged positions in a post-modern, globalised world. China, however, is not yet a post-modern society. Nevertheless, those who are able to be post-modern and are able to freely move across borders will be able to take up the options and possibilities opened to them by the process of globalisation and those who are not able to be post-modern and who cannot freely move across borders will miss out on these opportunities. If China is to transform, like the rest of the developed world, into a post-modern society then those who are first able to capitalise on the transformation will be at the vanguard and best positioned to reap the benefits.

The very act of studying abroad is itself an expression of freedom of mobility, and if Chinese international students are able to learn the values with which they can function successfully in a post-modern globalised world then their overseas education may be the ticket to a future at the forefront of a changing China. If, on the other hand, the rise of China represents a new and unique chapter in human history and its development does not follow the path of the rest of the world, then having post-modern values in China may prove less valuable.

2.2.3.1 Post-modern values as embodied cultural capital?

We saw previously that the Chinese international students who returned to China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were successful in bringing modern technologies and practices from the more modern West to a China attempting modernisation. The students were able to find success in modern, internationally oriented, fields which reflected the cultural capital that they had developed as a result of their Chinese upbringing and their experience of education overseas. There is little direct evidence, however, that Chinese international students who study in societies which are starting to exhibit the values of post-modern societies are similarly able to transmit such values back to China, let alone gain value from them. There are indications, however, that possessing certain characteristics reflective of the post-modern societies discussed above can have value in a country such as China.

In particular being globally oriented, a sign of flexibility and propensity for mobility, has been highlighted as important for social positioning in contemporary Asia. The research of Qing Zhang, for example, demonstrates that in Beijing bilingual people who are able to speak Mandarin without a local accent are better able to position themselves in an increasingly transnational business world (Zhang 2005). Being able to show with their accent that they are not tied to a particular place, i.e. that they are mobile and (at least potentially) border crossers, they are able to increase their value in the job market: their non-local accent is useful embodied cultural capital. Michael Pinches has also noted that for middle class 'Asians' an external or global orientation is key to their identity and is built on their representation 'as successful players in the global arena of capitalistic accumulation' (Pinches 1999, 44). The habitus of both of these groups includes a global, or at least non-local, orientation and such an orientation has value as embodied cultural capital. Bourdieu's conceptual framework indicates that such a habitus is acculturated in the family or in education through interaction with people who themselves have such a global outlook, and Appadurai may argue that global culture also has an influence. By studying overseas international students may also be able to develop a global orientation. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter One, studying overseas has been shown to leave students more interculturally aware and well equipped to work in international contexts. As Fazal Rivzi writes, 'International education is used by international students to better position themselves within the changing structures of the global economy, which increasingly prizes the skills of inter-culturality and a cosmopolitan outlook' (Rizvi 2005, 9). There is, however, little to indicate that mainland Chinese students are choosing to study overseas in order to become interculturally aware and develop a global orientation of value in the field of global business. This is an area that this thesis will explore.

Nevertheless, there is more to being post-modern than developing a global orientation and reaping the material gains that may arise as a result. The post-modern values discussed above entail a prioritisation of individual self-determination, freedom of expression and mobility, and quality of life over more explicitly materialist goals. If Chinese students do develop these values as a result of their overseas education their lives may be influenced in different ways from the experiences of students in earlier periods. Whether being immersed in a post-modernising society can cause

value change for Chinese students and how (or if) this impacts their lives is a key point of enquiry for this thesis.

This discussion brings another dimension to Bourdieu's framework for explaining strategies of capital accumulation undertaken by families in order to best position their children in social fields. Not only do these strategies now need to take into account the possibility of transnational capital accumulation as experienced by early Chinese international students, but they also need to be positioned within the context of new global cultural flows and the values and orientations, indeed the dispositions, necessary for success in the future. Bringing Bourdieu into a world where life experiences and cultural encounters are increasingly globalised results in more complexity, but is nonetheless necessary.

2.2.4 Habitus, family background and the deployment of transnationally generated capital

Despite the potential that global cultural forces and the experiences of students overseas have to affect their habitus, the role of the family remains important. Students come to overseas study with their own individual habitus reflective of their own upbringing and education. Although it is reasonable to expect that international students' families have access to more resources than average given the high costs of an overseas education, it does not immediately follow that they are members of a singular 'middle class' with similar family and social backgrounds, indeed, if a middle class can be said to be developing in China it is neither unified nor homogenous (Bian 2002, 98). It is possible, and indeed likely, that the resources and backgrounds of families of Chinese international students will vary, perhaps markedly. The role of the students' backgrounds in their potential development of an internationally oriented embodied cultural capital or post-modern values thus becomes an important issue, but not one which has been the subject of research. Bourdieu comments that:

the specific productivity of all pedagogic work other than the pedagogic work accomplished by the family is a function of the distance between the habitus it tends to inculcate ... and the habitus inculcated by all previous forms of pedagogic work and, ultimately, by the family...

(Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, 72)

To put this in terms of the current discussion, if a student has grown up in a family which is internationally oriented and/or whose values are more post-modern then they are likely to already have aspects of a habitus which reflects this. When they subsequently study overseas they are already endowed with an international or post-modern perspective and so, according to Bourdieu, should be in a good position to further develop their habitus in this direction. For students who do not come from such families, on the other hand, the distance between the habitus they developed in China and the internationally oriented habitus which is possible to develop while overseas is greater, and thus they may not be able to capitalise on their experience to the same extent. Nevertheless, although students without an internationally oriented family background may not gain as much of the embodied cultural capital of value in the global field, the amount that they do gain may still be sufficient to provide them with advantages over other people within China who had similar backgrounds who had not studied overseas.

Consequently, the role that international education plays in the struggle for positions in the Chinese social space is mediated by the backgrounds of the students. This is an area which has not been given much attention to date and to do so is one of the aims of this thesis. It is particularly important to understand the role of international education in China because the country's growing wealth and the ever increasing demand for higher educational qualifications means that studying overseas will become more accessible to people with relatively less wealth.

If students' backgrounds do play a role in their ability to develop an internationally oriented habitus, then those students who found that their embodied cultural capital was not developed to a level of significant value in China might find that remaining in Australia gives them greater opportunities than returning to China given that their Australian degrees give them a clearly defined measure of institutionalised capital in the Australian employment market.

2.3 Conclusion

The above discussion has addressed how Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus help us start to understand some of the causes and consequences of studying overseas for Chinese international students. In various ways it appears that students may be able to invest in their overseas education to gain capital which they may otherwise not have been able to acquire. We have seen that a qualification from overseas can act as institutionalised cultural capital, and has done so in China at various times during the last hundred years, despite it originating in a very different social setting. Chinese international students may also be able to develop embodied cultural capital (dispositions and values), objectified cultural capital (skills) and social capital (connections and networks), all of potential value in certain fields wherever they may be spatially located. The cultural changes arising from globalisation, however, add an extra level of complexity to this picture. By examining the phenomenon of Chinese students seeking to further their education abroad it will be possible to make a further assessment of the utility of Bourdieu's concepts in contexts of transnational capital accumulation and application.

PART II – METHODOLOGY

3 Study design

The first part of this thesis outlined the historical and social contexts in which the current movement of Chinese international students is located, and how the students' decisions and experiences can both be examined in light of and raise questions about orthodox (in particular Bourdieuean) views of the role of education in societies. Gaining further insights into the complexities behind the decisions, experiences and perceptions of contemporary Chinese international students will both help to understand the role of international education in social change in China as well as provide a basis for reassessing Bourdieu's ideas about the role of education in transnational contexts.

In order to further explore these issues this thesis now moves to examine the decisions, experiences and perceptions of Chinese international students in Adelaide, Australia. The experiences of these students, the participants in the study, represent an instance of Chinese international students studying abroad which allows an exploration of the applicability of Bourdieu's ideas in an international context.

A qualitative approach, drawing on aspects of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990) was chosen to explore these issues as it allows the development of an understanding of social processes and mechanisms from the perspective of the actors who are attempting to negotiate them. A qualitative approach is particularly applicable when examining the concept of cultural capital, which the literature has indicated may be central to this thesis. This is because cultural capital concerns the attributes and dispositions of people, and qualitative methodology is a powerful tool for understanding people's attributes and dispositions from their own perspectives. Moreover, grounded theory is an inductive approach which allows the pursuit of new directions discovered in the course of the research which may not necessarily have been anticipated through analysis of the literature or preliminary fieldwork (Strauss & Corbin 1990). With limited research having been previously carried out with these students the opportunity to do this is important (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 19).

The qualitative data collection method chosen for this study was in-depth open ended interviews. Interviews were carried out in late 2005 and 2006 with 39 university students from mainland China who were studying in Adelaide, South Australia. Interviews were transcribed and then analysed. This chapter addresses the rationale for interviewing these students and the participant selection, interview and data analysis processes.

This project had ethical approval from the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee, project number H-094-2005.

3.1 Rationale for selection of participants

This research aimed to investigate the broader social context of overseas education for Chinese international students as well as their expectations about longer term effects. In order to do this, Chinese international university students were interviewed about their experiences of education in China as well as Australia, and their thoughts about the future. This section explains why these students were considered best able to provide the data necessary to carry out this research.

3.1.1 Rationale for collecting qualitative data only from students

Chinese international students have been chosen as the sole informants as their experiences are the central point of interest in this research. It is the students themselves who are in the best position to reflect upon their educational experiences, what these experiences mean to them and what they expect their significance will be in the future. Concentrating on collecting data from the students provides an opportunity to gather the richest and most direct possible data. It is not possible within the time frame of doctoral research to complete a longitudinal study within China and throughout international study and beyond, although such a study design could be argued to be ideal. The in-depth interviews I conducted allowed students to report retrospectively on their educational and familial experiences within China and their motivations for overseas education. Their reflections on their future are conjecture, but they provide important insight into the benefits and possibilities attributed to overseas education.

This study revolves around the students' perceptions of the reality that they have lived through and draws links between their past, present and future. In the future, it is the students who will be making the decisions about their own lives and their pathways will be informed by their experiences. Addressing the students' experiences on their own terms, therefore, is important. Viewing the process through which the students chose to go overseas through the eyes of the students allows a context to be developed which helps understand their experiences whilst studying in Adelaide and their hopes and expectations about their future. For these reasons, although interesting and relevant data may have been available from other actors (such as parents, teachers, education managers, international recruitment officers and education agents, immigration bureaucrats etc.) their roles will be discussed only through the eyes of the students I interviewed.

3.1.2 Rationale for interviewing students while they are students

In this study, only international students who were undertaking their education at the time took part. Although it is possible to include people who had previously or not yet experienced an overseas education (i.e. former or future students), current students have been chosen as they are in the best position to comment directly on their experiences. Their process of deciding to study overseas was still relatively recent and as such they are still in a good position to reflect upon it.

Former students may also have been able to contribute data to the study, in particular in relation to the consequences of their overseas education on their future lives and careers. The potential benefits of their involvement, however, are outweighed by the advantages of their exclusion. In addition to a desire to impose limits on the scope of the study for practical reasons there are three reasons why former students are not involved. The first is related to the immediacy of their experiences which is far less than for those currently studying. Each day international students live the reality of being international students. In every facet of their relationships within their educational institution and in the broader host community their position and identity as international students are very close to the top of their minds. This gives the students' ideas about their

experiences as international students an immediacy and relevance which may be lost if former students are involved.

Second, former students are likely to interpret their experiences as international students in light of what happens after they finish their education. In one sense this could add some greater depth to the data about overseas education than that available from relying on projections from current students. This study, however, is focussed primarily on the role that *overseas education* itself has in the students' lives in terms of aspirations and other aspects of character development as well as in terms of expectations about future outcomes. Also, students' perceptions about their experiences and the consequences they feel in themselves as a result are expected to drive the kinds of decisions that they make in the future and the ways that they view themselves and their environment. These feelings and expectations about the future are an important aspect of this study, more important than *what* the former students actually do in the future.

Third, recruiting students who have already entered the workforce has the potential to limit the diversity in the backgrounds, experiences and perceptions of the sample. Due to logistical and time constraints it is difficult to access former international students who have returned to China, and this may have resulted in a pool of participants who had chosen to stay in Australia. While a study of such people may well have been interesting, any representatives of the large number of students who return to China would have been omitted. As this study aims to look at experiences of overseas education across a variety of backgrounds and perceptions of projected futures, any arbitrary limitation to this diversity is best avoided.

3.1.3 Rationale for limiting sample to university (coursework) students

Participants are chosen from Chinese international students currently studying at university and undertaking either undergraduate or postgraduate coursework programs. Selecting such students provides an opportunity to maximise the variety of pathways by which they have come to Australia and thereby increases the range of family backgrounds of participants. These pathways include Chinese middle school → Australian senior high school → Australian university; Chinese middle

school → Chinese senior high school → Chinese preparatory college → Australian university; Chinese middle school → Australian senior high school → Australian vocational (including TAFE¹⁶) college → Australian university, etc. Had the study been limited to Chinese international high school students, for example, the sample would be more biased toward those with relatively higher socio-economic status. This is because the high costs of overseas high school education (combined with the anticipated eventual costs of overseas university education) make it available only to families with significant economic resources. Although overseas university study (and associated living expenses) is also expensive, by comparison it is still more readily available to a greater range of families than overseas high school education. Thus, by interviewing students while they are at university it is possible to include students who completed their secondary education in China before coming to Australia in addition to those who completed their secondary or other pre-university education in Australia. Moreover restricting participation to university students still allows an exploration of the potentially interesting aspects of the experiences of students who came to Australia initially to study at high school. Including students who came to Australia at different stages of their education (secondary, tertiary, etc.) therefore raises the possibility of encountering a broader range of experiences of overseas education and exploring in more depth issues related to the length of time the students had studied in Australia.

Chinese international postgraduate students who were studying higher degrees by research (PhD) were excluded because they are significantly older than undergraduate students and their pathways into overseas education are also different. They have already achieved highly in the Chinese education system, usually including the completion of a Masters program in China. Postgraduate *coursework* students, on the other hand have most likely only completed their undergraduate training in China, and are also likely to be relatively younger, and for these reasons were included.

University students are also nearing the end of their education and closer to moving into the workforce. As an aim of the study is to investigate not only the experiences of the students but

¹⁶ TAFE = 'Technical and Further Education', public vocational colleges

how they expect that these experiences will affect their lives and careers in the future, those with at least some experience of tertiary education are in a better position to comment on, and are more likely to have thought about, their lives into the medium-term future than those without.

3.2 Recruitment of participants

Participants were recruited through three methods. The first was with the assistance of lecturers and tutors at the University of Adelaide who taught courses taken by Chinese international students from a variety of disciplines. In some cases the lecturers and tutors asked students in their classes if anyone was interested in participating in the research. On other occasions I gave a short presentation about the research to classes with Chinese international students and interested students were provided with more information and directions about how to participate. The second recruitment method was through notices posted in various locations around the University of Adelaide campus (see Appendix 7). Interested students made contact with me through the information provided on the notices in order to obtain more information or to arrange a time for an interview. The project also utilised the 'snowball', or participant referral, method to contact more students to participate. At the conclusion of each interview and/or through subsequent email exchanges, participants were asked if they knew any other Chinese international students who may be interested in participating. If so they were then asked to pass on information and ask the interested student to make contact. In some cases, with the interested student's permission, I was provided with their email address so an appointment could be made. Although this 'snowball' method is reported to be successful in many social research projects it was not particularly effective in this case. Despite the efforts of one or two particularly social participants, on no occasion was a participant interviewed after secondary referral, i.e. being referred by a participant introduced by another participant. The data subsequently indicated that a contributing factor to the difficulties encountered in pursuing the snowball method may be the relative isolation felt by the participants who were involved in the study (see 6.2). Although most did have Chinese friends they generally did not consider the bonds between them to be as strong as they had felt with their friends in China. As such they may have been reluctant to broach the subject of participating in an interview which, by the time the question of referring friends arose, had covered quite personal

thoughts and experiences in some depth. Alternatively the participants may have assumed that their friends would just not have been interested. At all stages it was made very clear that the students' participation or non-participation would have no bearing on their standing in their classes or at the University in general. Moreover, the voluntary nature of the interview and the confidentiality of the information discussed in the interviews was guaranteed.

The first round of interviews (13 participants) was carried out between August and November 2005. For the first round the only selection criteria was that the participants needed to be non-research international students from mainland China and studying at the University of Adelaide. Keeping the selection criteria open was intended to encourage as many students as possible to participate as well as to provide a broad range of experiences and perceptions. Contrary to the experience of the second round of interviews, almost half of the participants in the first round were introduced by participants, with six recruited through lecturers and one directly (by chance, in a lift). After the first round of interviews was complete they were transcribed and analysed. The analysis (which will be discussed in Chapters Five to Seven) confirmed that rich and varied data was available from participants who had gone through diverse educational and experiential pathways before commencing tertiary study. However, it was found that students who had spent relatively more time in Australia (either being former international high school students or nearing the end of their tertiary education) had generally experienced a greater degree of personal transformation as a result of their education than had those who had left China more recently. As the question of how the experiences of study abroad were seen to affect and alter their lives in the future was central to the study it was decided that a second round of recruitment would focus on attracting senior students or those with more overseas experience. This utilisation of what Strauss refers to as 'theoretical sampling' (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 176-179) thus proved useful. Nevertheless, students with relatively little experience studying overseas were not entirely excluded from the study as the first round of interviews had also shown that they were able to offer many important insights. The contrast between those with more or less overseas experience was also a potential avenue of enquiry.

The second round of interviews was carried out between August and November 2006 and involved a further 26 participants. Again most students were recruited with the help of their lecturers or tutors, but a significant minority participated after responding to the recruitment poster. The wording of the poster had been changed slightly to make it more attractive by highlighting that the interview would provide the students with an opportunity to practice their English. The initial round of interviews had revealed that lack of opportunity for English conversation had been particularly disappointing. Also, a clause restricting participation to second and third year students added (see Appendix 8).

3.3 Description of the interviews

Before each interview commenced I provided information about the project and explained its confidential and voluntary nature, the fact that the participant would not gain by taking part, the process of the interview and the fact that a copy of the individual's transcript and a summary of the overall results would be provided to them if they wished (see Appendix 4). Participants also completed a consent form indicating their desire to participate, their willingness to be recorded and whether or not they wished to receive a copy of the transcript and results (see Appendix 5). A form outlining the procedure to follow if the participant wished to make a complaint was also provided (see Appendix 6). This was all done in accordance with the requirements of the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee. Interviews took place with one participant at a time (except for participants Wang Bin (#10a M) and Wang Yi (#10b M) who were siblings and chose to be interviewed together) in various rooms at the University of Adelaide upon agreement with the participant.

An interview protocol was prepared for the first round of interviews which summarised the topics of discussion of interest for the project at the time (see Appendix 9). I used this schedule as a prompt to ensure that all aspects of the participants' experience were covered rather than relying on a fixed schedule of questions. The interview protocol was revised for the second round of interviews in order to better highlight the areas of interest that had emerged from the first round of interviews (see Appendix 10).

Participants were typically first invited to 'tell the story' of their experience of becoming and being an international student, if possible highlighting the process through which they became an international student, their experience in Australia and what they thought about the future. The method of inviting participants to tell their story proved to be most successful in eliciting comprehensive stories.

Participants' responses when asked to tell their story varied markedly from some who offered a few short sentences to others who offered monologues of more than 20 minutes. Participants' understanding of what constituted the interesting and relevant aspects of their stories also varied. Some focussed on the process of getting to Australia, others on the difficulties after arriving, and one (Xia Zixi (#27 F)), after warning that her story was a long one, began with her family history going back two generations. The success of encouraging participants to tell their story, however, appeared to lie in the fact that the interview came to be understood as being under the participants' control, with the interviewer acting more as a facilitator to help uncover the story they were keen to tell rather than as an inquisitor extracting pre-determined information.

The interviews generally, but not strictly, explored the students lives chronologically in 'phases', in China, Australia and in the future. The first section of the interview concentrated on the participants' time in China. Particular emphasis was placed on the process which led them to becoming international students, their experiences both positive or otherwise of education in China, their relationships with their parents and how this affected their attitude towards their studies, as well as other relevant areas which arose.

The second section of the interview concerned the participants' time in Australia. The discussion started in a manner similar to that of the first phase, i.e. with the focus on documenting the story of their time in Australia. Areas covered included their experiences of education in Australia, in high school and/or university, the differences they perceived between the Chinese and Australian 'styles' of education, their experiences of adapting to and living in the Australian community and any difficulties they may have encountered in their education in Australia or in Australian life in

general. In the first round of interviews participants were asked about the consequences of their time studying abroad in terms of the 'benefits' they believed they had accrued as a result.

Responses in these interviews indicated that a key 'benefit' was the change that the participants had felt in themselves. Indeed, as elaborated in Chapter Six, the concept of 'change' turned out to be more relevant than 'benefits' and considerable time was spent in subsequent interviews exploring how the participants felt that they had changed through living and studying overseas.

The third section of the interview was devoted to exploring what the participants thought the future would hold for them. In many cases there was a considerable level of uncertainty about the details of what they believed would happen, particularly, but not only, with the participants who were in the early years of their university study. Where there was uncertainty, however, it was restricted to the specifics of what the participants expected they would do. They were all able to talk in some depth about how they thought their experiences overseas and the resulting changes they felt in themselves would play a role in their lives in the future. As such a key part of this phase of the interview consisted of participants outlining how they believed their futures would be different as a result of studying overseas and considerable time was spent exploring the various factors which contributed to this difference.

The final section of the interview involved a discussion about the participants' family background. This was carried out in order to collect data on the participants' perceptions of their families' relative social position and for indications of potential social mobility as a result of studying overseas. The discussion began with details of participants' parents' and grandparents' employment and the kinds of social mobility that they may have experienced (i.e. had their parents come from very poor families or had they always been relatively privileged?). Participants were then asked to plot their family's social position on a small scale representing 'all the people in China, from the top to the bottom, not only about money but about social position too'. They were asked to put three different marks on a scale (Figure 7), the first for their family's current 'position', the next for what they expected they would achieve in their lives, and the third for what they expected they would have achieved had they not studied overseas. In order to get better and more consistent information about the participants' family backgrounds going back to the grandparents' generation, later

participants were also asked to plot where they thought their grandparents would have been on the scale when they were working. Earlier interviews had only provided this information verbally.

In this process it was made clear to the participants that they were not being asked for absolute, 'scientific' answers and that however they interpreted the question and chose to respond was acceptable. As in the rest of the interview it was reinforced that there were no 'right' and 'wrong' answers. After some thought most participants were able to confidently place their families and themselves on the scale, with most slightly above the middle. Interestingly, a small minority of participants explained that their responses (which were similar to most others) were in relation to urban residents only as if all Chinese people were taken into account (as asked for in the interview) then any urban resident (particularly those who could afford to study overseas) would necessarily be quite close to the top.



Figure 7 – Scale for plotting participant's and their family's relative social positions

The interviews concluded with participants being given an opportunity to add anything they felt to be relevant which had not already been covered in the discussion, as well as a chance to ask any questions.

3.4 Data analysis

During the interviews and throughout their transcription the data were continually searched and coded for themes and contrasts which were analysed and interpreted, as described in the

grounded theory method (Strauss & Corbin 1990). During interviews participants' views and experiences were explored, in many cases touching on areas not foreseen in the planning stage of the project. In these circumstances analysis of the data proceeded as it was being gathered in order to pursue the possibilities that the participants' stories presented for the conceptual development of the project and for the exploration of new themes and directions with subsequent interviewees. This meant testing different kinds of conceptual understandings which emerged from the students' stories as they were being discussed by presenting summaries of their stories drawing on particular conceptual explanations for reflection and comment. For example, the fear of failure (or relative failure) as a major motivating factor in decisions to undertake overseas study was discovered and explored in the course of subsequent interviews (see Chapter Five).

After the first 13 interviews were complete they were transcribed and preliminary analysis was carried out with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software, namely NU*DIST and NVivo2. Analysis began with 'open' coding whereby the experiences of the participants were assigned to categories for comparison, analysis and subsequently to further 'axial' coding in which the relationships between categories of experiences were explored (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 96-115). This process identified and clarified some areas for further enquiry which were pursued in subsequent interviews using the revised interview protocol (Appendix 10). One example of this is that second round interviews focussed more on issues such as independence and personal change and growth. A number of participants also raised the issue of the prestige of the university they were attending in Australia as a factor for their decision making processes. As participants had been recruited from the University of Adelaide (seen as the most prestigious university in Adelaide), it was decided to include participants from other universities. Two participants, Chen Wanling (#39 F) and Cui Lian (#40 F) were recruited from the University of South Australia although upon further analysis their experiences and perceptions in the areas of most interest in this study were consistent with those of other participants and did not warrant further investigation.

The second round of interviews (#14 – #39) were also transcribed and analysed drawing and building on the categories and concepts which emerged from the first round of interviews. Data analysis continued with the assistance of NVivo7 (which had superseded Nu*dist6 and NVivo2 by

this stage). Various characteristics and experiences of participants were tabulated to facilitate the further comparison and analysis of participants' experiences. This included class attributes, educational pathways and perceptions of future opportunities and employment. Some of these data are included in graphical form in the next section.

This process was followed by selective coding through which the core conceptual categories of the analysis were developed (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 123-124). I have titled these concepts 'deficiency/desire', 'growth/development' and 'distinction' as will be discussed in Chapters Five - Seven.

4 Characteristics of sample

This section gives an overall summary of the backgrounds of the students who participated in the interviews for this study. As discussed in Chapter Three, 39 mainland Chinese international students volunteered to participate in the study by taking part in in-depth open-ended interviews. Through the selection criteria described previously a sample was recruited which included participants with a diverse range of family backgrounds, places of origin in China, length of time spent in Australia, first level of education in Australia and level of educational success or otherwise in China. Not surprisingly due to the high costs of studying in Australia, very few participants had a recent family history of low socio-economic circumstances. Nevertheless, there was a wide variety of backgrounds represented by grandparents' occupation and class, although in many cases these were relatively non-specific due to the participants' lack of detailed knowledge about them.

This chapter will briefly highlight some of the demographic characteristics of the participants. Due to the limited size and self-selected nature of the sample these characteristics cannot be taken to reflect characteristics of mainland Chinese international students in general.

4.1 Age of participants

As all participants were either undergraduates or at relatively early stages of their Masters by coursework programs, they comprised a relatively narrow range of ages. The ages represented are what would be expected given their enrolment status with most being in their early 20s. Figure 8 shows the ages of the participants.

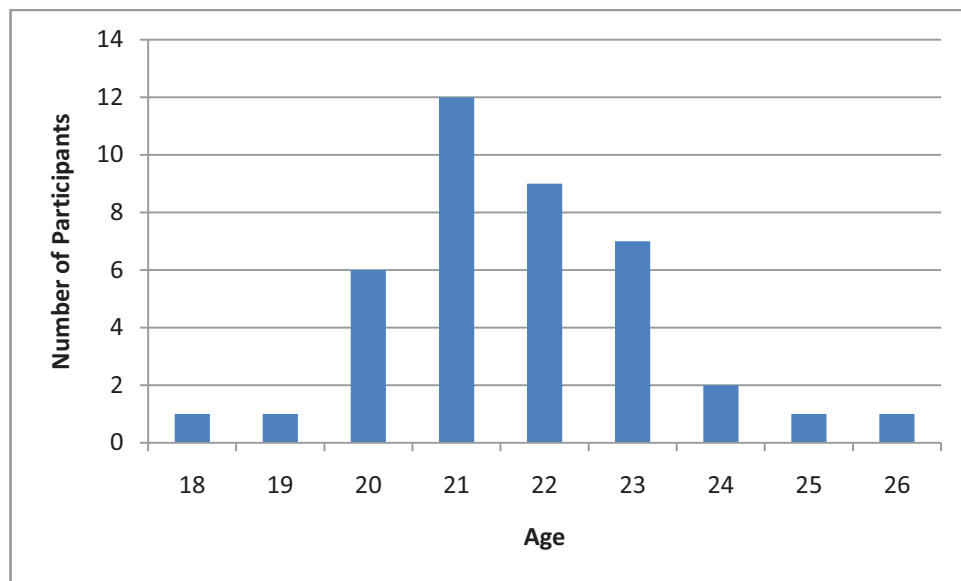


Figure 8 – Number of participants, by age (n=39)

Eighty-five percent (n=33) of participants were aged between 20 and 23 years while only 5% (n=2) and 10% (n=4) were aged below 20 and above 23 respectively.

4.2 Gender

A very even gender balance was achieved in the final sample, with 21 female students and 18 male students participating. When we look at age by gender, however, we can see that younger participants were more likely to be female and older participants male. The average age of female participants was 21.2 and the average age of males was 22.3.

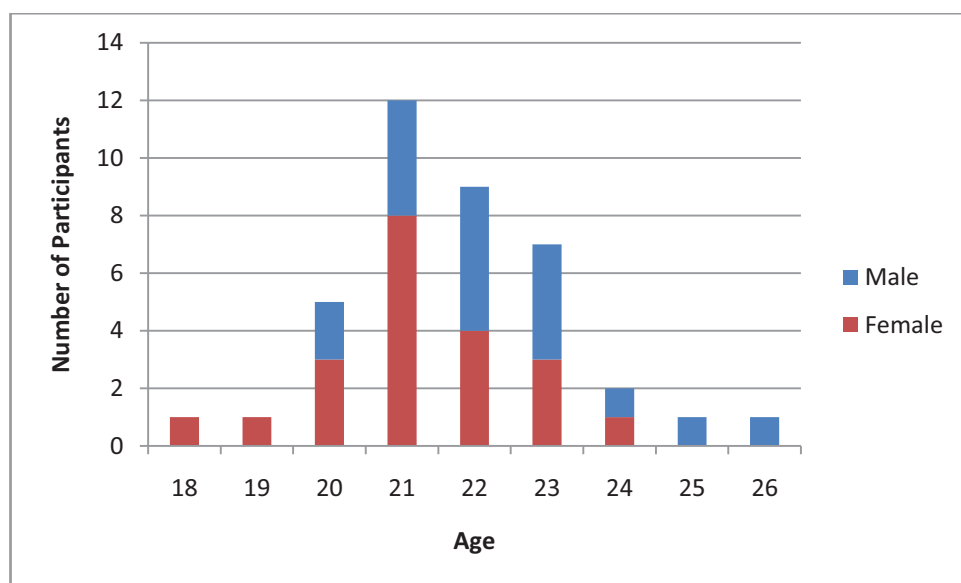


Figure 9 – Number of participants by age and gender (n=39)

4.3 Region of origin

Participants came from a broad range of provinces within China although the majority came from urban centres within provinces located along the Eastern seaboard, as shown in Figure 10. As these areas comprise both the highest population density and the most wealth, this outcome is, again, not surprising. The provinces from which most students came were Beijing¹⁷, Liaoning, Shandong, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

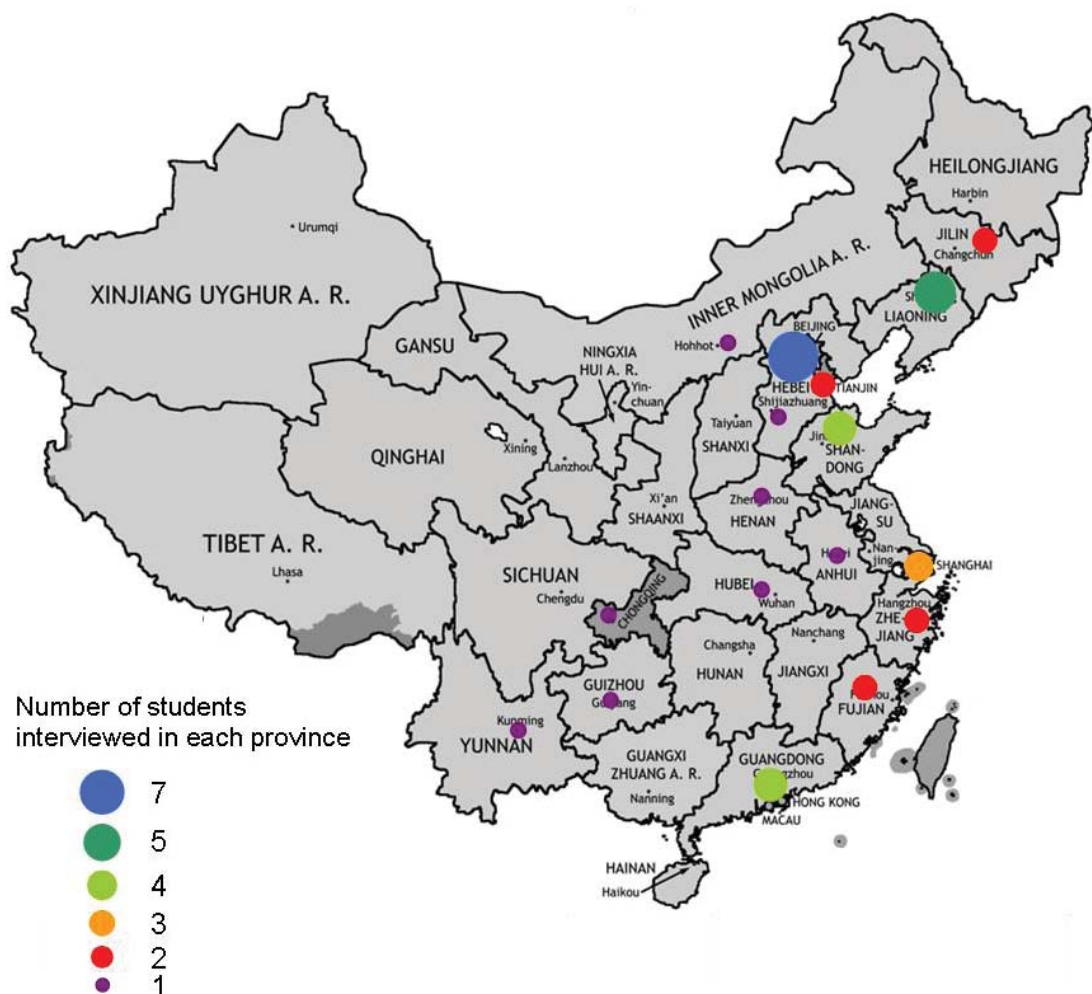


Figure 10 – Number of students interviewed, by province (n=39)

¹⁷ Beijing and Shanghai are municipalities with provincial status.

Participants were also primarily from the larger cities within their provinces with almost three quarters (n=28) coming from provincial capitals and a smaller number from large regional centres or towns relatively close to capital cities. Only a very small number came from small towns with populations in the hundreds of thousands. Clearly, then, the sample of students involved in the study is made up of students from in or near large or relatively large urban areas in the east of the country. Again, this is to be expected as the larger east coast cities are wealthier and therefore where the people who are likely to be able to afford overseas education live.

4.4 Family background

When asked to designate the relative socio-economic position of their families in comparison to the rest of China using a nominal scale, almost all of the participants placed themselves between the middle and three quarters of the way up. There were very few exceptions to this, with only a couple indicating that their families were near the top of the class ranking, and only one indicating that his family was below the middle. In order to make a meaningful comparison, then, I have given each participant's family a nominal class value based on this self-report rating combined with consideration of the other factors discussed in the interview. These factors include the participants' description of their parents' occupations, how successful their parents were in their occupations, explicit discussions of perceptions of status and social mobility, discussion of hardship caused by financing their overseas education, and other aspects where appropriate. Without being able to accurately plot data concerning parents' income (which was not asked for, and participants in most cases would not have been able to provide) I acknowledge that any assignment of class status is necessarily somewhat arbitrary. Nevertheless, my broad categorisation does allow other non-economic factors to be considered in the determination of class. One participant's father, for example, was the head of a county, and another the president of a university. Although neither of these positions are likely to place their families at the top of the scale in terms of income, the social (and political) prestige accompanying them assures their position in the 'upper' category. For others, however, such as those families engaged in running their own businesses, it is more difficult to accurately assign a class, and in these cases I have made a judgement based on the factors discussed above. Nevertheless, as this 'class' ranking was assigned for each participant

only with reference to the other participants, these socio-economic categorical distinctions serve as a useful comparative tool. These 'classes' are 'lower', 'middle', 'upper-middle' and 'upper'. These labels do not have any relation to labels used elsewhere and have been developed solely for the purpose of categorising the students' social positions relative to each other.

Surprisingly, there was a very even distribution across the classes among the participants. As mentioned above, only one was put in the 'lower' group, but the remaining 38 were evenly divided among the other three, with 13 in 'middle' and 'upper-middle', and 12 in 'upper'.

Responses to questions about parents' occupations elicited a very wide range of jobs. The jobs of their parents are detailed in Appendix 3. While all participants provided details of their father's employment not all did so for their mother. Therefore in order to obtain a consistent comparative measure the statistics below refer to father's occupation. As discussed in the previous chapter the 'class' attribution was based on a number of factors which took into account the occupations of both parents where available. Most of the participants' fathers (n=25) were employed in the private sector, with the remainder (n=14) in the public sector in various capacities.

Examining the sector of employment of participants' fathers by class it is clear that those employed in the private sector are more likely to be from the upper-middle or upper class than those working in the public sector, as in Figure 11.

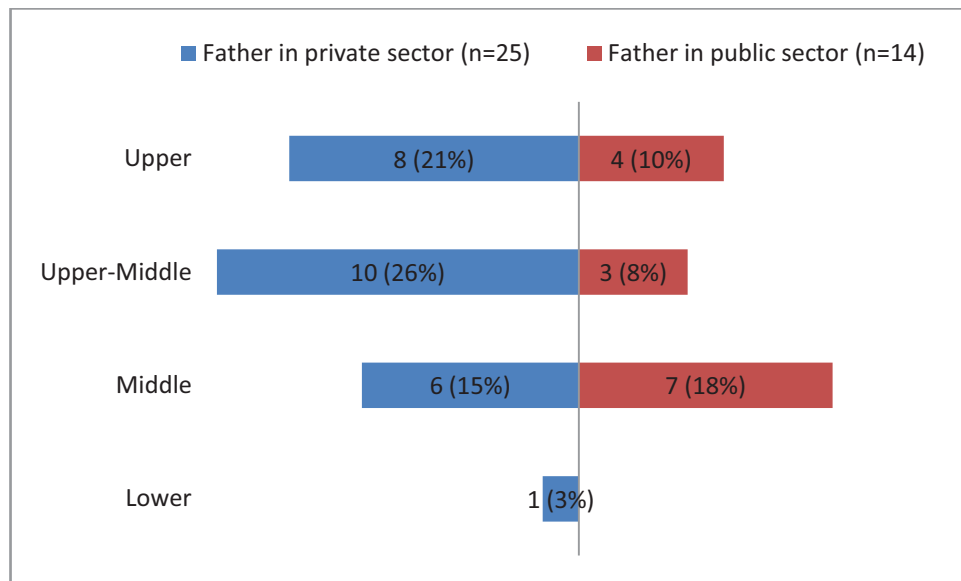


Figure 11 – Parents' class by employment sector (n=39)

Many participants were not very clear about the specifics of their grandparents' occupations, but most were able to provide some general indication of the kind of employment they were involved in. A relatively wide range of occupations were recorded, ranging from farmers and workers to relatively high level politicians and government workers. Because of the changes in the makeup of the Chinese economy over the time that the participants' grandparents were working, i.e. the transition from a capitalist to a communist system, it is difficult to classify the grandparents' occupations any more precisely than into relative classes based on the participants' descriptions of the level of their grandparents' occupations and the relative wealth of their parents as they grew up. This classification is shown in Figure 12 below. We can see from this table that around half of the participants' grandparents were from the upper-middle or upper class categories, including occupations such as landlords, doctors, politicians, managers and a head of a police force, and the other half came from the middle or lower classifications, primarily farmers or workers. Of the 39 participants 12 reported that their families two or three generations previously had been quite rich, indicating a continuity of wealth over the generations.

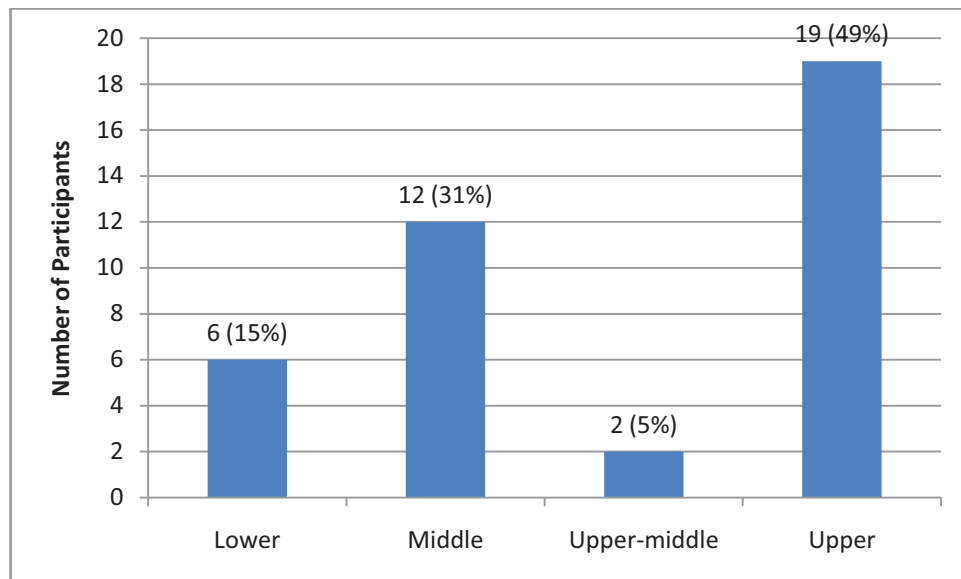


Figure 12 – Grandparents' class (n=39)

When looking at the differences in nominal class¹⁸ between the participants parents and grandparents, 14 of the participants' families had experienced upward social mobility between, 20 had stayed in much the same social position between the grandparents' and parents' generations and 6 had experienced relative social decline. See Appendix 2 for more detail about intergenerational social mobility for individual participants.

4.5 Participants' education in China

Almost all participants (37) completed their junior high school education in China and two completed it in Australia after starting in China. The majority of participants attended key point junior high schools. There are different categories of key schools, such as a provincial level key point school (very good) or a town level key point school (good), but these have been grouped together due to the difficulties of achieving an exact assessment of the relative positioning of schools from different areas within China. Nevertheless, attendance at any kind of key school indicates either sound academic performance or the socio-political connections to assure entrance. On the other hand, non-attendance at a key junior high school indicates either a lower level of

¹⁸ Questions about grandparent's and parent's class were asked in relation to the rest of the Chinese population at the time.

academic achievement or an inability of the family to bypass school zoning regulations. Slightly more than half (21) of the participants attended a key point junior high school, 16 attended a non-key point junior high school and the remaining two participants attended non-standard secondary schools in China.

In terms of senior high school, four participants undertook all of their senior high schooling in Australia, 13 started in China, but completed in Australia, and the remainder completed their secondary schooling in China.¹⁹ This is shown in Figure 13.

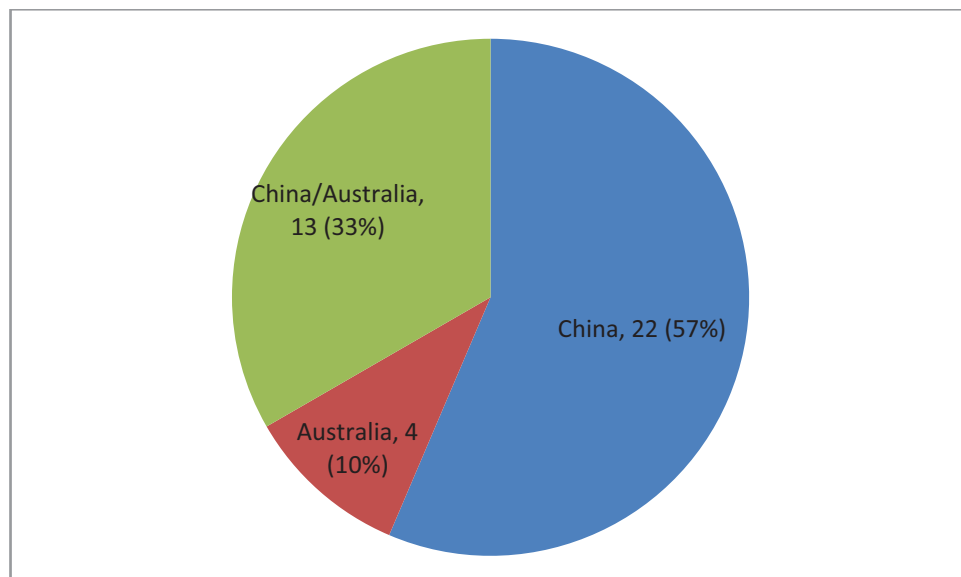


Figure 13 – Location of participants' senior high school (n=39)

Most participants who attended senior high school in China went to key point schools (30) and five went to non-key point senior high schools. Only one participant, Long Sheng (#35 M) attended a technical school in China – the only participant not to follow the academic, university entry, pathway in high school.

Most of the participants in the study indicated that they expected they would not have reached the academic standard necessary to go to one of the best universities in China, although just under

¹⁹ This includes Long Sheng (#35 M) who attended technical college, rather than senior high school, in China.

half said that they thought it would have been possible to go to a second tier university. One quarter of participants indicated that they would not have been likely to gain entry to any worthwhile university at all. Of the eight participants who believed that a top level university was possible for them, six had been admitted and two had expected entry if they had wanted to. Of the 17 participants who believed a second tier university was possible, three had been admitted and the remaining 14 believed it would have been possible. In reporting these numbers, however, it must be remembered that these are based on the students' self appraisals of their abilities which in many cases were not tested. This information, therefore, should be taken as self-perception of rather than ability *per se*.

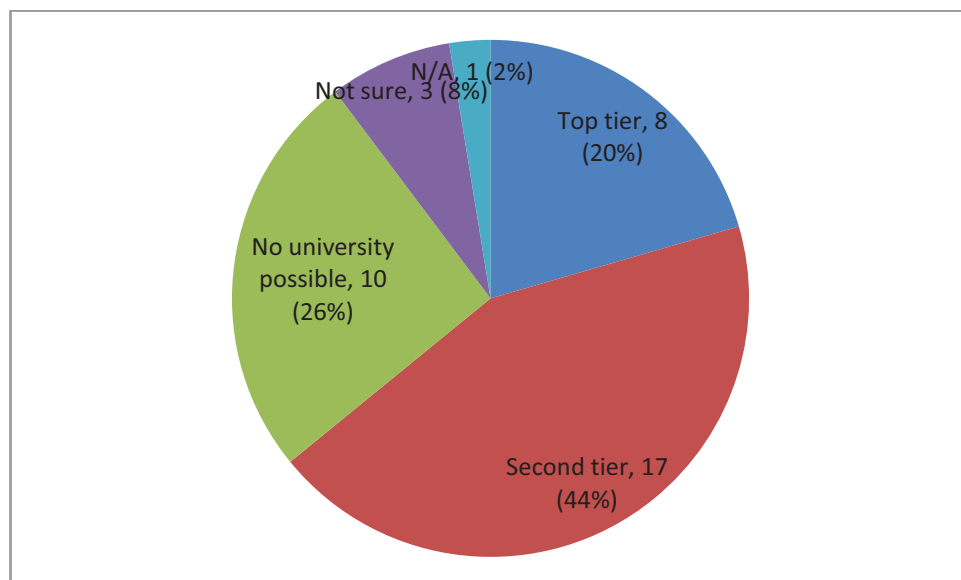


Figure 14 – Perceived chance of getting in to a Chinese university, by quality of university possible (n=39)

17 participants had studied in other non-school educational settings in China before coming to Australia. These included foundation and IELTS preparation courses, private colleges and universities. Some of those who started university courses did not finish them, either transferring their course credits to Adelaide or starting again in Australia. All who went on to do masters in Australia completed their bachelor's degrees in China.

4.6 Participants' education in Australia

Almost half of the sample, 19 participants, started their education in Australia at the high school level, and the other 20 did so at the tertiary level. Most of those who started their Australian education in high school began at year 11 (usually after a period of intensive English study). Of the 20 who started at university, 10 went into first year (often after a short English course), five did a foundation course before commencing the first year of their university degree, two had their course credits transferred from China and went into second year, and three came to do their masters. These are shown in Figure 15, below.

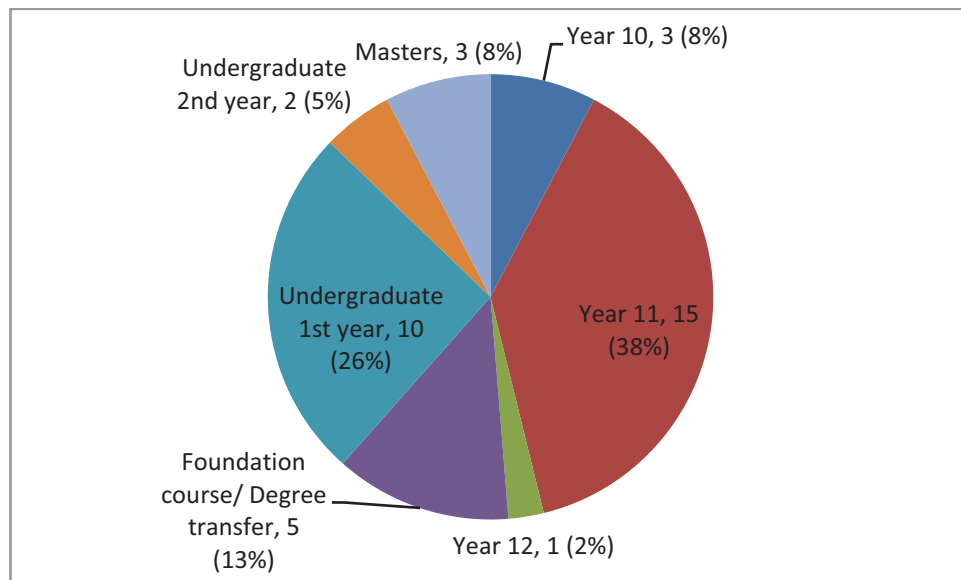


Figure 15 – Participants' first level of study in Australia (n=39)

At the time of the interviews the range of time participants had been in Australia was from less than one year to more than five years. The median length of time spent in Australia was four years. This represents a broad range of lengths of time spent in Australia and is an interesting point of variation within the sample. As most of the participants were studying at the undergraduate level when they were interviewed, it is clear that those who commenced their Australian education at the secondary level have necessarily been in Australia for longer than those who commenced at tertiary level. All of the participants, however, had a substantial amount of experience in Australia; even those who had been in the country for less than one year had generally arrived at the

beginning of the academic year and the interviews were carried out towards the end. The length of time each participant had spent in Australia is summarised below by the level they started studying in Australia.

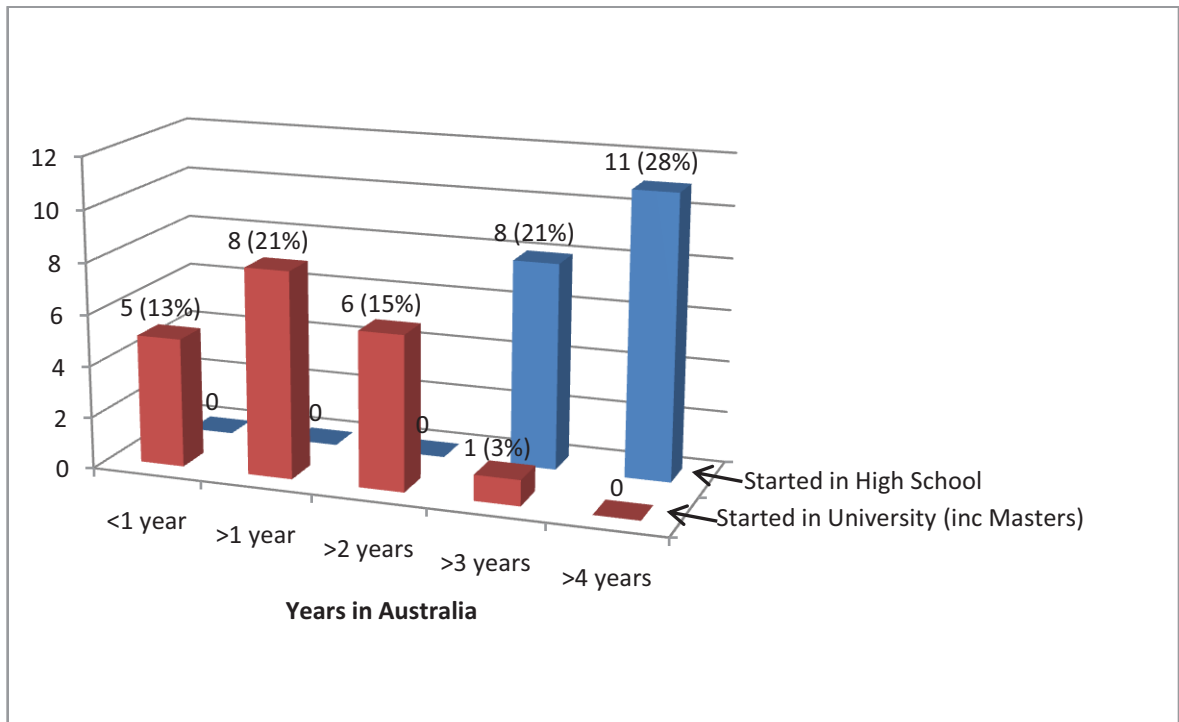


Figure 16 – Participants' length of time in Australia, by starting sector (n=39)

At the time of the interviews participants were enrolled in a variety of courses, as per Figure 17, below. Of those broadly categorised as studying business, four were doing accounting, five commerce, three finance and three marketing. Of the arts students four were studying media and the others were in various disciplines.

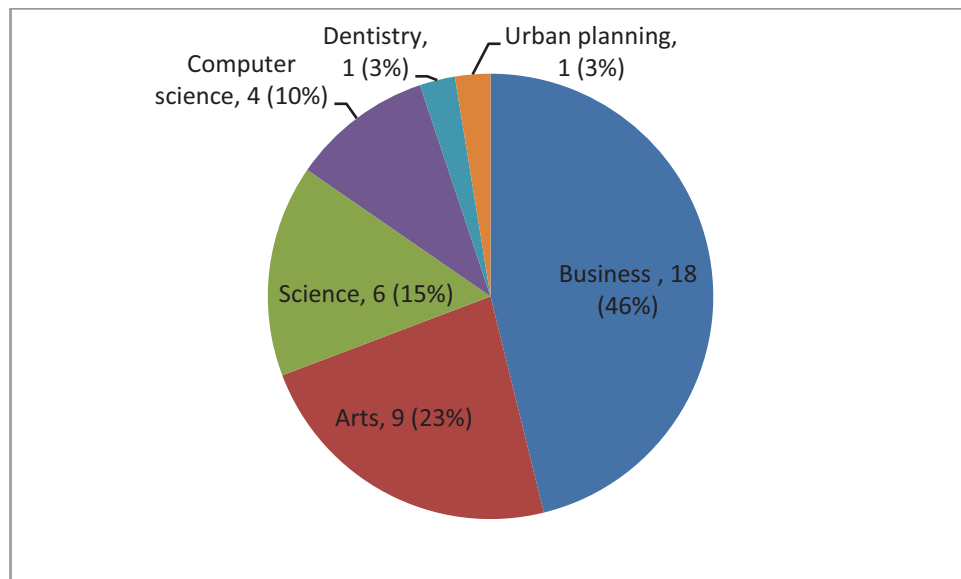


Figure 17 – Participants' major at time of interview (n=39)

All of the participants who studied at high school in Australia stayed for at least a short period in homestay accommodation with local families (this, or some other kind of supervised care is legally required for students under the age of 18 years). In total, 25 participants had some experience of homestay accommodation and 14 had not stayed in a homestay. Six participants who did not go to high school in Australia (i.e. began at foundation/undergraduate/masters level) had stayed in a homestay. By the time of the interview almost all of the participants were living either by themselves or in share houses, usually with other Chinese or international students. Whether students live with local Australians or with other international students has a large impact who they are more likely to develop friendships with. Most participants reported that their social circles included mainly other Chinese students, with 23 reporting that all of their friends in Australia were Chinese. 13 indicated that they had some Australian friends, while only three said that most of their friends were Australian.

4.7 The future: further study and migration

Only six participants were not intending to apply for permanent residence (PR) in Australia. Of the remaining 33 participants most reported that they were either definitely (23) or maybe (10) applying for PR. Those who had been in Australia longer (mostly those who began their studies in Australia

in high school) were much more likely to have firm plans to apply for PR than those who had been in Australia for less time, as shown in Figure 18.

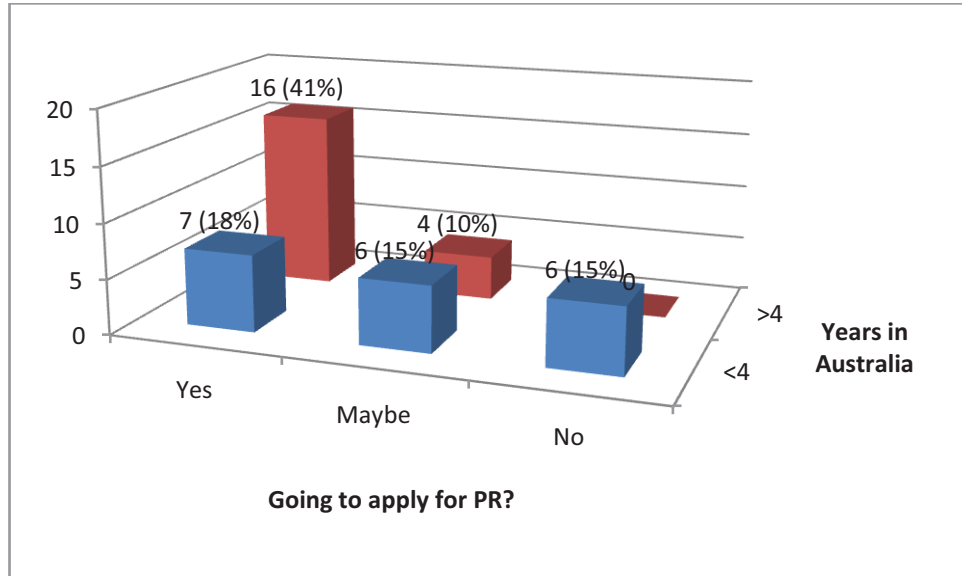


Figure 18 – Intention to apply for permanent residence by length of time spent in Australia (n=39)

A majority of participants who were studying at undergraduate level indicated that they would definitely or were at least considering continuing their education with further postgraduate studies. The proportion of participants who were definitely not going to do postgraduate study was significantly higher for those who came to Australia to complete their high school education before moving on to university, as shown in Figure 19, below. Three participants commenced their Australian education at the Masters (coursework) level.

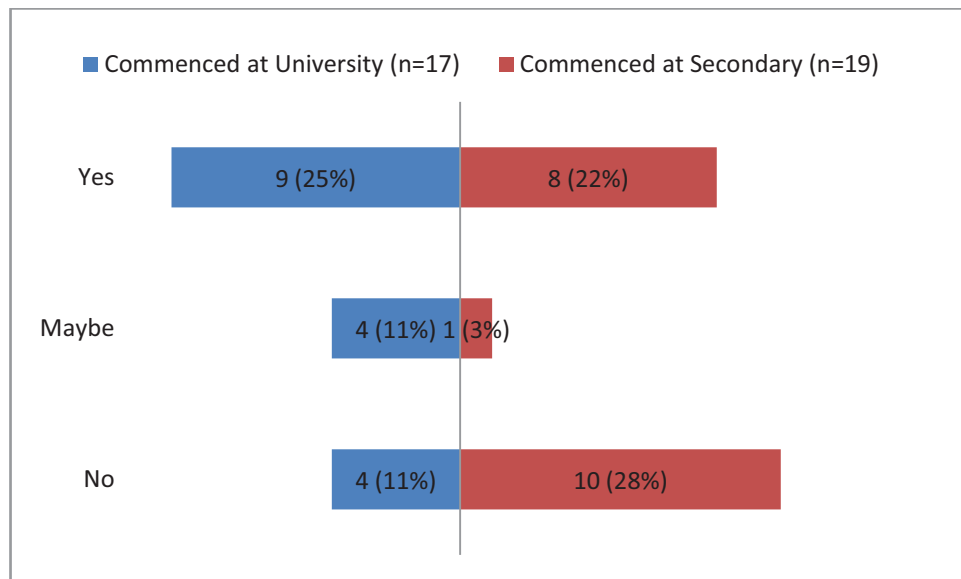


Figure 19 – Intention to undertake postgraduate studies by first level of education undertaken in Australia (n=36)

Almost all participants said that they would prefer to work in Australia after completing their education, even if it was just for a short time. Only four said that they would find their first job in China. When asked about where they would like to live in the long term, however, almost half (19) said that they expected to go back to China at some stage. In certain cases, however, this was very far in the future, perhaps even in retirement. Ten participants said that they were definitely going to stay in Australia and another ten said that they did not mind where they lived, be it in Australia, China or elsewhere.

This overview of the characteristics of students interviewed in this study shows that their backgrounds and pathways to education in Australia are varied. They come from different regions across China, their parents work in different sectors and there is a degree of variation in the social position of their families, although almost all are well off by Chinese standards. The students attended a diverse range of schools and found varied degrees of academic success in China, and began their studies in Australia at different stages from high school to masters level. In the future most plan apply for PR but only a quarter were committed to staying in Australia permanently. The following three chapters which constitute Part III of this thesis will explore and analyse the variety of experiences and backgrounds of the students in more detail.

**PART III – FROM DEFICIENCY TO DISTINCTION: OVERSEAS
EDUCATION IN THE LIVES OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS**

5 Deficiency and Desire: Experiences of education in China and the attraction of Australia

This chapter is the first of three in this section which explore and analyse the lives and stories of Chinese international students in Adelaide, Australia, as they navigate through the challenges of growing up, getting an education and finding their place in a rapidly changing world. This chapter explores the experiences of the students in China, Chapter Six examines their experiences and how they feel they have changed in Australia and Chapter Seven is concerned with how the students believe the sum of their experiences will make a difference to their lives in the future. This analysis provides an opportunity to assess both the function of an overseas education in these students' lives, and, by extension, their communities, as well as the applicability of Bourdieu's theories in this context.

For all of the students in this study their stories begin with something lacking, something deficient, in China. The deficiencies were of the students themselves, as well as of China and its education system. The students and their families expected that studying in Australia would not only allow the students to overcome the deficiencies which made staying in China unsatisfactory, but also fulfilled further desires and ambitions. This chapter focuses on the nature of these deficiencies and desires and the place they had in the participants' thinking about the decision to study in Australia.

The decision making process for each of the participants was a unique interaction of deficiencies and desires. For some there was little interest in studying in Australia *per se* and their main motivation to leave China was to avoid the unsatisfactory academic and employment outcomes they foresaw for themselves if they stayed. For other participants their desire to explore and capitalize on the particular experiences they expected in the West was a much more significant factor than the problems they had previously faced in their education in China. For most participants, however, the decision to study in Australia is an outcome of a mixture of perceived problems in China and opportunities in Australia. Families weighed up the costs of an education overseas against the potential benefits, or the cultural and social capital they expected, and made

their decision on these grounds. As all of the participants were studying in Australia at the time of the interviews, it is clear that when their decision was made they and/or their families had concluded that studying in Australia was on balance likely to be the best option available to them, however 'best' is defined. The first part of this chapter focuses on the problems experienced and expected in China and the second part examines how an Australian education was expected to provide outcomes valuable enough to overcome these problems.

5.1 PART I – Deficiencies: Individual failure and the failure of education in China

Thirty two out of the 39 participants described some level of academic 'failure' in their education in the lead up to the decision to study overseas. For example, Xie Tianmei (#01 F),²⁰ who left China before she completed senior high school, said:

Australian university education is better than Chinese one....we can't get into Beijing University, its good, yeah, of course its good but we can't, so why we don't just go to overseas and get better education?²¹

Xie Tianmei (#01 F)

Seldom was this failure absolute, however, and most participants had not exhausted all of their educational opportunities in China before coming to Australia. Still, lack of satisfactory achievement in education is strongly related to both the decision to come overseas and, importantly, to its timing. Other families, however, held negative beliefs about the Chinese education system which went beyond the students' performance within it. Nevertheless, for all participants studying overseas resulted from their negative experiences in the Chinese education system and the poor results they expected for themselves. This section examines the experience of education in China, the relationship between academic performance and the decision to study

²⁰ All names are pseudonyms. Further information about individual participants and where they have been discussed in Chapters 5-7 are included in Appendix 1 & 2.

²¹ Quotations from interviews have been edited for clarity while remaining as close as possible to the original.

abroad and, with regards to a small number of families, the mismatch between the kind of education available in China and their own values. In sum, China was not able to offer the participants what they wanted or needed, and thus they looked elsewhere.

5.1.1 Surviving school: problems with the Chinese education system

The intense and high-pressure learning environment of the Chinese education system dominated the lives of the participants before they left China. It was a very challenging time for most, and the problems with their schools and the education system were closely related to their difficulties finding academic success. Those who had lower levels of academic achievement generally reported a lower level of satisfaction with their time at school in China, even though most reported similar experiences of schooling.²² The students' lives were characterized by long hours of study, intense competition and pressure from peers, family and their schools and such experiences framed their thinking about studying overseas. These experiences are a direct result of the social changes occurring in China as discussed in Chapter One. Education and educational qualifications are becoming more important for finding employment opportunities and as the number of university places has increased so has the competition for them, particularly at first tier institutions. This competition flows through the entire education system, having serious effects on the students within it. The stories of this study's participants illustrate the personal impact that these social changes are having on students, and the decisions they and their families make in the light of such challenges.

5.1.1.1 Hours of study

Most participants' first response when asked to describe their experience of high school education in China was to detail the long hours they needed to spend studying, both at home and at school. In some cases the hours were described as a badge of honour, a recognition of the hardship they went through. For example, Chao Xiaobo (#19 M), who finished secondary school in China, and began university in China before transferring to Australia, said:

²² This is unsurprising as most participants came from middle to upper class families and attended middle to top level schools.

And that is the hardest time for my whole study life, in the study of high school. Every day I get up at about 6:30 and go to school at 7:15 and go back home at about 7 p.m. and I just probably have a few hours, less than two hours break. So all the time we study, all the time study.

Chao Xiaobo (#19 M)

Spending around twelve hours at school was common, although some participants reported having to study for even longer, seven days a week. Liu Ruolan (#13 F), for example, who performed well enough at school to get into a good university, although she moved to Australia before completing her degree in China, studied very long hours:

almost every week from Monday to Sunday I have to go to school.

seven days a week?

Yeah [...] and 16 hours in weekdays and another, maybe eight hours in weekend.

Liu Ruolan (#13 F)

After getting home from school each day participants said they were then expected to continue studying, working on their homework until the early hours of the morning. Those who were not able to study for as many hours as their classmates believed this was a reason they were not able to achieve better results, for example Deng Tao (#22 M):

My study was fine, all the teachers said I'm a good student, a smart student, [but] I need to study more harder. Sometimes, you know, from half past seven until six, only there is one and a half [hours] break between them, I really tired to work after that. So some students they do work after school, until midnight or even one or two o'clock, but I don't ... like, three or four hours maximum. So that's why I just keep that level.

Deng Tao (# 22 M)

Deng Tao left China before finishing secondary school. In an environment characterized by the intense competition for academic success, the time spent on study is seen to be as a key determinant of performance, or at least as an excuse for lack of performance, as in the quote above. Indeed, the few students who did manage to pursue extra-curricular interests blamed these for taking time that would otherwise have been available for the study which would have allowed them to perform better.

In the above quote the relationship between the school environment and the results is explicit – if such long hours of study had not been required, then better results may have been obtainable. Still, however, participants seldom described the heavy workload as the cause of their lack of achievement *relative to their peers*, or as a definitive reason as to why they and their families decided to study overseas. The necessity to study for long hours is a universal fact of schooling in China. In order to be successful long hours of study are required, for everyone, almost without exception. Such a study environment, therefore, is not an adequate excuse or explanation for poor performance. Rather, the dislike for the hours of study expected was expressed as a personal preference which would be better to be avoided if possible.

5.1.1.2 Styles of learning & teaching and individual personality

It is also interesting to note here that only a small number of participants, one or two, directly credited their poor performance with their intrinsic lack of ability. Rather, they saw it as a result of the interrelation between their learning environment and their own personalities and preferences. The issue of personality was important for Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F) and Zheng Rangrang (#28 F) (whose stories will be discussed in more detail in 5.1.3), and it can similarly be seen in the reaction of other participants to particular aspects of their schooling, such as Shi Youlin (#06 M) who did not like the style of exams which, required him to ‘just put the answer in the text paper’, and were ‘boring’, and Sun Yan (#21 F), who completed high school in China, and for whom school was:

...too strict. Students have totally not their own space and they just follow the teacher. The teacher says you should do this, do this, do this. We just do.

Sun Yan (#21 F)

Similar sentiments were also expressed by Duan Jialun #26 (M), who left China before completing high school:

...[school was] boring and the teacher just stand there and teach you and you have to listen, you can say nothing [...] you cannot say anything you want to say, you just have to sit here and listen what she or he is talking about.

Duan Jialun (#36 M)

Comments such as these reflect the sense that the participants' negative responses to the Chinese learning environment were stronger than their classmates, again emphasising the influence of personality on achievement rather than their lack of ability.

5.1.1.3 Perceived inflexibility of Chinese schooling

Others emphasised the inflexibility of the Chinese education system as a problem. This often related to their prior underachievement or regretted decisions and the path dependent nature of educational trajectories. For example, Liu Ruolan (#13 F) did well in high school and went to a very good university, but soon realised that her major in linguistics was unlikely to give her the career she desired. In her course she felt that she was surrounded by 'geniuses', such as one student who had published a novel by the time he was eleven, which led her to believe that she was going to only get a job as a secretary after graduation. She did not want this kind of job and the hard work it entailed, and the only way to continue tertiary study with a different major was to go overseas: 'once you enter a [particular] university, there is no way to go back in China. You can't change university'.

Similarly Long Sheng (#35 M) felt hampered by what he perceived to be the rigidity of the options open to him. He was the only participant who performed so poorly in junior high school that he was unable to attend senior high school, and attended a technical school instead. After doing well there he attended an adult college, but was still not able to get into a good university, he said: 'some top Chinese University will not accept any students from college and only bad university which have

bachelor degree, only [they] accept'. For Long Sheng, even getting into a 'bad' university would have been quite difficult, and so instead he decided to study overseas. Li Donglong (#03 M) also went to a private college and believed that it would have been possible for him to sit the university entrance exam and, depending on his results, attend a good university. Still, however, this would not have been a satisfactory outcome for him as he expected he would have been 'discriminated [against] in some way' because he had not been able to enter university directly from high school.

Other stories about the inflexibility of the Chinese education system and its inability to meet participants' needs were common. Lu Yang (#24 M), for example, explained that there were only two choices of specialization available to him in school – science and culture. Although he said he was more interested in culture he did the science stream, and this eventually meant that he was unable to study business at a university in China as he wanted (he also did not have good enough results to go to a good university). The high level of commitment required for academic success also meant that participants who were interested in extra-curricular pursuits had to sacrifice their study time in order to pursue these activities. Peng Deming (#23 M) found that his results fell due to his continued involvement in sporting and musical activities. Being in his school's band and tennis team meant that he could not put as much effort into his studies as did other students. Ma Zhiqiang (#20 M) similarly could not put as much effort into his studies as required as he was committed to his athletics training. For most of these participants the inflexibility of the education system was a problem as a result of their own inability to find success within it – if they had been able to perform at a higher level there would not have been a need for more flexibility to accommodate their need for compensation or alternative pathways.

5.1.1.4 Pressure

Doing badly in exams meant that students were less likely to be able to enter the next level of education they desired, so it also dramatically increased the pressure they were under, furthered their dissatisfaction with the education they were receiving, and this in turn contributed to the continuation of their poor performance. The pressure was experienced by participants through the competitive school environment but the intensity of this pressure is related to the attitudes of the participants' parents towards their performance in school. Parents such as those of Peng Deming

(#23 M) exacerbated the pressure felt by their children, in their case by beating Peng Deming after he got unsatisfactory exam results. The pressure Li Donglong (#03 M) felt from his parents also left a strong impression on him and shaped his attitude towards the problems of Chinese families, education and society.

Behind the individual experiences of pressure and stress, however, lies the intense competition for quality places in the Chinese higher education system, and the day-to-day struggle to succeed in this competition in the years leading up to the *gaokao*. Not doing well enough to get a place was not seen by participants as entirely their 'fault', but in many cases more a structural problem of the education system. They felt that if they had not been forced to compete in such a negative and stressful environment, then any problems they may have experienced with their studies would have been lessened considerably.

Other problems with the education system identified by participants include the perceived lack of quality of the education they were receiving or were likely to receive in China – a problem which they felt may not have existed at the tertiary level if entry to a high quality university could have been attained. The conditions that were expected for students studying at university in China was also a disincentive to staying for some participants. Having to live in dirty and cramped dormitories (e.g. Chao Xiaobo (#19 M)), or needing to do pre-university military style training and compulsory 'political' classes (e.g. Jia Huilan (#30 F)) were clear negatives.

5.1.2 Experiences and consequences of academic underachievement

In the midst of such a challenging educational environment many of the students in this study found success hard to come by. As mentioned previously 32 of the 39 participants experienced some level of academic failure in their education in China. Moreover, the consequences of this failure in school or university are expected to have large negative follow-on effects in the lives of the students. In the Chinese education system students' performance in key exams is the primary measure of success or failure. These exams act as gateways to each ascending level and not making it through these exams represents an irreversible failure on the path to academic success.

Although there is an exam at the end of primary school, it is the exam at the end of middle school (*chuzhong*) which is the first exam with serious consequences. The results of this exam usually determine the quality of senior high school (*gaozhong*) which students can expect to attend, and unless they do well enough to gain entrance to a quality senior high school they cannot expect to do well enough in the national university entrance exam (*gaokao*) to earn a place in a quality university. At university level, even after completing an undergraduate degree there is a further exam required to gain a place in a masters program. Most of the participants reported that they (and, importantly their parents) felt that the desired minimum outcome of education is a degree from a quality Chinese university. Therefore slipping off the path towards this goal at any time from middle school on meant that it became not only unlikely, but seemingly impossible.

5.1.2.1 Paths to (relative) failure

The participants did not need to wait until the exams were held to know their likely performance as they were constantly ranked within their classes, their classes ranked within their schools, and their schools ranked within their city or province. Their stories suggest that it was only the best students in the best schools who had a good chance of getting the places in a quality university that they and their parents desired. If they knew they were not one of these top students then it was clear that they were not going to make it as far as they wanted. Lian Zhiren (#09 M), for example, had attended a top school in his city, but he was only ranked around the middle of a middle ranked class within that school. He knew very clearly that he would not be able to go to one of the best universities and left China after the first year of senior high school. Similarly, Chen Xia (#15 F) was ranked around the middle of the second best senior high school in her city, and had no chance of going to a top university such as Qinghua, the number one university in China, where 'every year maybe one or two students can go' from her school. Being ranked in the middle of a school with over 2000 students meant her chances of going to Qinghua or another first tier university were extremely low. Chen Xia would have gone to a top university in China rather than going to an overseas university (the United Kingdom had been her first choice before Australia) if it had been possible, but doing so was so far out of reach that she and her family had not even seriously considered it. She thought this was the case for most other international students from China as well:

I think the international student who comes from China and now doing their university here, they will not get a higher marks as high as go to the Qinghua university in China. Maybe they were just in the middle level. And they have a wealthy family, they can offer them to get the higher education in here.

Chen Xia (#15 F)

Unlike Lian Zhiren, Chen Xia completed senior high school in China before leaving for Australia. They, along with 22 of the other participants, viewed their chances of success in the *gaokao* so poorly that they managed to avoid taking the exam altogether. As we will see later, this does not mean that few international students from China sat the *gaokao*. Of the sixteen students who did take the exam, only six participants did well enough to go to what they considered a good university. They nonetheless still chose to study abroad, for reasons that will be discussed later.

It was in junior high school, however, that the first signs of impending (relative) academic disaster registered in the minds of the participants and their parents. Although all of the participants managed to complete junior high school in China, and all except one commenced senior high school, it was in the lead up to and just after the exam at the end of junior high school that their academic deficiencies became apparent. Participants such as Yang Mingxia (#16 F) started to struggle with their studies in junior high school, and for her too it was clear that going to a good university was unlikely. She said that her 'study went bad' from around the second year of junior high school, and the following year she suggested to her parents that she should study overseas. Although Yang Mingxia enjoyed the social side of her junior high school and spending time with her friends, she did not enjoy the study environment. She described, as did many of the participants, how she was required to study from seven o'clock in the morning until nine at night; how she felt bored; and how, because of her poor results in comparison to her classmates, she was under a lot of pressure. Indeed, her parents used her desire to study overseas as a mechanism to apply more pressure to her – 'they just said their friend's children did very well in school and they said that if I have this bad results I can't study overseas'. In her case this pressure did encourage her to work more, but she never believed she would be able to get into a university in China, and neither did her parents. Soon after commencing senior high school, and still with no realistic chance of a good

Chinese tertiary education in sight, Yang Mingxia's parents agreed that she should continue her education abroad.

Unlike Yang Mingxia (#16 F), Tu Zhongzheng (#04 M) only became fully aware of his academic problems when he received the results from the exam at the end of junior high school. He did not achieve high enough marks to get into a good senior high school, and this meant he believed he had no chance of going to a good university. Indeed, he was doubtful that he would be accepted into any university. He put it like this:

Actually high school is quite important, very important, if you study good in high school you go to good university, although you don't study very well you can go to not so good university, but if you go to bad high school you can't get any university. When I get my result of my graduate, final exam, I know I can't go to a really good [...] *gaozhong*, so my father said if you don't go to a very good *gaozhong* and you can't go to very good university, so decided go overseas to study.

Tu Zhongzheng (#04 M)

Once Tu Zhongzheng's family realised he was destined for a less than ideal senior high school they immediately started preparations to send him overseas. He left for Australia a year later.

Other participants did quite well in junior high school, only to find their results (and rankings) slipping after getting into a good senior high school. Li Donglong (#03 M), Deng Tao (#22 M), Peng Deming (#23 M) and Xia Zixi (#27 F) all experienced this, and Deng Tao and Peng Deming left China shortly after. At the time Deng Tao started junior high school the policy in his city dictated that entry should be based on area of residence rather than by competition, and as a result he went to a junior high school of relatively low standard, with classmates he did not get along with. He managed, however, to do very well, ranking in the top 20 in his school and gaining entry to the second ranked senior high school in his city. Once getting there he realised that no matter how hard he worked he would not be able to be close enough to the top of his senior high school to seriously conceive of getting into a good university. For Deng Tao, it was 'kind of impossible to get any higher [...] academic results because everybody works extremely hard, sort of like everybody

is scoring the same speed, so [...] you can't really catch them'. After his father suggested the idea of studying overseas Deng Tao's only question was whether he would be able to go to university in Australia if he studied as hard as he did in China. His father said 'yes' and he left shortly after.

Unlike Deng Tao (#22 M) who knew that he could not get into a good university as he was unable to improve his results, Peng Deming (#23 M)'s results started to worsen after getting in to senior high school. Peng Deming was ranked third in his junior high school, did 'extremely well' in the exam at the end of it and got into the best senior high school in his city. There, however, his ranking started to fall, from 249 when he started down to around 400. He subsequently could not improve his position, he said his parents beat and swore at him, 'whatever they can, physical and verbal', and, finally, he got 'depressed'. Academic achievement was very important for Peng Deming's parents and he was unable to meet their expectations:

They always tell me you have to study hard, number three is the lowest level that you can get, so you have to be the top three in your class, that's their main thing, the main concentration, so I always try to get into the number three, but unfortunately I'm always number five or number six [...] so I got beaten up, like every exam.

Peng Deming (#23 M)

Despite this Peng Deming (#23 M) continued to study hard (although he thought that had his parents beaten him before the exams rather than after it would have had more effect), and in his case the impetus to study overseas came from him rather than his parents. He would have been able to go to university in China, but not to the first tier one that his parents preferred, and he believed he could get more out of studying overseas than from the second rate option of a second tier university. Although he was keen to study overseas, Peng Deming's parents were less supportive due to the high costs involved and left it to him to approach their friends and relatives to gather the funds required by Australian immigration to prove that he was able to support himself in Australia. By the end of senior high school Peng Deming had done all that was needed to study overseas and did not need to take the *gaokao*. Although Peng Deming's story about his decision to study overseas is centred around his inability to achieve the results that he and his parents

desired, this inability had a further catalytic effect on his thinking about overseas education. As mentioned above, he felt that he was depressed, and he had grown sick of China and Chinese education. By the time he reached the end of senior high school a lot of his motivation to study abroad was based on his desire to leave China, almost at any cost. Others shared such feelings, as will be discussed in 5.1.4 Escaping China.

Two participants, Li Donglong (#03 M) and Xia Zixi (#27 F), also saw their results (and hence ranking) slip in senior high school, although unlike Deng Tao (#22 M) and Peng Deming (#23 M) they did not move directly from there to high school in Australia. Rather, they undertook further studies in China before leaving. Xia Zixi's father, an engineer, was particularly keen on her studying overseas and would have insisted that she go even if she had prospects of going to a good university in China (which, according to her teacher was still a possibility despite her falling results). She did not sit the *gaokao* but did a foundation course in China to prepare her for direct entry into an undergraduate course in an Australian university. In contrast Li Donglong, whose family had less funds available for overseas study, sat the *gaokao* and studied in a local college before going overseas. We can see from this that although in many cases the personal failure to achieve during high school made a significant contribution towards the decision to study overseas, a myriad of other social, economic and family factors also played a role. Simply put, there is not a linear relationship between performance in education and the timing of the decision to go abroad.

Nonetheless, for most participants academic failure at some stage triggered or bolstered the momentum towards overseas study. Disappointment with academic achievement and direction could arise almost accidentally as well. Huang Qi (#17 F), for example, had the score from the exam at the end of junior high school to go to a top senior high school, but not expecting her to do so well her parents had encouraged her to apply for a lower level one. With the knowledge that she could have been in a better senior high school, Huang Qi was never satisfied with her school, and her parents were never satisfied with her subsequently entrenched mid-level results. She left China at the end of the second year of senior high school.

These stories reinforce the prime importance that parents in China place on their children being able to obtain quality academic qualifications (Bai 2006). Moreover they demonstrate that for these families the value of such qualifications as institutionalised cultural capital is perceived to be so high that *not* possessing them is the path to social failure in addition to academic failure; for the participants to claim the position in the social fields that their parents wanted them to, a prestigious degree was a necessity. But, in these cases, attending a first tier university was also an impossibility. Studying overseas, on the other hand, provided an opportunity for the families to convert their economic capital into institutionalised cultural capital (a foreign degree) which they felt would have greater value than the institutionalised cultural capital available if the participants stayed in China.

5.1.2.2 Paying for access to ‘better’ education in China

Families also attempted to use their economic capital to access pathways to higher value institutionalised cultural capital in China before their children left for Australia. In Chapter One we saw that there is a growing relationship between access to educational opportunities in China and families’ financial resources, and this is reflected in the educational pathways chosen for some of the participants. A common story related to families paying for their children to get into better schools than their exam results would have guaranteed entry into. Five of the participants’ families paid extra ‘fees’ to obtain entry to a top senior high school and another six participants were enrolled in some form of private secondary education. In these cases parents paying more than standard fees in China was a stepping stone to paying for study overseas, and is in contrast to some of the participants discussed above who left China almost as soon as they could after their poor chances of going to a good university became apparent. Because all of the participants in this study did finally study in Australia it is clear that if the objective of paying more to get into a good school was to increase the chances of doing well in the *gaokao*, then it did not work. The parents of Qin Xiaoli (#26 F), Chen Xia (#15 F), Gao Yuanfang (#11 F), Xiong Qizhi (#32 M) and Ma Zhiqiang (#20 M) all paid extra fees for them to go to a better senior high school, although the ‘legitimacy’ of how they managed to do this varied. Some paid off the books ‘fees’ (essentially bribes) and others enrolled their children in special fee-paying classes in top schools ostensibly for the purpose of preparing them for overseas study. In the face of competition from their classmates

who had scored highly enough to get in to a good senior high school on their own merits, these participants struggled even more and were under even greater pressure than they would have been had they been in a school more suited to their abilities. The expectation seems to be, however, that going to a better school, and being exposed to the higher quality education that it provided, would push the participants' results higher than would otherwise have been the case. This is most apparent for Xiong Qizhi (#32 M) whose mother, a local Judge, paid for him to go a better key point (*zhongdian*) school for the time leading up to studying overseas, and they even managed to do it without paying too much. Xiong Qizhi explained how his mother made 'friends with the school headmaster' and said that Xiong Qizhi would be only staying for a few months before leaving for Australia. In the end he had to stay for more than a year, but because there was no record of him being enrolled no-one thought to ask him for more money. His teacher presumed the headmaster knew about him being in the class, and the headmaster presumed he had already left. Xiong Qizhi said that although this was strictly speaking illegal, there were perhaps 10-15 students without records in each class on top of the maximum number of 40 'legal' students. Without a record at the key point school Xiong Qizhi would have had to have gone back to the lower quality school his exam results had allowed him entry to if he wanted to take exams or the *gaokao*, he explained:

At that time you don't do *gaokao* with the *zhongdian* [key point] one, I go back to the original one and you do that with them. That's what we do. But you got better educated, yeah, because you study three years in *zhongdian* high school, right.

Xiong Qizhi (#32 M)

The participant who most consistently paid for entry to better quality schools than her results would have guarantee entry to is Qin Xiaoli (#26 F). Her parents, her mother in particular, had been very keen on her getting a good education, and, it seems, going overseas, from when she was very young. Qin Xiaoli's mother sent her to English language classes from the age of three, she was not happy with the junior high school to which Qin Xiaoli was assigned, so she paid more money to go to a better one. She also was not happy with the senior high school Qin Xiaoli was able to go to, so again paid more money to go a better one. Moreover, having Qin Xiaoli's aunt as the

principal of her senior high school certainly did not hurt. Despite all the effort and money invested in her education, Qin Xiaoli still did not enjoy her study and did not achieve good results. During the first year of senior high school her mother decided to send her overseas and started to get the process underway. Paying the fees to attend a high school and then a university in Australia was seen by Qin Xiaoli as a continuation of her mother's education strategy for her.

Other kinds of non-mainstream schooling attended by participants included a senior high school which provided a pathway to English universities (Xie Tianmei (#01 F)), a private junior high school which provided what Wang Bin (#10a M) and Wang Yi (#10b M) believed to be a higher quality junior high school education and which assisted them getting into a good senior high school, an internationally focused school teaching the International Baccalaureate (Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F)), and various other colleges and schools providing university preparation classes (Wu Meiqi (#02 F), Xia Zixi (#27 F), Ma Zhiqiang (#20 M), Sun Yan (#21 F)). Apart from the private junior high school attended by Wang Bin and Wang Yi which had the express purpose of getting students back into the top quality mainstream education system, the other kinds of education undertaken represents an acceptance that taking their education to the tertiary level in China was unlikely. Indeed, none of those who undertook any form of non-mainstream education, or went to a good school for reasons other than their merits, sat the *gaokao*, let alone did well enough in it to get a place at a good Chinese university. All of these students and their families realised during their high school years that they would not be as successful as they wanted to be in the Chinese education system, took measures to counter their relative failure, and eventually these measures included studying overseas. If alternate forms of education in China, including buying a place in a good school, were meant to provide hope of staying and succeeding in the Chinese system, then they did not work – at best they acted as a delaying tactic which gave families the time to be convinced about the need for overseas education, the time to organize the money to fund it, or the time for the participants to reach the level of maturity that their parents thought necessary to go overseas. In the case of the foundation colleges in China, which participants generally attended at or towards the end of their senior high school, the decision had already been made and the money had been found, and going to these colleges was simply the first step on a path overseas.

All of these examples demonstrate how those with more economic capital are in a better position to access different educational opportunities than those without. Moreover, we can see that these inequities arise not just from the fees applied across the mainstream education system and the rise of private education as discussed in Chapter One, but from families having the ability to circumvent normal processes altogether via backdoor entry. Those whose families attempted to convert their economic capital to institutionalised cultural capital, quality qualifications, within China, however, were not able to gain institutionalised cultural capital of sufficient value to satisfy their families' expectations. Their academic deficiencies and the challenges they faced in the Chinese education system were simply too great. This indicates that although access to educational opportunities is linked to the economic resources of the family, it is not the case that economic resources alone are sufficient to provide the institutionalised cultural capital necessary for an acceptable outcome in China, hence the need to pursue further studies and qualifications overseas.

5.1.2.3 Leaving China later

For some of the students the decision to leave China was made relatively later, but the impetus behind their decisions was similar to those who left earlier: that they were not able to achieve what they wanted to if they stayed. Of the sixteen participants who stayed in China and sat the *gaokao* there, nine were offered places in Chinese universities (including six who were accepted by universities they considered 'good') and the remainder believed they would have been able to go to some kind of non-elite university in China if they had wished and tried. We can again see with these participants the influence of their performance in an exam, in this case the *gaokao*, on their decision to go overseas. Lu Yang (#24 M), for example, decided to study overseas after doing worse in the *gaokao* than he expected. He would have stayed in China had he been able to go the top university that he wanted – with his results he would only have been able to go to a local college. Similarly Kong Liling (#37 F) had good results in senior high school but only went well enough in the *gaokao* to get into Yunnan University rather than the top university desired by her father, she said:

it's not too good, because I only can only go to, do you know the Yunnan University [...] yeah, but it's not that good. [...] because my father [...] actually I let him down, I think. Because he expects

more from me because, maybe top-class [university], but actually I didn't, in the final exam, I ruin it, actually. [...] Just the final exam, because [...] normally, when I was in high school my result is pretty good. But the final one, [...] I don't know, maybe I went out with another guy, yeah, so all of that, then I just can't make it ...

Kong Liling (#37 F)

After discovering the result of her *gaokao* Kong Liling went directly to an overseas university preparation college in her home city and then commenced her study abroad as an undergraduate student. Dai Dai (#25 F) also performed more poorly in her *gaokao* than she had expected. As soon as the exam was over, Dai Dai knew she would not be accepted into the top law school she wanted and was determined to go overseas immediately. She was so adamant that she visited the exam centre and cancelled her university application in case she was accepted into one of the other lesser universities she had applied for but would have been dissatisfied with. Not willing to let their daughter go overseas at that stage Dai Dai's parents allowed her to go to a special overseas preparatory class in another top university (of her own choosing), but she was still unhappy. The students in that class had similarly performed poorly in their *gaokao* and Dai Dai found herself to be one of the best students there. Coming from one of the top classes in one of the best schools in Shanghai this was a particularly unsatisfactory study environment for her. Moreover, she was majoring in accounting rather than law as she had wanted, and this added to her dissatisfaction. After two years at this university preparatory class, and wanting to 'escape my failure', she convinced her parents to let her study overseas. Even at the time of interview, the level of Dai Dai's discontent, and even, perhaps, embarrassment with her poor achievement in the *gaokao* and her subsequent educational experience in China was so much that she insisted that I mention neither the name of the university she failed to get in to, nor the one she decided to leave.

Getting into, and even completing, university in China did not mean the end of the pressure imposed by the rigours of exams. Even after graduating from his (admittedly less than high quality) undergraduate degree in business administration in Shanghai, Shi Youlin (#06 M) did not believe he could do well enough in the masters entrance exam to get a place in the course he wanted to do, so he instead chose to undertake his masters degree overseas. He is currently studying

Masters in Accounting and Finance. Cheng Wanling (#39 F) studied environmental science in China, took the masters entrance exam but failed it, but was able to continue her education in Australia with a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning. In these cases the students' inability to get Chinese qualifications which could provide the institutionalised cultural capital deemed necessary was again the key reason the decision to leave China was taken. The students and their families believed more or better qualifications were desirable and the only remaining option was to go overseas to pursue them. For these families the opportunity to study overseas is simply another in a suite of educational pathways available. The fact that it involved leaving China to study in the education system of a different country did not seem to register as controversial nor risky, as long as the ultimate goal of a quality qualification was realisable.

Another group of participants did not experience particular academic failure but were nonetheless dissatisfied with the educational qualifications available to them. This includes those who attended and then dropped out of universities in China. Their dissatisfaction arose from either the quality of the education/education environment and/or the perceptions of opportunities arising from the course they were undertaking rather than own personal academic deficiencies. This is particularly the case for the few participants (such as Liu Ruolan (#13 F), Jia Huilan (#30 F) and Guo Tingwen (#12 F)) who were accepted into first tier universities. For the other participants who completed their undergraduate education in China the stories are similar to those who were accepted into universities and commenced their studies but did not complete them – the reasons for going overseas were less to do with their inability to succeed than their dissatisfaction with the environment in which they were studying. In these cases we can perhaps see how perceptions of the value of the qualification as institutionalised cultural capital changes over time. During high school some of these students had expected that their Chinese university degree was valuable enough to be worth pursuing. In the midst of their studies or after, however, they were faced with the realisation that their Chinese education was unlikely to provide them with the outcomes they desired, and hence they looked elsewhere.

5.1.3 Systemic problems: the mismatch of school and family values

For a small number of participants and their families the problems with the Chinese education system stretched well beyond their own ability or inability to be successful within it. For these families the fact that the education was not able to provide their children with the values and opportunities that they desired was more important than the matter of gaining a particular standard of qualification. Participants such as Wu Meiqi (#02 F), Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F) and Zheng Rangrang (#28 F), all female and all classified as coming from 'upper' class families, exemplify this. Wu Meiqi went to a very good foreign languages school in Beijing from which many students were selected to directly enter universities such as Qinghua and Beijing, the top two ranked institutions in China. She believed that she too would have been able to go a very high quality university. Despite this, and in contrast to many of the other participants, her father believed that studying overseas provided an even better opportunity than going to the best Chinese universities. As Wu Meiqi was keen to pursue a career in the media her father thought the study environment overseas would be much better for her than even a top Chinese university. Overseas she would be able to learn English better, get a good training relevant for her future employment, and it even offered the chance to learn a third language. Even the best education in China could not provide these outcomes to the level that an education abroad could.

Although the possibility of going to a top university was less certain for Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F), her parents' dissatisfaction with the Chinese education system is clear. Ding Xiaoyu's parents both speak English and it was important for them to bring Ding Xiaoyu up bilingually. She started learning English when she was two years old, she subsequently boarded at a primary school run by Americans, with American teachers and students from different countries, and went to a private high school which she describes as:

one of those typical private Chinese schools where you know, rich parents send their spoilt little brat to and nobody study, and it was not very good.

Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F)

Ding Xiaoyu's school provided a dual curriculum – both the mainstream Chinese one as well as the International Baccalaureate (IB). She would have had the opportunity to study the Chinese

curriculum but, as she said, 'fate' intervened. Towards the end of junior high school Ding Xiaoyu was in a car accident, was blinded in one eye, and spent six months recovering in hospital. Although she was back at school in time to sit the exam at the end of junior high school, the amount of study she had missed meant that it would have been difficult to do well. As a result she studied the International Baccalaureate. During senior high school Ding Xiaoyu went on a short exchange to a high school in Australia and was so impressed that on her return insisted that she be sent back there to complete her education. For Ding Xiaoyu, lack of success in school in China was not a factor in her desire to study abroad. Although her school was academically 'not very good', she was the teachers' favourite and had it not been for the accident she expected that she was 'going to get anywhere she wants to'.

For Ding Xiaoyu's parents, the prospect of failure was not the reason they chose to withdraw Ding Xiaoyu from the mainstream education system. Although their frequent travel and busy lives contributed to their decision to enrol Ding Xiaoyu in a boarding school at such an early age, their choice of a foreign run institution is indicative of their values and hence educational preferences. Ding Xiaoyu explained that her parents were:

really really different from the normal Chinese parents, they don't ever put any pressure on me whatsoever [...] my parents are, my parents are not like the traditional conventional Chinese parents, they [other parents] are like you do this you do that, they [my parents] never ever do anything, that's why I'm really self-motivated because I know it's what I want to do and my parents are really smart in the sense that they allow me the freedom to think

Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F)

Ding Xiaoyu said her parents brought her up in a 'positive and just sunshine-ish environment' and because of this she believed her parents thought she was more suited to the West. For her, the values of the West, which she sees as having clearer rules to follow, equity, human rights, respect and freedom were more in line with the values she had been raised with. China, on the other hand, where 'bribe deals exist everywhere' and 'its basically about distorting the rules with power and money' was not considered so suitable. For Ding Xiaoyu and her parents, being overseas allowed

her to be in a place where if she were to 'follow rules and [...] work hard [...] you will be able to achieve something, whereas in China if you want to achieve something you have to go through the [...] different pathways'.

Ding Xiaoyu traced her family's 'different' attitudes to their position and history. Her parents, who are professionals in engineering and business, are the 'top-class people in China, like, absolutely top-class', and this status went back a long way. Ding Xiaoyu's maternal grandfather was an Oxford graduate (by correspondence) and was able to remain 'beyond any problems' during his career, and his father was a landlord. Her paternal grandfather was a politician. Her parents attended university directly after the Cultural Revolution and had been at the 'highest wage level straight away'. Although it is clear that Ding Xiaoyu's family did not have financial difficulties she emphasized that it was not the level of wealth which signified their class status, but this history of high status. She commented:

So, I suppose that made [my mother] who she was, who in turn made me who I am. I'm not saying that I'm top-class, like, I don't really believe in class that I can look down on anybody, but I do believe it has impact on who you are and how you perceive the world.

Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F)

How Ding Xiaoyu and her family viewed the world included believing that China and its education system was not a place which suited her but that the West was. The West suited her personality, and this personality was a result of her upbringing in a 'positive', 'top-class' environment. Although the timing of the decision for her to study overseas arose as a result of a combination of her positive experience as an exchange student in Australia and her car accident, she had always known that her parents had intended that she would study overseas at some stage:

I was always under this impression that my parents would have sent me overseas like anyhow... either after, I don't know, undergrad degree, or just for undergrad degree, so I'm pretty sure that was what I was always supposed to do, it's just because that fate kicks in and I was out [of China] a bit earlier than expected.

Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F)

Zheng Rangrang (#28 F)'s family was even more explicit in their dissatisfaction with the education she would have received had she stayed in China. Her parents were also of a high social standing with her father the President of a University and her mother also in the education field. Given the position of Zheng Rangrang's father she would have been able to go to his university regardless of her score in the *gaokao*. In fact, although Zheng Rangrang was in a very good school, she did not study, slept in class, and escaped, 'jumped the wall', when she felt like it. With her parents' standing in the community, particularly in the education field, her teachers could say nothing about her behaviour – she described how one teacher who never smiled to anyone else always smiled to her and treated her well, despite her lack of study. She hated the special treatment and the constant comparisons between her and her father's high achievements and was very happy to leave it when she went overseas. Her parents' attitude toward the education she was receiving, however, contributed to both her erratic work ethic and their decision to send her to Australia. Being in the education field themselves, Zheng Rangrang's parents believed the education available to her in China was deficient and they did not encourage or force her to study as other parents did. Her father in particular questioned both the content taught and the education system more generally:

My father used to read my textbook, like, the history book and after he read it he say that all rubbish, that's not really truth, so don't need to study this. [...] I never do homework and my father just say, sometimes I'm going to do homework and my father said don't worry about it, go have some fun. Like, one time he actually got angry with me because I, I don't want to go out with my father to climb the mountain because I want to study. He is a teacher, he teaches in university and he doesn't like the education system in China, he think student have to study and study for very useless thing and don't learn something, it's very, it's just a waste of time, he thinks young kids [should] just play.

Zheng Rangrang (#28 F)

Zheng Rangrang took on her father's approach to education and concentrated on playing rather than studying. This, however, further marked her as different from her classmates who she found study-obsessed and boring. She derided their lack of knowledge about anything other than their textbooks and their lack of desire to know anything more than their textbooks. She believed most of her classmates would not even have known who Michael Jackson was and obediently followed their teachers' missive not to read beyond the assigned texts. Zheng Rangrang, on the other hand, knew about Michael Jackson and read whatever she liked. She knew that teachers could be wrong and was firmly against blindly accepting everything she was taught. She liked writing and being creative, although she did not get many opportunities to do this within the normal school curriculum. Like Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F)'s parents, Zheng Rangrang's parents also thought that her personality would be more suited to studying and living in Australia:

I don't really like to remember everything and [...] I will just, you know, [be] creative, [write] stories, and he [my father] thought Western countries education, they always gave the student opportunity to do creative things. He think I will be more comfortable to study here, like [it would be] more suitable for me.

Zheng Rangrang (#28 F)

Another aspect of Zheng Rangrang's parents' decision to send her to Australia was her father's view about the place of girls. Zheng Rangrang indicated that the fact that studying overseas was suitable for her was related to her being a girl and that Western countries provided more equality

and opportunities for girls. On the other hand, Zheng Rangrang said that her father preferred boys and treated her quite differently from her male cousins, teaching them more things and expecting more from them in terms of study.

...he always think boys are more strong, stronger than girls. That's one of the reasons he doesn't like me study, he thinks girls are just have a good husband and that's it. [...] He think in China, if you become a strong woman you can't get a good husband because husband don't like strong women. They like woman listen to them. So he think here [in Australia] is more independent, the relationship. [...] he think for girls, it's more suitable for me to come.

Zheng Rangrang (#28 F)

According to Zheng Rangrang's description of her father's opinions, he understood and even supported the prevailing attitudes towards women in China, but knowing that these were not what was best for Zheng Rangrang, decided to send her to an environment more suitable for her own development. Although Zheng Rangrang's family had discussed the idea of studying overseas, perhaps in Russia, and Zheng Rangrang had been very keen to go earlier, during middle school, when the time came it was a surprise. On a Tuesday Zheng Rangrang was taken out of class, her parents told her she would be going to Australia, she got her visa on Friday, flew out on Saturday and started school in Australia the following Monday. Nevertheless, she said that even if she had been asked she would have still wanted to go.

For Wu Meiqi (#02 F), Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F) and Zheng Rangrang (#28 F) the deficiencies leading to their departure from China were more about the perceived inability of China to provide what they needed rather than their inability to succeed. For Ding Xiaoyu and Zheng Rangrang in particular the perception that they were somehow naturally more suited to the Australian or 'Western' environment seems to have played a large part in them studying overseas, and their unsuitability for the Chinese environment appears to be closely related to their upbringing and the values passed on to them from their parents. Of the ten participants who indicated that they were somehow 'suited' to Australia, six were girls, seven were from 'upper' or 'upper-middle' class families and nine reported that their grandparents had been from 'upper' class families. It appears

that there is a relationship between long held higher social status and feeling that the participant was suited to Australia before arriving. Although there is not enough evidence from either of these basic statistics or the textual data to make a strong claim about the relationship here between gender, class and perceptions of the value and suitability of the education available in China, Zheng Rangrang's comments about her father's views indicate that girls from higher class families may be subject to different kinds of pressures and expectations than boys. If Zheng Rangrang had been a boy rather than a girl it is easy to imagine that the father's attitude to education and level of achievement may have been different. Again, if Zheng Rangrang's family had been employed outside of the field of education it is less likely that they would have developed such strong negative attitudes towards it (nor would they have had the ability to circumvent it with the possibility of a back-door route to university entry in China).

In these cases we can see that it is not primarily the quest for institutionalised cultural capital that is the driver behind the decision to go overseas. These families are looking for a place for their children which they believe has values commensurate with their own. Rather than prioritising the materialistic, achievement oriented outcomes of an international education, the institutionalised cultural capital of a degree in particular, these families' emphasis on freedom, creativity and self-expression is more reflective of the post-modern values discussed in Chapter Two. We can see similarities in these cases with the wealthy middle-class Asians and Hong Kong capitalists of Pinches' (1999) and Ong and Nonini's (1997) work respectively. If the values and outlook of Chinese people are to change as it transitions from being a developing to a developed country, then these elite families may be the vanguard of such a change.

This therefore brings us to the question of habitus and the role of the Chinese education system in reinforcing the habitus of upper class or elite families. In Bourdieu's conceptual framework as discussed in Chapter Two, an education system is likely to reflect the values of the dominant group within society as they are misrecognised as the only possible legitimate values. The education system serves to provide a platform for the reinforcement of the habitus of the elite and provides them with the embodied cultural capital necessary to struggle for position in their social fields. Here, however, it appears that even the 'best' educational pathways available in China are

perceived as not able to reflect and reinforce the habitus of the families in question – the system is in this sense deficient. It is only in the West, in these cases in Australia, that the parents think their children will be in an environment that reflects their values, the habitus that they desire, and that will in turn provide them with the embodied cultural capital they deem necessary.

5.1.4 Escaping China

All of the participants discussed so far in this chapter were not able to achieve what they wanted in China, either in terms of the level and prestige of qualification or in terms of the style and values of their schooling. This, however, misses an important part of the participants' stories. For many participants going overseas was an immediate, albeit drastic, solution to the immense pressures they were under, as well as the negative psychological consequences they experienced. Simply put, many wanted to 'escape' from China and avoid what they were facing and what they foresaw themselves facing in the very near future. A comment by Peng Deming (#23 M) who had such a negative experience with his school and being beaten by his family that he just wanted to leave China, is illustrative:

I just want to go overseas, I want to go to Australia, I don't want to stay in China anymore, because not only [did the] school give me pressure, lots of the society give me pressure as well, the school is very stressful, also the society... I just can't stand the reality, China's reality, I just don't want to stay with those people any more.

Peng Deming (#23 M)

For Dai Dai (#25 F), who had cancelled her university application in case she was accepted into a low quality university, escape was 'the main reason' to leave as she could avoid the immediate, negative, environment she was in, which reminded her each day of her own personal failure. For Huang Qi (#17 F) too, the need to leave China was the overwhelming force behind her desire to leave:

I just want to say goodbye to the study time in China, that's all.

Huang Qi (#17 F)

For other participants, it was the spectre of the *gaokao*, the national university entrance exam, which drove their desire to escape. In this regard their escape was particularly successful – as mentioned previously more than half of the participants in the study were able to avoid the *gaokao* and its associated pressure and stress. Indeed, as with Huang Qi above, at the time of departure the need to escape the exam became the overwhelming presence in the mind of other participants such as Qin Xiaoli (#26 F):

actually when I know I should go to overseas I don't think, I just think I don't need to do the exam, just, but I'm, at that time I never think much and just think [if] I can go overseas I don't need to *canjia gaokao* [sit the university entrance exam]. Yeah. So okay, I go.

Qin Xiaoli (#26 F)

The participants who reported the most fervent need to leave China and the Chinese education system behind them were those who had struggled more and had had relatively more negative experiences. For these participants leaving China was more because they had problems with China than because of a great attraction to Australia or the 'West'; being able to leave China was a sufficient outcome. Even when the participants themselves were focused on escape, however, they reported that their families were more commonly focused on the other benefits expected to arise.

5.1.5 Conclusion

This section has examined the problems arising within China that made remaining in China untenable for the participants. These problems are the inability of some to gain the qualifications necessary to develop the institutionalised cultural capital they believed necessary as well as the inability of the Chinese education system to provide the environment for the participants to develop

both the embodied and institutionalised cultural capital desired by their families. Whether it was deficiencies participants saw in themselves or deficiencies they felt in Chinese education and society, all participants in this study reported a certain level of dissatisfaction with their experiences in China and in the Chinese education system. Making the decision to leave China, however, was not just about the problems in China, but also about the options and opportunities they anticipated abroad. These are explored in the next section.

5.2 PART II – Desires and the foreign allure: Expectations and attractions of Australia

Participants expected that studying in Australia would provide direct solutions for many of the problems associated with remaining in China, the deficiencies discussed in the first part of this chapter. Most importantly, where university entry had been difficult or impossible in China, it was seen to be attainable in Australia. Or if entry to a lower quality university had been possible in China, entry to a 'better' university was deemed possible in Australia. If, for whatever reason, academic performance in school had been impossible to improve in China, then coming to Australia was seen to provide this chance. If a more creative, flexible education was lacking in China, then it was perceived to be available in Australia. Where families believed their children were not 'suited' to China, they expected that they would be more suited to Australia. For the participants Australia (and perhaps for Chinese international students elsewhere, the 'West') was seen to provide a seemingly less stressful, less pressured school environment without such long hours and without the extreme competition of the *gaokao*. In the longer term, studying in Australia also provided some participants with the option to pursue postgraduate education when they would not have been able to do so in China. They anticipated that a higher degree qualification would allow them to more easily find work. If participants did not want to live in China in the future, then studying in Australia provided them with the opportunity emigrate. Where there was a problem in China, Australia seemed to provide the answer.

The participants in this study, however, were not *forced* to leave China, although as was discussed previously, many were 'escaping'. They were not forced in the sense that they had not exhausted their options in China – none had reached the end of the line of possibilities and most were still on the path to some kind of further tertiary education. All of the participants' families made a judgement that, on balance, the benefits, or the institutionalised, embodied and objectified cultural capital, available abroad was greater than that available if they stayed in China. This section discusses how Australia was seen to be able to provide better possibilities, better opportunities and options than China.

5.2.1 Building competitive advantage and employment prospects

Even if the students had been able to navigate the Chinese education system to its conclusion, there still remained the difficulty of competing in the Chinese employment market with credentials which were less than 'top grade'. As we saw in Chapter Two, Chinese university graduates are facing increasing competition for jobs and the relative value of their qualifications are declining. The students' stories indicate that a major reason they were attracted by the possibilities they saw in Australia was they could circumvent this intense competition. Avoiding the competition was key for Ma Zhiqiang (#20 M), who wants a career in banking but had not been able to get in to a top university in China. He said:

They said in China competition is really high and maybe you go abroad, go to Australia, you can get a lower competition because there are not as much people as China.

Ma Zhiqiang (#20 M)

Indeed, the most common and direct longer term advantage from studying overseas was the expectation of a better chance of getting a job, of getting a better job, or of finding a job more easily. This is directly related to the perceptions of the quality of education available in China or Australia, and the subsequent perceptions of chances and choices of jobs available in China. This relationship is clearest for those participants who did not expect to gain entry to a quality Chinese university. Wang Bin (#10a M) did receive a university offer after taking the *gaokao*, but the standard was not to his liking. He commented:

because we didn't get good results in high school, just mediocre, can't really get like, like competitive, good, university ... in China if you can't get a good, get into good university, and after you finish your bachelor then it's also you can't, cannot find a good job...

Wang Bin (#10a M)

A similar sentiment was expressed by Deng Tao (#22 M):

I could go to university if I was still in China, but just a really not good one.... You can get a degree, you can go to university, but after that you might not find a job with it.

Deng Tao (#22 M)

The difficulties of gaining high quality employment were seen to be even greater by the three participants who did not believe they were able to enter any Chinese university at all. Tu Zhongzheng (#04 M) would have gone to a technical college had he not come to Australia, and as a result believes he would have worked in a technical job rather than the professional job he expects after completing his Australian university degree. Yang Mingxia (#16 F) had also been destined for Chinese technical rather than academic tertiary education, and similarly expected lower job prospects, she said:

the TAFE²³ is a lower level, so when I graduate from the TAFE I may not, I can't get a better job because I graduate from the TAFE because everyone think that is not that good.

Yang Mingxia (#16 F)

While Tu Zhongzheng and Yang Mingxia left China before they faced the reality of going to technical college in China, Long Sheng (#35 M) completed his studies at his technical college. His understanding of the predicament he faced in relation to his job prospects drove him to work hard and finally to earn a place in an overseas university.

Participants who went to or could have gone to good universities in China also believed their job prospects would be improved by going overseas. Again this is directly related to the intense competition in Chinese society, competition personally experienced during their schooling and expected to continue as they entered the workplace. Xiong Qizhi (#32 M) explained how people his age who were graduating from university in China were only able to get jobs 'cleaning rooms':

²³ Participants often used the Australian term 'TAFE', Technical and Further Education, to refer to tertiary level technical colleges in China.

and because in China too much pressure, too much competition, too many peoples, few jobs. [...] Very difficult, very very difficult. We don't know why, everybody thought like, China got a good developing at the moment, but only a few jobs. We don't know why. [...] The pressure is you're not getting a good job, right, you're not going to get a good job after graduating. Because too many peoples there. And the reputation is you're going to a good job, right, after I graduate from overseas. [...] So we come here.

Xiong Qizhi (#32 M)

It is this pressure and competition which underlies all of the participants' thinking about their chances of gaining good employment in China without studying overseas. Whatever their level of education within China was likely to be, they expected to be in competition with so many people that they were afraid of not being able to get a job good enough.

How an Australian education and degree was expected to help in terms of finding a job or a better job depended on how far the participants expected they could have reached in their education in China. For example, for participants such as Tu Zhongzheng (#04 F), Yang Mingxia (#16 F) and Long Sheng (#35 M), coming to Australia represented a chance to get the tertiary education that was otherwise unavailable to them – hence better job prospects. For participants who did have a chance of going to a university in China, coming to Australia represented a chance to go to a better university and to gain a different kind of qualification and skills which would allow them to stand out among their expected competitors in the job market – hence better job prospects. Zhou Jilong (#07 M), who went to a university a little below the standard that he had hoped for, and left for Australia before graduating under a degree transfer arrangement, expressed this when he said:

in China have a serious competitive working environment, you have [to] make yourself much more excellent than others, if you've done a good job, because in China have a lot of talent and a lot of graduates, very many, and you finish your study and you get into the society you will face a lot of problems and even [indistinct] to find a good job so you have to choose to study for Master degree again, yeah, so I think that I need to consider a little far [indistinct] my future.

Zhou Jilong (#07 M)

Even the few participants who completed their undergraduate studies at good Chinese universities had difficulties with the competitive environment in which they were looking for jobs and they expected that an Australian qualification would provide them with further competitive advantage. Cheng Wanling (#39 F), who graduated from a top university in Shanghai, commented:

But after graduating I found it's, it's hard to find a job there because so many students, you know [...] all of my classmates, sometimes they, they had to further their studies, doing Masters [...] or they find jobs actually not relevant to our study in university.

Cheng Wanling (#39 F)

The difficulty and inflexibility of the work environment was also a serious issue for Duan Jialun (#36 M) who had found what he had thought to be a 'very good job' after graduating from his university in China. Duan Jialun was a policeman stationed at the State Council in Beijing. Not liking his posting, however, which included having to deal with self-immolating Falungong practitioners, and not being able to quickly transfer without having very good networks, Duan Jialun decided that studying overseas would provide him with the capability to circumvent his difficult and limited job prospects.

It is clear that for most of the participants, particularly those who could have gone or did go to university in China, their concerns were more about the nature of the work they could find and the difficulty of finding it rather than whether they would ever be able to be occupied in gainful employment. The language used to describe the challenges does not rule out the possibility of finding a job, or even finding a good job, just that it would have been very difficult to do so.

At the same time as allowing participants to escape the overly competitive academic environment, going overseas also allowed them to escape the competitive labour market. Going to Australia, then, provided a means of either circumventing or rising above the competition, as Peng Deming (#23 M) said:

I was thinking that if I can graduate from an Australian university, that would ... make me more competitive because it's differentiate me from other Chinese people, Chinese University graduate, it definitely means something else.

Peng Deming (#23 M)

It is not, however, simply the qualification, the institutionalised cultural capital, gained from an overseas university which was expected to help the participants to 'differentiate' themselves in the job market from their counterparts who had not studied overseas (although for those who would not have been able to go to university in China the ability to have a degree at all was a significant attraction). The perception of the better quality of the education available overseas was also an important factor, as was the opportunity to develop English skills and have experience living and working in another country. All of these factors were seen by participants to varying degrees to add to the case for studying overseas. These pragmatic benefits were attractive to the participants who at the time of making the decision to study overseas were experiencing the deficits discussed in the previous sections and becoming concerned about their future opportunities.

For some of the participants these benefits of studying overseas were so obvious and an appreciation of their desirability so ubiquitous in China that they were taken as given, as Kong Liling (#37 F) commented:

because the social opinion [in China] thinks that. Well, the people [who] study overseas, they should be better, yeah, just that. ... it's just a common idea.

Kong Liling (#37 F)

This sentiment reflects the high status and perceived success that graduates from overseas have had in China since the beginning of the 20th century, as discussed in Chapter One. It appears that beyond the individual circumstances and challenges faced in China, studying abroad is seen as attractive and good in itself.

For the participants and their families who had the financial ability to attain these benefits and at the same time escape the pressures and disappointments of the overly competitive Chinese educational and employment environments it is perhaps unsurprising that they would decide to study overseas:

the main reason is get a degree, I get more competitive in the, today's society, and find a good job, have a good life.

Peng Deming (#23 M)

And Bai Shanshan (#34 F):

even though I was in a really good high school, yeah, high school at that time, I just feel lots of pressure, so also, and some of my friends, they been to, went to Australia for study already, and I heard from them, all of the friend said Australia, education is more easier, also more chance, more opportunities to get into a good Uni easily or something like that, so ... my parents just ask me if I want to choose this way, start a new life or something like that, and I said okay, why not?

Bai Shanshan (#34 F)

Given that the opportunity to study overseas was available and direct benefits were expected in contrast to staying in China, there was little reason for the participants to remain in China at the time.

5.2.2 The value of learning English

Other participants were more explicit about the particular benefits of studying overseas that they and their families expected would help them achieve the better careers they hoped for. The prospect of improving English was consistently held to be one of the major attractions of studying overseas for both finding work in the future and other purposes. Around half of the students mentioned that they believed learning to speak English fluently was expected to have a positive impact on their employment prospects. Again this was sometimes taken as a given and they believed that simply knowing more English would put them at an advantage over their counterparts. Chen Xia (#15 F), who was in her second year in Australia, is one case of this:

...my English is not very good, but I think after four years later I will be better, especially compared with someone [who does] university in China.

Chen Xia (#15 F)

Other participants directly tied the need to learn English with China's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) – a move they believed would open up China to the rest of the world and thereby increase the demand for English speakers within China. Lian Zhiren (#09 M), along with Yang Mingxia (#16 F), Sun Yan (#21 F) and Long Sheng (#35 M), all mentioned the WTO as one of the factors behind China's need for people with better English and/or internationally focussed skills. Lian Zhiren said:

Australia is basically English base country. I think in Chinese people point of view, since China join WTO and stuff like that, people with bilingual skill is like really important, especially if I have fluent English, so you are more... you're more in advantage positions, compared to other people. So come to Australia, I can study and practice a lot, so yeah, it's good for my future.

Lian Zhiren (#09 M)

As discussed in Part I of this chapter, Qin Xiaoli (#26 F)'s mother had wanted her to learn English from a very young age, although Qin Xiaoli was much less interested in it: 'I don't want to speak in English, I hate English'. For Qin Xiaoli's mother, however, learning English was an essential part of the larger picture of being able to make the most of the opportunities available from studying and living overseas, and it was central to the plan she had for her daughter. Indeed, mastering English is not only useful for working in China, but essential if a career in Australia is even to be contemplated. The opportunity to learn English was therefore necessary to keep the option of working in Australia (or anywhere overseas) open, even if, as with Qin Xiaoli, they were not overly enthusiastic about it.

The skill of being able to speak English fluently, as well as the higher quality professional skills expected from a higher quality education (as opposed to a higher quality qualification), can be viewed as objectified cultural capital as discussed in Chapter Two. It is therefore not simply a foreign degree that the participants and their families were anticipating would help them in their search for employment. The objectified cultural capital available in Australia was also expected to contribute to the value they hoped from their overseas studies.

5.2.3 The attraction of Western culture: Curiosity, challenge and personality

For other participants there is a lot more to learning English than its practical application in the labour market. More than a quarter of the participants also talked about their desire to learn English because it was something they were interested in and wanted to know more about. Some of these participants also appreciated that learning English would be good for their careers, but others, such as Guo Tingwen (#12 F) explicitly stated that it had nothing to do with finding a job and was just something they were interested in – although in Guo Tingwen's case this may not be all that surprising as she said she had not considered work or a career at all before she left China (to study a Masters degree in computer science).

The participants who described their interest in English as one of the reasons they wanted to study overseas generally tied this to a broader interest in 'Western' culture, as Duan Jialun (#36 M) commented:

I was influenced by some friends, because they are going to overseas to study. And also, I like Western culture. Very much. I like rock and roll ... Yeah, so pretty much, I just want to go outside and learn a little bit English and to study cultural, know cultural, and that's it.

Duan Jialun (#36 M)

Similar stories were common. Cui Lian (#40 F), among others, was curious:

we use chopsticks in China, I was so curious if people like, here, use fork and knife, how can they do that, I always think about that, just, Sandwich, coffee, we don't have much in China, we all have, like, rice ...

Cui Lian (#40 F)

The participants who were able to describe where this interest came from ascribed it to the Western culture they encountered in their lives, such as Li Donglong (#03 M):

Why does [Western culture] interest you?

[laughs] Hard question. [pause] I learned English for many years, since I was in junior high school, and actually I like the pronunciation of English, I like the sound. Umm, actually, before I came to Australia I listened to a lot of English songs, music, and, umm, Hollywood movies, to improve my English and, umm, (indistinct) why did I come here, why am I interested in the culture? I don't know...

Li Donglong (#03 M)

Two participants, Lian Zhiren (#09 M) and Zou Zhijian (#31 M), explained how they thought that learning about Western culture would provide them with a competitive advantage for employment,

for Lian Zhiren in China, and for Zou Zhijian in Australia. For Zou Zhijian it was clear that if he was to work in Australia he needed to understand it. They were the only participants who described that they had thought about Western culture in this way as a motivating factor to go overseas. Knowing about Western culture in this way can also be viewed as objectified cultural capital. Having such knowledge is tool of the trade, a necessity for success in the fields they anticipated working in (international trade for Lian Zhiren, for example), whether in China or Australia.

When deciding to study overseas the opportunity to become more familiar with Western culture was, however, more strongly associated in with the desire for adventure and personal challenge than employment prospects. Again, for some participants this was expressed in the context of wanting to escape the malaise they expected or experienced in China. Lai Junbao (#38 M) explained very clearly that he could see his life ahead of him in China as 'just being a normal person, mediocrity, mediocre', and that was something that he definitely did not want. Although he believed that coming to Australia did not necessarily 'guarantee my brighter future', he wanted the challenge regardless. He said:

... I am sure I am facing more challenges and that's what I really want. I just want to do something with my life, not, I don't want to see myself ... when I get 50 years old and I look back and my life is really, I did nothing, I didn't even try to make a difference, so yeah, that's why I come to Australia.

Lai Junbao (#38 M)

Lai Junbao's ideas about wanting challenge and adventure in his life are quite common, particularly among those participants who had started studying in Australia later and/or had a chance of going to, or had gone to a university in China. Wanting to 'see the world' (Wu Meiqi (#02 F)), to go overseas and 'have a look' (Chen Xia (#15 F)), 'see what it's like' (Jia Huilan (#30 F)), 'know more about things' (Sun Yan (#21 F)), or simply experience different things were all ways in which these participants described their desire for adventure and challenge. Where these sentiments were expressed they were expressed quite strongly. For some it was simply the challenge of doing something different, difficult and new, for others the attraction was being able to travel and see different parts of the world.

Those who wanted to go overseas because they were simply 'interested' or craved adventure and challenge placed less emphasis on the more practical job-related outcomes of their time abroad. Moreover, the more participants emphasised the desire for adventure, the less significance they seemed to give to job outcomes in their decision making process.

Another group of students and their families were attracted to Western countries and culture as they considered it more 'suitable' for their personalities and interests. The participants who expressed this most strongly included Wu Meiqi (#02 F), Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F) and Zheng Rangrang (#28 F), who were discussed in 5.1.3, and this understanding is based on their contrast of China's deficiencies with the perceived nature of the West.

For a small number of participants the prospect of being able to study within a 'Western' education system was also an attraction in and of itself. The education system seemed to be the focus of a number of the positive aspects about Australia more generally in contrast to the perceived deficiencies of China. The Australian education system was seen as providing participants with the opportunity to have less stress and pressure in high school, more freedom in school and from parents, more interpersonal interaction in the classroom and more rigour at University.

The generic attractiveness of the 'West' in general is perhaps another indication of the cultural flows of globalisation penetrating China and into the consciousness of young Chinese people. Arjun Appadurai's 'mass-mediated master narratives' mentioned in Chapter Two (Appadurai 1996) are primarily the narratives of the West and it is amidst these global cultural flows that young Chinese people form their outlook on life and hopes and dreams for themselves. It is little wonder that the West takes a prominent place in where and how they would like to be.

5.2.4 Keeping options open – Migrating and *Guanxi*

For the students who were most attracted to or felt they were most suited to the West, one opportunity presented by studying overseas was the possibility of migrating, or at least gaining the

permanent residency necessary to keep the option of migrating open. As discussed in Chapters One and Two there is a long history of Chinese international students migrating after studying abroad. On the surface the relationship between studying abroad and migration appears to continue with the current cohort of international students from China. For destination countries such as Australia, for example, international students are not only seen as a source of export earnings for the education sector, but also as a source of skilled migrant labour. Moreover, the selection by Chinese international students of academic programs which carry the most weight in migration applications would indicate that having the opportunity to permanently migrate and work overseas would be a significant factor in the decision making process for international students such as the study participants and their families.

The evidence for this from the interviews carried out in this study, however, is mixed. Only a small number of participants indicated that their families had a firm desire for them to permanently migrate at the time the decision to study overseas was being considered. One such participant was Qin Xiaoli (#26 F), discussed above, whose mother had suffered from cancer. With her own experiences of the Chinese medical system in mind, Qin Xiaoli's mother wanted Qin Xiaoli to be able to access the government funded medical and social services in Australia and encouraged her to migrate. Qin Xiaoli said:

[my mother] had told me that [...] if I can be a[n Australian] citizen and [...] if I lose job and if I get sick, because government will pay for that and it's more safety [...] Because my mother is always very sick because she got cancer for four or five years and she have paid many medical and she just think if I come to Australia and if I get sick and government will pay for that...

Qin Xiaoli (#26 F)

For most participants, however, the immediate motivating factors to go overseas were much more strongly associated with the academic and contextual pressures discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. Where they considered migration or a work visa in Australia before departure it was most often in the sense that going overseas would open up the opportunity to do so and gain the subsequent benefits should that be the best option after the completion of studies.

In fact, although many of the students described the benefits of studying overseas in the relatively linear sense of the overseas education providing them with a 'better' job than if they had not studied overseas, it would be more accurate to understand it as providing them with a greater variety of opportunities. On balance the outcome of these opportunities were perceived as better than the opportunities available to the participants if they remained in China. It is in this context that the relationship of the decision to study overseas and the possibility to stay overseas in the longer term should be considered. Indeed, even at the time of the interviews most participants were not sure about where they would live in the medium term future and many did not have a strong preference.

The importance of the greater opportunities expected from studying overseas is seen in the participants' discussion of the role that their families' connections (*guanxi*) would have had in their careers had they not left China. With limited employment pathways open to them because of poor academic performance, choices of specialization, or other factors, many of the students reported that they would have needed to rely on their families' connections in order to find satisfactory jobs. For example, Gao Yuanfang (#11 F) had the option of getting a production job in a TV station through her father's connections, but as she performed relatively poorly in high school her other options would have been limited. She said:

my Dad kind of had connection with the TV station things, TV channel things and then my dad said to me now if I get into a certain university that one university and I got a bachelor degree in Chinese, in Chinese literature, he could guarantee me to go to that TV station to do a editor job or you know, producer job things in there and then and he said the pay in there is really good, actually...so that's probably [what my life would have been like there], ... because I was in the humanities class in, like, in the senior high and that will limit my career choice as in the arts degree or commerce

Gao Yuanfang (#11 F)

Similarly Shi Youlin (#06 M) would have been able to rely on his parents to find a good job in China after graduating from university, as had his twin brother:

I have a twin brother, have the same time to graduate, he couldn't find job. Or rather, he didn't want to [...] In China [the] situation is if you had a better background, I mean that parents background, parents usually want to give, offer you a job, and give you the job through their relationship with other colleagues [...]. And the ridiculous thing is the, most of time they offer you a good job, better job and you only can find a poor job, I mean, not that good [a] job [if you find one yourself]. Lots of my friends, especially, I think, my brother, they won't, they don't want to find a job by themselves, they don't want. That is true, they just wait, sit and wait, and wait for a good opportunity to come out, they just grab this job. Mostly they just depend on their parents, depend on some others, you know, mmm, and I don't think this suits for me, I don't like this life.

Shi Youlin (#06 M)

A different, although complementary, example is Lian Zhiren (#09 M) who chose to study dentistry after completing high school in Australia. He explained that his parents were a little frustrated with his choice of specialization as he, having lived on the campus of a medical university where his father was a lecturer (oncology), would have been able to study some kind of medical specialization in China if he had wanted to:

I think they [my family] can help me a lot if I study in China, getting a job, getting a good positions, getting more opportunities, compared to other peoples. So in a sense it may be easier for me, maybe, I don't know.

Lian Zhiren (#09 M)

In these cases the students are not aiming to develop more social capital, rather they are aiming to put themselves in a position where they do not need to rely on their social capital as much as they would have if they had stayed in China. In effect they expected that the other cultural capital they would get from studying overseas would provide enough value in their chosen fields that their social capital would no longer be necessary.

For these and other participants then, it is clear that despite the academic and environmental difficulties they faced, leaving China was not a simple calculation of whether or not they could get a 'better' job – going overseas was expected to open up opportunities to find different kinds of futures without the help of their parents and to live in different countries from what would have been available to them if they had remained in China.

5.3 Complexities

The paths leading participants to embark on their overseas educational journeys are diverse and built on a variety of backgrounds, experiences and desires. Although many of these factors are present in many of the participants' stories, the importance of individual factors for the participants and their families varies substantially. Nevertheless, all of them came to the same conclusion that going to Australia would provide them with the capital to ensure more opportunities and better outcomes than continuing to study and/or work in China. In this sense the decision to study overseas is a strategic one, a calculation of return on investment, but it is also a decision rooted in the habitus of the family. It is the backgrounds and circumstances of the families which inform how they view the value of capital expected from studying overseas, particularly in relation to the economic capital necessary to acquire it.

We can see from the interviews a simple pattern in how participants and their families weighed up the different kinds of factors or incentives to study overseas: Those who struggled most in China or faced the most difficulty in achieving their educational aims were more attracted by the educational, psychological, and often more practical, outcomes available from studying in Australia. For them high value institutionalised cultural capital in the form of a foreign degree obtainable without extreme pressure was of most importance. Those whose academic achievement in China was higher were more likely to give weight to the other less tangible benefits that they and their families perceived as arising from an overseas educational experience. These less tangible outcomes include being able to pursue their interests and having the opportunity to live in an environment which 'suited' them better. For some this was important as their families believed that only an overseas education would be able to provide embodied cultural capital reflective of their

families' habitus. Nevertheless, whatever factors were more important in individual participants' circumstances, the expected outcomes of studying overseas needed to be better than what was expected in China to the extent that it was worth the investment, both financially and emotionally.

Indeed, it appears that the lower the relative financial burden on a family resulting from the decision to fund study abroad, the lower the required difference in outcomes expected from it compared to remaining in China. Families with greater financial resources were more likely to send their children overseas even if there were only relatively small benefits expected to arise (e.g. if there was little question of a successful career available if they had remained in China, and going to Australia provided qualitative rather than quantitative differences). Families with less financial resources on the other hand, making a larger investment relative to their wealth, were likely to be either less supportive, delay the decision, or take into greater consideration the practical, quantitative returns on their investments.

Moreover, what was considered an acceptable level of academic achievement varied between families as well. For some, particularly those classified as 'upper' class, going overseas was an option if entry to one of China's prestigious institutions such as Beijing or Qinghua university was not possible, even if entry to an otherwise good, but not elite university had been. For others, more often those with less financial resources, if going to any university in China had been possible then that would have been preferable to studying overseas.

Even these socio-economic divisions are not entirely adequate. Among the participants there is a continuum between those with the least financial resources such as Li Donglong (#03 M) whose family had to borrow money from relatives for him to study overseas, and those with the most such as Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F), who was not really clear about the extent of her parents' wealth, saying 'well I don't really know [their level of income], I suppose I'm still here, so they must be doing all right'. Families from different positions within this range also took into account the various factors in ways that reflected on who they were and their personal priorities, and these background priorities affected the importance of the various factors contributing to their decisions. The case of Qin Xiaoli (#26 F) was discussed earlier – her mother in particular had held a long standing

ambition for Qin Xiaoli to study overseas as a path to emigration. Although her family's expenditure on education for her to learn English in China and the costs of studying overseas seemed to represent a significant financial burden on the family, the drive to have Qin Xiaoli study overseas appears to have been very strong from when she was young, and was rooted in factors well beyond problems with academic performance in school.

Just as Qin Xiaoli (#26 F)'s mother's experience with cancer drove home to her the importance of living in a country with a medical welfare system, so did other participant's parents' own experience influence their attitudes towards sending this children overseas for their education. Xia Zixi (#27 F)'s father, for example had studied overseas, in his case in Sydney, and believed he had benefited greatly from the experience and wanted his daughter to experience the same thing. Xiong Qizhi (#32 M)'s father worked under a (Chinese) manager who had worked extensively in Australia, saw how he had benefitted from his experience and wanted Xiong Qizhi (#32 M) to have the same opportunity. These kinds of factors all contributed to how early participants' families considered the option to study overseas and the kinds of triggers that prompted them to make the decisions to go. Due to the extent of the individual families' circumstances' influence on the way decisions to study overseas are made, quantitative measures of family wealth and background in a qualitative study such as this can only give general indications of the role of social class in these processes.

Nevertheless, despite the variation between participants and their families as to how the different factors in the decision to go overseas were weighted, they all came to the same conclusion: that studying overseas was better than remaining in China. To varying degrees it was seen to be better for the participants' educational, career and life options, better for their emotional and psychological needs, and a better way to invest the financial resources that the family had available to them. For many of the participants the benefits were clearly practical and materialistic, allowing them to access a level of education and a choice of employment that would otherwise have not been available. For others the emotional and personal side took precedence. In all cases, however, studying in Australia was expected to provide the participants with both the opportunity to

overcome the deficiencies associated with continuing to study in China and the new options expected to arise from an education overseas.

6 Experiencing, growing and becoming: Life in Australia

After the decision to study in Australia was made and the participants came to Australia, the challenges of living and studying in a foreign country quickly replace the almost ubiquitous stressors of the highly competitive school and social life in China. Once in Australia students adapt and change to cope with their new environment, and they also change as a result of the accumulation of their new experiences and exposure to people, places, ideas and methods far removed from their lives in China. This chapter examines the process of change as experienced by the 39 students in this study.

In essence this chapter is about how the students' habitus has changed as a result of their encounter with Australia. We know from Chapter Two that an individual's habitus is a 'set of dispositions' developed as a result of their personal history and experiences (Mahar et al. 1990, 10), and that habitus is reflective of the environment where it is developed (Postone et al. 1993, 4). Moreover, bringing habitus into new fields can cause transformation and change (Reay 2004, 436). And indeed, the students described many ways in which they changed during, or as a result of, their time studying and living in the new fields in Australia.

The changes reported by the students range from those necessary in order to survive and succeed in a new social and educational environment to changes in the way they think and approach their lives. For most, the extent and magnitude of the change is greater than anticipated, and for some the fact that they changed at all comes as a surprise. For all, however, the significance they ascribe to the change they feel in themselves is quite unexpected. Although the students are aware that if they had stayed in China they would also have grown and developed during this important stage of their lives, they are very aware that a lot of the change they described can be directly attributed to their experiences in Australia. Moreover, the fields encountered in Australia reflect the globalised, post-modern values more common in developed countries, and the way the students' habitus changes in turn reflects some of these values. But, as we will see, the way their habitus develops is still intricately linked to their experiences in China.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the experiences of the students living and studying in Australia. It continues with an exploration of how these experiences have resulted in them becoming more independent and broadminded, to the point where many of them have grown and changed, indeed transformed, in ways which had not been imagined before they left China. In light of these changes the next chapter, Chapter Seven, will analyse what value the students see their transformation having for their lives in the future.

6.1 Practicalities of living and learning in Australia

Upon arriving in Australia participants are faced with life in a different country, culture and, importantly, education system. In the course of navigating their way through these they face many challenges, both in their domestic and student lives.

Because during the difficult times you learn things, you learn stuff from that period of time. That's really good time, actually. To get to know the city, to get to know the people here, that's really good time. And good experience for me. Just myself, come here to study, you know, to be more independent. To be a little bit brave. You, stay here. Just start, you know, new life.

Duan Jialun (#36 M)

This section discusses the experiences of the students as they learn to make their way in Australian educational institutions and Australian society. The lessons learnt from these experiences, the ways of communicating and behaving in order to survive in a foreign, Western, country are the foundation for the ways they feel they have changed, as will be discussed in the next section.

6.1.1 Challenges of Australian life: English, culture and friends

One of the most difficult aspects of almost all of the participants' time in Australia, particularly in the months directly after arrival, is the challenge of communicating in English. Being an international student in an English-speaking country requires good English skills in order to complete even basic

tasks. For students undertaking sometimes quite advanced courses of study, however, the tasks required to live and survive in Australia are often far from basic.

6.1.1.1 Communicating with homestays and housemates

For the 19 participants in the study who came to Australia to study at high school, the first place their English was tested was at their homestay accommodation. In South Australia, students under the age of 18 years are required to be under some kind of adult guardianship and for the participants in this study who arrived when they were relatively young, this meant living with a 'homestay' family. In such an arrangement a family offers to provide food and accommodation for international students for payment. Participants reported widely divergent experiences of their time in homestay accommodation. This may be partially related to the financial nature of the relationship between themselves and their homestay families. Broadly speaking, participants staying in homestays who appeared to be primarily concerned with financial returns are less likely to have had a positive experience.

It might be assumed that language difficulties would have had a major impact on the students' ability to develop good relationships with their homestay families, but for those participants who reported bad relationships the reasons usually centred more on cultural or personality differences. For Cui Lian (#40 F), for example, arriving in Adelaide somewhat travel sick, vomiting in the car on the way to the homestay, and then being fed sandwiches and coffee which were very far from her liking – 'everything just horrible' – got her relationship with her homestay 'mother' off to a bad start. She lasted half a year at that place, two weeks at the next, and then a year at the third. This third homestay, however, was much better than her previous ones, and, she said, better than any of her friends' as well. Peng Deming (#23 M)'s homestay experience was the worst experience he had in Australia:

My homestay is very Aussie. He [...] is living now on dole, he's a dole bludger. And he had four Chinese students living in his house. So basically homestay is his business. He don't really care the relationships with the students. And more interesting, I do not understand how come he is so racist but he had a Filipino wife and he has lived with four Chinese students for so long. Maybe five or ten

years now. I suffered for half a year, more than half a year. [...] his opinion is very intimidating, he always gives people wrong ideas, he teach people different things but most of stuff is crap. He showed me the different, the down side of Australia, which showed me disrespect, racism, what else, low education and dole. Basically he is not a good example.

Peng Deming (#23 M)

In these examples it was cultural and personal difficulties rather than difficulties with English communication which were the cause of these problems. Lack of English, therefore did not necessarily pose insurmountable hurdles to developing good relationships with homestays, although it may have contributed to mutual misunderstandings. Indeed, the participants such as Cui Lian (#40 F) and Peng Deming who had a particularly negative experience in their homestay were able to change to other accommodation, be it other homestays or, once they were old enough, to rent places by themselves or with other students or live in hostels or other student accommodation.

Participants who had positive experiences in their homestay accommodation are clear about how their experiences contributed to their understanding of the English language and Australian culture. The clearest cases of this are where they had been brought into the family and treated like a family member. This included being invited to their host family members' weddings, taken on holiday, and generally involved in the day-to-day life of the family. A consequence of being afforded the respect of a more or less equal family member is that the participants were able to communicate with the family members and develop a greater understanding of the cultural practices of Australians. Some participants reported spending evenings chatting with their host mother, gaining a valuable opportunity to practice their English while also getting insights into Australian culture. As Gao Yuanfang (#11 F) said, 'I am glad I live with [my homestay family] because I learnt a lot, I learned the different food and then I learned my languages and all these sort of things'. And for Yang Mingxia (#16 F) the knowledge she gained from her homestay was important 'because I want to live here in the future, so I think I need to know about that [Australian culture]'.

Three participants chose to live in non-Chinese share-houses in a direct attempt to develop their English skills and learn more about Australian culture. Their experiences with these kinds of living arrangements, however, are mixed. Liu Ruolan (#13 F), living with people from a variety of countries, did manage to improve her English, while Jia Huilan (#30 F) moved out after a short time, apparently due to a practical issue to do with sleeping arrangements rather than personal/language issues. Despite being able to improve her English by living with non-Chinese people Liu Ruolan's lack of English also made it harder to understand and be involved in the conversations and jokes which were taking place around her, she said:

I found it's difficult to communicate with [...] my housemates [...] they can make joke with, in English and I, I'm really not good at that and I just keep quiet and maybe one hour or two and I just speak one or two sentence.

Liu Ruolan (#13 F)

Liu Ruolan, however, does not solely attribute her difficulties in making friends with her housemates or other Australians simply to her difficulties with English. What might be classified as cultural problems also added to the challenge she, and other participants, face. Not being interested in Australian football or going to the pub dramatically reduce the topics of common interest between the Chinese students and many of their potential local friends.

6.1.1.2 Finding Australian friends

Some participants came to Australia with a clear desire to develop friendships with Australians, and their lack of success in this regard probably represents the greatest common disappointment with their time in Australia. Only three participants, Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F), Guo Tingwen (#12 F) and Peng Deming (#23 M), reported that they have had any significant success developing friendships with Australians. These participants attribute their success in making friends to their outgoing personalities rather than superiority in English, although they believed their English had improved as a result of having good Australian friends. Interestingly, in contrast to the participants who have not made friends with local Australians, these three are much less instrumentalist in their explanations as to why making friends with Australians was something they wanted to do. For

them having friends is not good *because* they can help improve their English, but simply good because having friends is a good thing.

For others, however, disappointment from not making Australian friends was often expressed in terms of what they have not been able to achieve because of their lack of friends, rather than in terms of the lack of friendship. In part this may be because although participants generally do not have many Australian friends, most have developed networks of Chinese friends. Therefore the lack of friendship *per se* is generally not the concern of the participants. What is still missing is the opportunity to develop better English and be involved in the society of the country they are living in. As Lian Zhiren (#09 M), who before he came to Australia thought it important to improve his English and understand Western culture in order to improve his career and business chances, commented:

[...] I don't really involve, like, stay with a lot of Australia's students, that's the thing I really regret. Like because there are still other overseas students, so basically we stick together, right. So that's not good for my English, anyway. But at that time, I mean, we just stick together, so, I didn't really communicate with too much Australia student, which is contradict to my purpose at the beginning, yeah.

#9 (M)

In fact, the problems of English and making new friends appear to be a vicious circle for many of the participants. Without what they believed to be good English, the participants are unable, or too shy, to make friends with English speaking locals, and without making friends with English speaking locals they feel that they are unable to improve their English as much as they hoped.

6.1.1.3 Communicating at school and university

Attending school and university in Australia, too, presents both challenges and opportunities for the students in terms of their English communication skills. Chen Xia (#15 F), for example, did not recognise the word 'behaviour' when it was used in a pre-university psychology course, and she consequently could not understand any of the content of the class. Other participants also reported

not being able to understand their Australian lecturers and tutors, but in most cases were able to cope through intensive reading of the course texts.

For the 19 students who first came to study in high school, the initial difficulties associated with their English ability appear to have been greater than those who came at the tertiary level, but they also appear to have overcome their difficulties relatively quickly. In part this can be attributed to the intensive English program into which newly arrived non-English speaking international students are placed in high schools. Those who studied at high school reported that after a few months studying in these classes which were tailored to their needs English ceased to be a major concern for them. Other issues, instead, took the place of English as causing the greatest challenges in their lives.

As discussed in Chapter Five, before leaving China most of the students and their families had an unqualified expectation that studying overseas would provide them with improved English skills. These stories demonstrate, however, that improving English is for many a much more complicated task than expected. Living in an English speaking country does not necessarily mean living with English speakers, and problems with English make both relationships with Australians and academic study more difficult. Nevertheless, even if the students indicated that they are not happy with how much their English had improved, most were sure that it has improved, or at least will improve by the time they finish their studies.

6.1.2 Studying at school and university

As we saw in the previous chapter, ostensibly the main reason that participants gave for coming to Australia was to further their educational opportunities. It is not surprising, then, that the school and the university provide the participants with some of their most concerning problems as well as some of their most satisfying experiences. As described above, being required to communicate in English represents a new pressure and challenge for the participants, particularly in the months soon after their arrival. More significant than the practical challenge of comprehending and being

comprehended, however, is the challenge of adapting to the styles of teaching and learning that they encounter in Australia.

6.1.2.1 Quantity and level of work required

High School

One relatively simple adjustment to make for many of the participants who first studied in high school in Australia is that the content of the subjects is not as difficult as in China. This is particularly the case in technical and scientific areas where participants may have already studied the concepts being taught and less sophisticated levels of English expression were adequate. In addition to this, a lower volume of work is required both at school and after school in order to obtain satisfactory results.

The lower levels of pressure in the school environment mirror the changed equation of university entry that the students faced after arriving in Australia. Participants were no longer competing against their classmates and the rest of the China for limited high quality university places. Rather, as international students in Australia they only needed to hold a certain minimum entry standard,²⁴ pay the fees, and they were guaranteed a place. They were not even competing against local students who were in competition among themselves for the limited government-subsidised places on offer. In effect overseas students were only competing against themselves to reach the entry mark required. In contrast to their schools in China their names were no longer posted on classroom walls in descending rank order according to their exam results, and even when students were aware of each others' marks the comparison did not carry with it the same life-defining consequences as it had in China.

The combination of the reduced academic pressure that the participants were facing in Australian high schools in order to gain university entry, as well as the relatively easy content required in their subjects meant that they were able to relax in their schooling for the first time. As so many of the participants who studied at high school in Australia did so because they were unable to perform at

²⁴ Defined by the universities according to what is considered an appropriate level of achievement to indicate suitability for the chosen course.

an adequate level in China, and consequently had been under substantial school, parental and social pressure to perform, this relief was very welcome. Their responses to this situation, however, were mixed.

On one hand, a number of the students reported that the new academic environment allowed them for the first time to build up their own confidence in their academic ability – something which had been continuously undermined while they were at high school in China. By having the time available to take a step back and concentrate on study without the overwhelming pressure of impending failure they were able to realise their own potential. This sentiment is expressed clearly by Wang Yi (#10b M):

[...] When I first came here, the course is just not that hard in comparison to the course in China. And you have more freedom, so, [...] you kind of developed kind of confidence and control over the environment so even though [...] at the end it's harder and harder but at the beginning you kind of developed that confidence so you kind of overcome those difficulties.

Wang Yi (#10b M)

For Gao Yuanfang (#11 F), the confidence she developed in her Australian high school resulted in her pursuing mathematics in university – a field in which she had found very little success in the highly pressurised academic environment of her Chinese high school. Being given the time and space to realise that she could, in fact, be successful allowed her to reach her potential and follow her interests in a way that she otherwise would not have.

Another related factor was that in Australia the participants could, for the first time, choose the subjects that interested them, and, perhaps even more importantly, they could stop studying the subjects they did not like. Yang Mingxia (#16 F) commented: '[I did better in Australia because] I can choose the subjects that I love [...]. In China I studied the compulsory [subjects] that I don't like'. This, again, helped to build the confidence of the students and contributed to them achieving better results. In fact, most of the participants who went to high school in Australia reported that their results improved after coming to Australia. Moreover, from the very fact that all of the

students that I interviewed gained entry to a quality university program it is quite clear that the outcomes of their high school education (in terms of university entry) were better than had been anticipated if they had remained in China. This outcome, of course, is a consequence of both the participants' improved performance as well as the less competitive entrance regimes of the universities.

In contrast to those who enjoyed Australia's less pressurised high school environment, some of the participants who were unused to having free time to fill with non-school activities found it difficult to maintain focus and motivation. At the most innocuous level this meant participants became bored. In some cases, however, the freedom afforded to the students gave them the opportunity to engage in paid work or social activities which detracted from their academic success, such as Xiong Qizhi (#32 M) who needed to take up a part time job while in high school. The job gave him an income of \$300 a week: 'so I just spend money and I never earned so much money before and I just play and, so I fail'. The number of students in this study who reported such problems, however, was very small. This may be explained by a bias in the sample towards students with relatively successful academic track records resulting from mostly being selected from among those who had managed to gain entry to the University of Adelaide, the most prestigious institution in the region in which they were studying. There is some anecdotal evidence, however, from teachers and in the media which indicate that the success achieved by this study's participants was not experienced by all Chinese international students (e.g. *Underage gambler 'lost \$45,000 at casino'* 2004). As for Xiong Qizhi, the income of his father increased so he had less need to work, and acting on the advice of his school teachers he managed to turn himself around, finally getting into university.

Regardless of the individual response to the new academic environment, the participants who studied in high school in Australia felt a great release from the pressures and stressors which had so dominated their lives throughout their education in China as discussed in Chapter Five. Tu Zhongzheng (#04 M) commented that in Australia he was finally able to 'have fun and study' whereas in China he said he could only study. He said he had only been to the cinema once in five years and had only visited Beijing five times in his life, despite living in Tianjin only a short train ride

away – ‘my parents don't let me go anywhere, just study study study [...] no I don't like study in China’. In Australia, however, he had learnt how to manage his own time, relax, have fun and play sports – all the while still keeping up with his school work. Having the space to do this, and developing the ability to manage himself in this environment meant a lot to him.

University

Once in university, however, the story changed. While school and university entry in Australia may have been relatively straightforward, studying at the tertiary level is more of a challenge. Twelve of the participants reported that they had failed one course or more, and very few indicated that they thought university study was easy – one exception was Kong Liling (#37 F), studying computer science, whose boyfriend was the tutor. In relation to the difficulties of studying at university a number expressed what they believed to be a common Chinese view, that Western universities are ‘easy [to] get in, hard to get out’ (Long Sheng (#35 M)) – in contrast to what they believed to be the case in China, where ‘it's very difficult for you to enter into the university, but very easy to graduate’ (Dai Dai (#25 F)).

At the university level it is perhaps not surprising that the students who had not attended high school in Australia more commonly reported that English difficulties contributed to how difficult they found their courses. Other than that, however, the experiences of university among the participants do not differ markedly according to where they had finished high school. Studying at university is simply hard. It requires students to learn how to motivate themselves to learn independently, even more so than in Australian secondary education, continue to adapt to Australian (or Western) teaching methods and, importantly, it challenges them to develop their thinking and problem solving skills.

6.1.2.2 Styles of teaching and learning

Some of the participants had had an idea that what was going to happen in their classes, tutorials and lectures in Australia would be different to what they had experienced in China. Sometimes this information had been derived from friends, other times it had been picked up from books and other

sources. Even when they had thought about it and were consciously interested in being involved in something different, they rarely anticipated what the experience would be like.

The students noticed very quickly that the classroom environments they entered at high school or university are different from those they had previously encountered in China. The main practical differences concern the manner of the teachers and their relationships with the students, the activity of the students in classes and the kinds of assessments required. It was commonly commented that teachers in Australia are more encouraging than those in China; they are more approachable and are accessible at any time to answer questions. In particular, students are able to ask teachers questions during classes and tutorials, have discussions and raise alternative opinions. In China this kind of student/teacher interaction was uncommon. Dai Dai (#25 F) explained why this style of teaching suited her better, she said:

In China, if you give a wrong or not so accurate answer the teacher will say 'no that's wrong, you should, you have to answer this way'. But the tutors or lecturer in Australia will not. They will say 'oh yes, that's a good suggestion' or 'good, good' or something else and they will say 'but I think maybe it is better for you to say it like that'. So I like the education here.

Dai Dai (#25 F)

At the same time as being more open, accessible and encouraging, however, Australian teachers are seen to be less engaged in the performance of the students than their Chinese counterparts. As Jian Ru (#05 F) commented, 'no one cares [...] if you want to work hard, work hard. [...] if you want to fail, no one care about it'. The students who commented on this attitude liked it very much as finally, after years of being under intense pressure from teachers in China to achieve very high results, once in Australia they find they are being left alone. It is up to them to decide if and when they want to work hard. To succeed in Australia, however, still requires a significant amount of motivation and students can no longer rely on their teachers (or their parents, for that matter) to provide the incentive to perform. Instead, they need to learn how to study independently, and being able to do so provides many of the students with great satisfaction.

Participants raised the notion of 'independent study' in two related but distinct contexts. First, as above, it is necessary to be able to study independently to achieve the general tasks required. Second, independent study is required within particular tasks set by teachers at both school and even more so at university. In this context 'independent study' refers to students needing to search for information and knowledge and critically evaluate it without being under close direction of the teacher:

in China [...] we have that kind of assignment, just like a question, and the answers from the textbook. But in Australia you can't do like that, you should get a general idea about the textbook, what they are talking about, and then maybe go to the Internet, to do some research, to get the information you want. And combine the real information and the knowledge you learn from the textbook to finish your assignment.

Dai Dai (#25 F)

Although this was a challenge for some of the participants, being able to do it is something they valued and gave them great satisfaction. Yan Juanjuan (#33 F), for example, commented that she liked this way of learning:

because all the knowledge is myself [mine], no one can take [it from me] [...] you have to think of [for] yourself, you have to do a lot of research, do the referencing. Yeah, it's interesting. I learned that.

Yan Juanjuan (#33 F)

Lian Zhiren (#09 M) also commented that having to study independently gives him control and ownership over what he is learning:

[I prefer independent study because] I got more control over it. So, I do learn things if I do independent study, because [...] I suffer the difficulties and overcome these difficulties so they become part of my knowledge afterwards.

Lian Zhiren (#09 M)

This mode of knowledge acquisition is viewed by participants in stark contrast to their experiences in China which were characterised by the need to remember and be able to recall only the information provided by the teacher.

With different tasks required in Australia came different styles of assessment. The most commented upon difference is the lack of exams, or at least the lack of heavily weighted exams. In their place is continual assessment based on frequent assessments such as those mentioned above. Although the style of assessment in Australia is generally welcomed, a number of participants indicated that they prefer the Chinese style. Two reasons were given. First, a couple of participants said that having only a small number of exams constitute most of the assessment, as in China, meant that they could simply study very hard before the exams and not study so hard the rest of the time, as Tu Zhongzheng (#04 M) commented: 'I think the Chinese way is better [...] because I not study well, I don't like study every day, so I like study before the exam'. With a more continuous style of assessment in Australia, this is more difficult. Second, it was noted by some participants that in Australia when there are exams they are seen as being different to exams in China with 'tricky questions in every paper' (Bai Shanshan (#34 F)). Also, as exam papers in Australia are changed significantly each year, more effort is required than simply preparing from past exam papers.

Finally the Australian practice of assessing oral presentations and tutorial participation often presents significant challenges for the participants in the study. Seldom, however, are these challenges expressed in an overall negative manner. Although they are clearly hard to adapt to, because giving presentations to a class or a tutorial group had not been experienced by any of the participants in China, accomplishing this new task leaves participants with the satisfaction that they are able to achieve something difficult.

Participants reported that the open, inquisitive and encouraging environment of their classrooms, tutorial rooms and lecture theatres requires them to develop the ability to seek out knowledge and solutions without direct instruction. This means that most need to learn how to approach problems

and apply their minds in ways that they had not encountered in China. Many reported that their problem-solving skills have improved as a result, and a number also believe that their ability to think critically has also improved. When they mentioned that they have learnt how to think critically they commented that they value this development very highly.

Life in Australia provides the participants with many challenges. They have to face living and learning in an English speaking country often with a less than confident command of the English language. They have to develop new social networks and develop relationships with the people with whom they are living. They also have to deal with a different education system which requires different amounts of work and incorporates different styles of teaching and learning. Some aspects of their lives were relatively easy to adapt to, such as the decreased amount of work required in secondary school. Others, such as learning and communicating in English, are harder. All of these experiences, however, contribute to the participants' growth and development in terms of their independence, styles of thinking and other, deeper, changes.

6.2 Being Independent

Across all the interviews and all the topics discussed, the single most consistent theme is that the students believe they have become more independent since arriving in Australia. Not only did they almost all talk about the fact that they have become more independent, becoming more independent is one of the first things many of them discussed when questioned about how they have changed or benefited from coming to Australia. The need to be able to study independently was discussed briefly above in the context of the different requirements of the Australian classroom. The independence here, however, is a broader kind of independence than simply study methods – it concerns every aspect of the participants' lives and perhaps because of this is an aspect of their growth and development which they valued the most.

On the surface it may seem self-evident that the students who come to Australia without their families and friends and thus are forced to live independently do, in fact, become more independent than if they had remained in China. For many of the participants their independence

is defined by their new ability to live by themselves, cook, clean, and manage their day to day lives in a foreign country. For others, being independent goes further, implying a greater control over the direction they want their lives to take in the future.

A common theme through the stories of independence is the relationship between the necessity to become more independent and the social isolation participants experience living in Australia. Not being in close proximity to family and friends means more than simply being alone and, perhaps, lonely. In China participants relied on family and friends for support, direction and to act as someone on their side. Without these people around there is no one to act in this capacity for them. Zheng Rangrang (#28 F) put the situation like this: '[In Australia] I realised that no one will voluntarily treat me good'. As a result Zheng Rangrang became a harder, stronger person, she went on:

So I just believe the only thing going to make me happy is I treat myself good [...] there is no one in here going to do anything to make me happy. So [...] why I am trying to make other people happy?, [...] why I am just don't make myself happy? [...]. If you treat me well I will treat you good and if you treat me like shit, I will treat you like shit. And I won't let the way you treat me to upset myself, I would just keep be happy, just don't talk to you anymore. Because here is [...] not like in China, [if] I can't get along with someone, my friends can always help me [...] they are definitely going to help me, and I got a lot of friends. [...] But here there is no people like that, no one care if you are upset, no one care about it, so if in China, I probably won't be like this.

Zheng Rangrang (#28 F)

Zheng Rangrang was one of the few participants who had been encouraged by her family to be independent while she lived in China. As we saw in 5.1.3 her family was different from others and did not place a strong emphasis on competing for grades and ranking in school. She was encouraged both directly and indirectly as a consequence of her parents' busy lifestyles to follow her own path in choosing her actions. As a student in Australia, therefore, the difference she feels in her level of independence was significant not so much because she has developed the ability to

decide and act for herself, but more because she has had to do so on her own, without the close support of her family and friends.

In China, family and friends were the first port of call when it came to dealing with whatever difficulties arose in everyday life. In Australia, however, faced with the myriad problems which arise living in and getting to know a new country, the students are no longer able to call on their old support base. If a problem arises it has to be dealt with by them, there and then. It is abundantly clear that no one else is going to help. An episode recounted by Huang Qi (#17 F) is a small but telling case in point: 'I lost my tax file number, so I didn't know what should I do, and where should I go. I think if I was in China I could ask anyone...'. She asked a passerby on the street, who could not help, then finally approached one of her lecturers who could. She said: 'I think after I solve the problem I feel, I will feel good. But if I couldn't solve the problem that's terrible'. Solving this kind of problem not only meant that she could find out her tax file number, it also proved to her that she *can* solve problems, by herself, in Australia, using English.

All of the students, apart from a small number who came to Australia in the company of friends or relatives from China, need to adapt to relative isolation. If they do make friends in Australia the friendships are seldom as strong as they had with their friends at school in China, and no matter how regularly they communicate with their parents there is no way that parents are able to fully understand the situation they find themselves in. Contrary to the experience of Zheng Rangrang (#28 F), however, most of the participants also need to adapt to the freedom that a reduced parental involvement in their lives entails. In China it had been rare that parents encouraged independence, but Zheng Rangrang had been given cash to go out and have fun and, on occasion, encouraged to participate in other activities instead of doing schoolwork. Most of the other participants had had very little discretion in how they used their time prior to coming to Australia. The imperative in China of improving grades to maximize the chances of gaining entry into a good university meant that both parents and teachers applied considerable pressure to most of the participants, as discussed in Chapter Five. With school hours in China extending from early in the morning until the evening, and parents and teachers insisting that more homework be completed upon their return home, some participants found that activities such as watching television, playing

sport and developing relationships with the opposite sex were severely curtailed. In Australia they not only have more free time to fill as the requirements of the courses are generally not as great as they had been in China, they also have no one telling them what they should be doing in their free time.

Another consequence of the study imperative in China was that the students were seldom, if ever, asked to do anything apart from study. Their mothers washed their clothes and cooked for them and all the students needed to do was work hard and achieve the grades desired by their families. This meant that activities such as cooking, washing clothes and cleaning were foreign for many of them before they left China. Once in Australia and without the support of their families, however, they found that they have no choice but to learn how to carry out these tasks. Although they may sometimes feel that they would prefer not to be doing the cleaning, they are almost universally impressed by their own ability to do it. Being able to look after themselves is a matter of some pride to the students. One of the reasons for this is, perhaps, the great contrast with the manner of their lives in China where carrying out such tasks had been neither attempted nor suggested. Moreover, the ability to do these things sets the participants apart from their counterparts who had stayed in China, even those who had needed to move to another Chinese city in order to go to university.

For participants such as Shi Youlin (#06 M) wanting to become more independent was a major reason for going overseas. Shi Youlin had never cooked, done housework or had a part-time job before he came to Australia – he depended on his parents for everything. After seeing one of his friends come back to China from studying overseas having grown more mature and more independent he decided that that was what he wanted as well – ‘that’s a big reason I want to go abroad’. And since being abroad he has found that he really has become more independent.

If the students had stayed in China they would not have needed to have been independent in these ways. In their social fields in China it was simply not necessary. In Australia, however, they have developed a broad, empowering independence marked by flexibility and a willingness to adapt to new situations. They can have set backs and difficulties, but they can now work through them

using their own initiative. These traits are some of the characteristics of those who are able to succeed in a post-modern globalised world marked by continual change, fluidity and uncertainty as discussed in Chapter Two (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 4). We can see from these stories, however, that it is not just the fact that the students are *in* a culture that exhibits post-modern values that the students' habitus goes on to develop such characteristics. The actions of the students themselves, in deciding to leave China, are proto-post-modern. They have chosen to be border-crossers, a post-modern activity, and they now need to further embody the behaviours required to survive and thrive in a post-modern, individualised community in which the flows of globalisation run deep.

6.3 Getting Wise

The students reported that being motivated, self-reliant and independent is more than simply behaving differently. In the process of learning how to manage their own lives they are also exposed to many experiences and ideas far removed from those they encountered in China. As a result most participants reported that they have become more broadminded, although exactly what they mean by this differs, as will be discussed below. Most, however, believe that their style of thinking has undergone some kind of change as a result of their time in Australia and that this change has put their personal development on a different trajectory than that of their friends' who stayed in China, or indeed their own if they had done the same.

6.3.1 Exposure to difference

The most basic examples of changes in the way the participants think were reported by Deng Tao (#22 M), Xia Zixi (#27 F) and Yan Juanjuan (#33 F) who indicated that they have to think differently and about a greater variety of things than they did in China in order to live independently in Australia. This meant having to think about more than studying, as Yan Juanjuan commented:

if I [am] in China my parents will take care of everything for me I don't need to think that much. I just go straight to do what they say. But in here I have to think all round. And think 'I can I do it?' or 'no I can't', I have to think by myself. [...] in China I just get money from parents and study, that's it.

Yan Juanjuan (#33 F)

Quite simply, learning to be independent is an intellectual exercise for these participants as well as a practical one. Being intellectually engaged with the choices and events they encounter in their lives also led to deeper thought about their lives in general. For Deng Tao (#22 M), for example, this means that he now thinks not only about what he is studying, but the purpose behind all the effort he is putting in to his study; what he wants to achieve and what kind of life he wants to have. Because of this he has started to be more interested in other aspects of life too, including learning about how Australians live and about politics, among others things.

One result of being exposed to different things and having to think about them is the gradual realisation of the possibility of competing ideas, and the acceptance of this. Shi Youlin (#06 M) recounted his revelation when he realised that other students in his tutorial groups were coming up with completely different answers to those he had considered:

I never saw this before, and then I think that's the [way] things should be, same problem they have a different solution to this, not like the old way [in China where] you have only one choice, you have only one solution to this problem. I think, you should try to another way, another way to think about this.

Shi Youlin (#06 M)

Once the possibility of competing ideas is acknowledged a number of the students reported that they are able to incorporate this possibility into their thinking processes. They realise that it is not enough only to have one side of the story, it is necessary to look at both sides of issues – not just the negative or just the positive, but both, in order to come to a conclusion. This was most often expressed, as Shi Youlin did above, in contrast to how they needed to think in China. Another participant, Lian Zhiren (#09 M), discussed how, through his experience of life in Australia, he

better understands rules and ethics and is starting to incorporate this understanding into his everyday life. Similarly, through her experience in the high school International Baccalaureate program, Gao Yuanfang (#11 F) has learnt that it is important to care for others in the community, and, despite admitting she was 'too lazy' to do anything practically in this regard, she is very clear about how important it is to her. Incorporating these different perspectives into their outlook means that they are able to develop what they consider to be a more balanced and nuanced view about the world and their place in it.

Living in Australia and directly experiencing and being exposed to different social practices also has more profound effects. As Zheng Rangrang (#28 F) commented, 'in Australia there is not only the book's influence, there are [also] things that happen'. She went on to tell a story of how she was waiting at a bus stop when she was approached by a man who, after talking to someone on his mobile phone, told her that the bus had broken down and would not be coming. Apparently his friend, who he was supposed to be meeting, was on the bus and had just told him. The man offered her a lift, but, sensing something was amiss, she refused. He insisted, she said no, and he finally left. Shortly after, the bus came. She said that this and other similar experiences in Australia had affected her, made her less trusting, but also more confident that she can handle herself in challenging situations. When Zheng Rangrang was in China she only had a simplistic and positive view of the West, but after experiencing it for herself her understanding and thinking about the West is more complicated and mature.

6.3.2 Accepting difference

The students experience new things in Australia and as a consequence develop what they consider to be better and more mature understandings about many aspects of their lives and the world. This exposure led to some becoming more accepting of other cultures, such as Peng Deming (#23 M) who said:

[now] I accept other people's culture, before I only accepted my own and the Western. Now I think there is Muslim, Greek, Italian, there is South African, African, the South American. So people are all different, you have to accept other cultures and make other people understand you more...

Peng Deming (#23 M)

Others have become more accepting of diverse cultural practices which they had had little exposure to before leaving China. A number of participants said that they have developed more liberal views about issues such as homosexuality and sex before marriage as a result of their experiences in Australia. Wu Meiqi (#02 F), for example, said:

in China, you know a gay or lesbian is quite, people can't accept that, and maybe they look down [on] the people that have this, but here, I think everyone is [...] same and it just depend on the life they choose, you can't judge, you should respect. This I am learning here, but [...] I believe I can't learn [...] in China, because people have that attitude...

Wu Meiqi (#02 F)

She went on to tell how a friend she had known in China for six years had only dared tell her he was gay after she had lived in Australia:

But after I came here, half a years later, and he send me a email [...] and he say maybe you can understand me now. Yeah, actually when I saw the email I think, oh yeah, its fine, I can keep [in] touch with him [...] we still are best friends, so its good, there's nothing too bad.

Wu Meiqi (#02 F)

Wu Meiqi said that her friend had not told her or their other friends about his sexuality while she was in China. Interestingly here, her friend expected her to become more understanding after she had had some experience outside of China, and he was right. Participants described their experiences in Australia as giving them more exposure to different things which allow them to have more knowledge and understanding on which to base their thinking. In this process they feel they

became more broadminded and more accepting and tolerant of difference, even of situations they did not necessarily agree with.

6.3.3 Reassessing China

One consequence of becoming more broadminded is that some students started to reassess their former understandings of China. Admittedly, some, such as Peng Deming (#23 M) and Qin Xiaoli (#26 F), had already begun to challenge what they were learning before they left China and coming to Australia provided them with an opportunity to continue this process. Most, however, were less prepared. Things as simple as the behaviour of people on the streets were mentioned in this regard. The Australian habit of smiling at or saying hello to strangers as they passed on the streets, for example, was compared positively with the Chinese custom of avoiding any kind of recognition at all. Other examples included frustration at people in China not obeying pedestrian signals when crossing the road (Wei Li (#29 M)) or dropping rubbish on the ground (Peng Deming (#23 M)).

In a small number of cases this questioning of China also extends to political systems. Again, this is strongest among those who already started to question such issues in China. Liu Ruolan (#13 F), for example had not thought much about politics before, but it is the area in which she feels her thinking has changed the most. By being exposed to different ideas and, most importantly in her case, more information, she believes she is able to be more critical about the Chinese government. One example she mentioned concerned voting. She explained how her experience of voting in China had been limited to following the instructions of her lecturers and writing down the name of a person she did not know on the ballot paper. She contrasted this to the example of her Australian landlord who, she said, had made the journey back to Australia from his job in Germany in order to vote. Liu Ruolan was quite impressed by this. She also talks to her friends in Australia about politics – ‘I have talked to friends from different countries and they talk about their government policy [...], and I can have something to compare with my own country’ – and is able to read a more diverse range of news reports about China than she had been able to before coming to

Australia. She has now come to the conclusion that 'if China can have two parties, that will be better'.

Another student, Chao Xiaobo (#19 M), said that one of the reasons he had wanted to leave China was to escape the brainwashing he felt he had undergone throughout his life. He had questioned the state of politics when he was in China, but in contrast to Liu Ruolan (#13 F) finds that living in Australia and being exposed to more information and opinions has left him more in support of the status quo than he had been previously:

Firstly when I come to here, I am very exciting because I never see this kind of news about how bad the Chinese government, the Communist Party, I am very exciting, but as time and time when I see and see more and more of this kind of news I suspect, is that really true? Well, eventually I found no, it's not really true.

So when I come to here the big change is my attitude towards the Communist party. When I was in China I always criticised the Communist Party, how bad they are, you know, they controlled the whole country they controlled people thinking, you know lots of different, lots of things controlled by the Communist Party, but when I really go back, I think China should have the Communist Party, China shouldn't completely adopt the Western domestic democracy policy.

Chao Xiaobo (#19 M)

Although the result seems to be different from Liu Ruolan, the process through which he came to this conclusion is, in fact, very similar. Chao Xiaobo has talked to Korean and Japanese people about their attitudes towards China and their shared histories, he has read a lot of news reports which were not accessible from China, and he, like Liu Ruolan has come to his own conclusions. From his experiences and exposure in Australia his thinking about these things has changed: 'So you say what's different? It's my thinking about the political aspect, history aspect'.

Thinking differently about politics went further for Xia Zixi (#27 F), who described how when she was in China she had studied Japanese for 10 years and knew a lot more about history than her friends. She mentioned the example of the Japanese Prime Minister visiting the Yasukuni Shrine,

a controversial issue for Chinese people due to the enshrinement of Japanese war criminals there. Xia Zixi said that as a Chinese person she could not accept the visit, but now, after living in Australia, she has become 'much more calm about these problems [...] because now I do not, for the politics problems, I do not think as I'm a Chinese. Now I am always thinking as I'm a human'.

Where participants reported that their 'way of thinking' had changed, it followed this pattern, to a greater or lesser extent: living in Australia has provided them with the requisite information necessary to form different views and they have also developed the ability to critically use this information to come to their own, often different, opinions. Being more broadminded as many of the participants have become is something they welcome and enjoy. For some it is worthwhile on a purely personal level, and for others it is something that they think will be beneficial for their careers. Lian Zhiren (#09 M) commented:

Back in China I just considering study. But now I considering current affairs and international affairs and stuff like that and other really interesting things.

I think it's really important, like opened my mind about the world and I think it's really good for my future like, I'm more clear what I want to do and what I can do in the future. Stuff like that. Yeah I think like, as well as like in order to survive in the future competitions you need to have a good knowledge base and the broader mind is really good things to have, not only in communications, you can communicate with different levels [...], as well as basically make your life better because you can think things that other people can't think because you have that certain knowledge, extra knowledge, yeah. I think it's really important to have a broader mind... more knowledge...

Again, was that something you considered before you came to Australia?

That's not something I... that's something I realised in recent years.

Lian Zhiren (#09 M)

And Peng Deming (#23 M), feels that as a Chinese person, being able to be more broadminded and open to other cultures is in the interests of China more broadly, and necessary due to the isolation of China over the centuries.

These traits also exemplify the values of post-modernity necessary for life in a developed, globalised, post-modern world. To illustrate this, the quote from Ronald Inglehart in Chapter Two is repeated here:

Postmodern values emphasize self-expression instead of deference to authority and are tolerant of other groups and even regard exotic things and cultural diversity as stimulating and interesting, not threatening.

(Inglehart 2000, 223)

The participants are, indeed, learning to question authority, tolerate other groups and enjoy cultural diversity and diversity of opinion. It is the encounter between the students' own habitus developed in the course of their upbringing and the fields they encounter in Australia that results in them developing these values. Again, it is their practical experience of the large differences between the culture of China and Australia that acts as a catalyst for the development of these views and values, in addition to the fact that the Australian culture they are experiencing also broadly reflects these values.

6.4 Growing and changing

Becoming more independent and learning how to think differently and more broadly has consequences beyond what the students can do and think. Developing these behaviours and values challenges and changes their personalities and identities. In some cases this simply meant maturing, becoming more confident and outgoing than they had been in China, for others, however, they believed they had become entirely different individuals. How their personalities develop is intricately related to the flows of global culture and the development and reinforcement of habitus in the context of globalisation, as will be discussed below.

6.4.1 Becoming adults

The most significant and consistent change participants described in themselves is that they have grown up and become more mature. As most of them see being mature as synonymous with becoming more independent and being able to think for themselves, this is unsurprising. Being alone in a foreign country and having to rely on and look after themselves as adults do, they feel that they have, in fact, become adults.

The nature of the new maturity they see in themselves is, however, both different from what they may have envisioned, and different from how they believed they would have matured had they stayed in China. Moreover, participants described themselves as maturing faster than they would have in China. Again, the reasons for this follow on from the discussion above. In China they saw their dependence on their parents lasting much longer, often well into their post-school life, and their chances of having the diverse experiences that they had had in Australia were much slimmer. This growing maturity was reflected in Chen Xia (#15 F)'s comment that, despite only having been in Australia for a year, in China she 'behaved more like a little girl but in here [Australia][...] is more [like a] lady'.

Along with becoming more mature, the students described themselves as becoming more confident as a result of their experiences in Australia. As mentioned previously this confidence is developed out of their realisation that they can manage themselves and solve the problems they face in their studies and lives. For students such as Dai Dai (#25 F) this confidence was expressed in her newly found ability to ask questions in her tutorial class. On the other end of the scale, Xia Zixi (#27 F)'s new confidence has led her to become a 'completely different person'. Participants are more confident communicating with strangers and other people in general, and 'foreigners' in particular (Lian Zhiren (#09 M) and Huang Qi (#17 F)), they are more confident that they can take control of their lives (Wei Li (#29 M)), and if things do not work out, they are more confident that they can keep trying and eventually succeed (Sun Yan (#21 F)).

The most common expression of new found confidence, however, is that they have become more outgoing. Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F) and Lian Zhiren (#09 M), for example, said that they had been shy in China and only became outgoing once they were in Australia. For them and for many others, becoming more 'active' (Xia Zixi (#27 F), Cheng Wanling (#39 F)) and outgoing represents a major shift in their personalities. Being outgoing means more than simply having the confidence to do what they are required by circumstance to do, it means becoming more adventurous and choosing to do things that they do not need to. One example of this is the students' participation in this study. For some, even volunteering to sit down and discuss their lives, mainly in English, with a 'foreign' researcher is something they would not have considered doing before.

Although becoming more confident and outgoing are typical changes, a small number of participants painted different pictures. Gao Yuanfang (#11 F) said she has become a more caring person, and Peng Deming (#23 M) said he has become more trusting, more passionate about what he is doing, less depressed and a very different person to who he was when he arrived in Australia four years previously. In contrast Zheng Rangrang (#28 F), who by her own admission had been through some trying experiences in Australia, said she has become lazier and angrier, less willing to sacrifice herself for study or for other people, and less willing to put up with people and things she does not like. She has become more self-assertive in addition to being more self-reliant. These changes are directly shaped by her experiences, as she commented:

...the experience that you have, it doesn't matter if it's good experience or bad experience, but you have this experience, but, I mean, it's better than [if] you never have those good or bad things. [...] It make me change. [...] I won't be the person I am now if I didn't experience those things.

Zheng Rangrang (#28 F)

All of these experiences and changes contribute to their perception that they have rapidly grown up since they arrived in Australia. For some this process of growing up also includes learning to look at the world and their place in it in a more realistic and 'sophisticated' (Sun Yan (#21 F)) way. Drawing on both their new experiences as well as their ability to think in different ways they believe that when in China they had been relatively naive or had not fully grasped the possibilities of life.

Living in Australia, however, has taught them that life is not as easy as they thought. This sentiment was expressed by Duan Jialun (#36 M):

You know, before I come here I just think when I finish my degree I can do this, I can do that. I can do everything. But after three years, no, I realised [...] life is tough. I have to look after myself carefully, have to think about everything, think about much more things than before. You know, I have to think about how to find a good job, what sort of job is suit me, I have to ... this is the way of thinking.

Duan Jialun (#36 M)

6.4.2 The importance of the Australian environment on participants' development

Although living in Australia led most participants to become more confident, mature and outgoing, the development of these aspects of their personalities, in relation to how they described their personalities in China, varied. As mentioned above, the typical change reported was from being relatively shy to being more outgoing and confident, and from being relatively naive and dependent to being more mature and independent. A small number of cases, however, provide some additional insight into this process.

6.4.2.1 The release of true personality

For Lai Junbao (#38 M), being overseas has allowed him the opportunity to express what he considered his true personality – in China he believed that if he acted as his true self he would not be accepted, but as going overseas carries with it the expectation of change his family would now be able to accept the different sides of his personality that they would not have been willing to before. The issue of his personal change occupies him to such an extent that the day before the interview he even dreamed of how his family would or would not accept who he was becoming, he commented:

[In the dream] I saw my cousin again and [...] in the dream she is surprised at how much I changed and she is see me a lot different as before. People don't really know [...] so even [if you are] very

close, she always try to understand me, but she doesn't know that, the person, today, like, no, that's really me. [...] Before, [when] I was in China, I was holding myself back and I couldn't come out the whole personality, just for some reason and I told her I am changing more and more and you will be really surprised and that's really me, what I'm doing now. I'm not being 100% myself because I have still got this whole time with the family ...

Lai Junbao (#38 M)

Lai Junbao hopes that the very fact of being overseas will give his family the chance to accept what he had already wanted to be in China, but could not. In Australia he has changed further still, but simply having the opportunity to be accepted for who he was means a lot to him.

Chao Xiaobo (#19 M) also felt that it is the Australian environment which allows his true personality to be expressed, although in a different way. The contrast he made was not because of the restrictions of his family, as in Lai Junbao (#38 M)'s case, but with the restrictions of Chinese society more generally.

I think I have this potential to be confident, but in China I think maybe there is something was pressed me, you know, don't allow me to express that much. Chinese culture is, well, I don't know, many Chinese students shy. [...] it doesn't mean they don't have an idea, they don't want to express their idea firstly, but I think that's my thinking, I shouldn't say first, I shouldn't say first, if somebody else should say first, if you say wrong, you lose your face. [...] But in Australia never mind, whatever, if you say wrong, nothing happens. You know, because in here we adopt the Western way.

Chao Xiaobo (#19 M)

A similar story was told by Cheng Wanling (#39 F) who described how in Chinese culture girls were not expected to be so 'strong'. She said that she did not, in fact, want to be all that strong, and that she was quite comfortable with this, but that deep inside her she did have an 'adventurous part'. Living in Australia allows this 'adventurous part' to come out, it allows her to enjoy travel and be more outgoing. It has also resulted in her becoming stronger and more mature than she otherwise would have. Moreover, like many of the other participants, the maturity she feels was a 'different

[...] kind of mature here, because if I just stay in China, not go outside, maybe I will live a more stable life and just married, children'. Her life would have been different, perhaps calmer, but she prefers the path she has taken.

6.4.2.2 Being Western before coming to Australia

That Lai Junbao (#38 M), Chao Xiaobo (#19 M) and Cheng Wanling (#39 F) can realise these aspects of their personalities by living in Australia seems to have been a somewhat unexpected outcome of their overseas sojourn. As discussed in Chapter Five others explicitly anticipated that the Australian environment would suit their personalities and allow them to fulfil their potential in ways that could not have been possible in China. When they were in China they were already more 'Western', and somehow different to others. As a result, once they come to Australia they are able to fit in relatively easily. Although they also reported they have changed and grown since living in Australia, a significant and unique part of their story is they have not changed so much as a result of the different environment, they changed environment as a result of their difference. These participants were those whose decisions to go overseas were more likely to be based on the failure of China to provide for them, rather than their own academic failure, as also discussed in the previous chapter.

Participants such as Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F) and Peng Deming (#23 M) directly credit their families with bringing them up in a way which made them different from their classmates in China and more suitable to live in Western society. Ding Xiaoyu was the participant who most strongly emphasised this point, she said:

Australian, Western societies suits me, rather than like I'm trying to adapt to Western society. It suits me in the first place, because I was brought up in a really positive environment and I always had those really positive [...] perceptions of life [...] you work hard and you reap your achievements and you know you are nice to people and people are nice to you, and all those little simple things that reflects that you are, you have a lot of positive thoughts. And they just get reconfirmed really strongly here in Australia and the Western society because that's how it works.

Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F)

For her, adapting to Australian society is not a problem because she, through her upbringing in China, had already done so before she arrived. In the passage above, she says that she is better suited to Western society as it is a 'positive environment' where people are nice to each other and hard work is rewarded. Previously in the interview she had mentioned that her parents had allowed her 'the freedom to think', and this meant that she liked the West where 'self-independence' was valued and 'they have equity and human rights [...] just the whole respect and equity and freedom thing in the culture and in the society'. Although she is only nearing the end of her first year at University (after completing high school in Adelaide) at the time of the interview, Ding Xiaoyu is able to thoroughly involve herself in the broader life of the University, participating in many social and political activities. Similarly, and in contrast to most study participants, Peng Deming (#23 M) also finds it very easy to fit in to Australian life, making a lot of friends and having a very active social life with locals. When asked why he thought he can manage this when most other Chinese international students cannot, he commented:

I was different from [other] Chinese because I was always kind of close to Western culture, close to Western people [...] even when I was in China. That's why, I think it's just me. I don't really put much effort into making friends, it's just naturally happens [...] I fit better here.

Peng Deming (#23 M)

Even though he felt that he was already suited to Australian society before he came, he said that living in Australia has made his Western orientation even stronger.

Zheng Rangrang (#28 F) was another example of somebody who felt a little 'Western' even before going overseas. She also described her family as being very different from most others in China, and her parents placed a very high value on her personal freedom and choice. Like Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F) and Peng Deming (#23 M) she too fits in to Australian life very well, particularly so during her time in high school. The challenges she has faced in Australia, however, have caused her to question her initial judgement: 'At first I think Australia is very suit me and very good place to live, but now I don't think so'. She has realised that in Australia people do things 'very very slow' and

were not 'really responsible' (Zheng Rangrang (#28 F)). The isolation she feels in Australia also affects her, and although she may be suited to Australia in certain ways, part of her still remains in China:

Here is more freedom and, [if] I can't think about anything else that's good. Okay, it's, it's just that I don't have, I don't have my history here, that's the problem. The history is all in China. I come here, I just put my history behind me, totally no, yes, that's the part that I don't like.

Zheng Rangrang (#28 F)

This, she did not expect.

While these participants expressed their pre-existing inclination towards Western culture on a personality-wide scale, others did so in more low-key terms. Qin Xiaoli (#26 F), for example, described how even when she was in China she was frustrated by not being able to question the things she was being told in school, and how she was satisfied when she discovered that her expectation that studying in Australia allows her to do so was accurate. Other participants described how they were attracted to other aspects of Western culture, in the case of Duan Jialun (#36 M) to motorbikes and rock and roll, or in other cases to the English language more generally.

Once in Australia all of these participants, with the possible exception of Zheng Rangrang (#28 F), have been able to build on and explore these 'Western' aspects of their personalities which they developed growing up in China. They believe that because of who they were and how they thought before they came they are able to fit in to Australian society and this, in turn, contributes to how they have developed into the more mature and confident individuals they see themselves as.

It was not just those who saw themselves in China as having a leaning towards, or a particular interest in, Western society who feel they are able to 'fit in' to Australian society, however. Others also believe they naturally fit in to or are suited to Australian society or that Australian society suits them. Part of this sentiment arises from the changed study environment encountered in Australia. As discussed previously, many of the participants faced significant difficulties coping in the highly

competitive education system in China, while in Australia the academic pressure is reduced as University entry became an achievable goal. It is perhaps little wonder that Australia suits. For Wei Li (#29 M), among others, it was the style of teaching encountered in Australia that he feels suits him. He does not like his schooling to consist entirely of studying for and sitting exams, but instead prefers the continuous style of assessment, including tasks such as oral presentations and assignments, which he found in Australia.

Similarly, it is also unsurprising that the participants find they are easily able to fit in to the freedom afforded to them by the opportunity to move beyond the direct control and influence of their parents, even if this is difficult and isolating at times. Asked why she prefers Australian life, for example, Yan Juanjuan (#33 F) responded:

Because I got a lot of free time. And quite freedom and leisure [...] because in China we have a lot of work to do and you never know when you going to finish [...]. Young people love freedom.

Yan Juanjuan (#33 F)

6.4.2.3 Absorbing Australia

Over time, a deeper kind of 'fitting in' or adapting to Australian life was reported by some participants. This goes beyond practical aspects of Australian life and concerns their views about their own lives and ambitions. The changes in the participants' views in these areas are seen as both an outcome of their particular experiences in Australia, as well as a characteristic of Australian people and society more generally. These sentiments were not expressed by all participants, but those who did so considered them to be very important. This change in view about these things in some cases builds on the move away from a 'naïve' view of the world towards a more mature and realistic view. The nature and result of this change is very closely linked to the environment in which it occurred.

Jia Huilan (#30 F) and Kong Liling (#37 F) are examples of this kind of change. Jia Huilan had previously wanted to go back to China and make a difference, in particular with the health system there. After living in Australia, however, she realises this dream would be very hard, she said:

I just changed my, my goal of life, you know. I mean, before, I want to go back to China, I want to do something. Now I just want to make life easy [...] just, relax, easy and happy.

Jia Huilan (#30 F)

When asked from where she derives most happiness she is clear that it is no longer from achieving great things as she had believed before, but rather from having a relaxed and enjoyable life, she went on:

[I want to] just enjoy life more. [I'm] more happy just to spend my afternoon just sitting near the river and feed the birds. [...] and I think oh, let others do that thing.

Jia Huilan (#30 F)

Kong Liling (#37 F) had a similar experience. She believes that if she had stayed in China she was smart enough to compete with everyone else, and that she would likely have been very ambitious. In Australia, though, she changed, she said:

I don't have to have money. I don't have to have status. As long as I have a happy life, that's enough. (*trans.*)

Kong Liling (#37 F)

For Kong Liling living in a less competitive environment where people were more equal means that she too has become less competitive. She feels she can now be satisfied with having a good family life and being happy, where before she could only have been satisfied with money.

These participants and others changed in the sense that they have come to believe it is possible to have a satisfying life while having time to relax and enjoy themselves, and this is directly linked to the social and economic environment encountered in Australia, as Zou Zhijian (#31 M) commented:

For Chinese people the things they think about it is to save money for their child, they working very hard and very save you know, but in Australia I think it's different, they make money for themselves but they give enough support for their child, the save money is not their only purpose.

Zou Zhijian (#31 M)

Other ways participants' views about their lives and ambitions have changed during their time in Australia include Chao Xiaobo (#19 M)'s desire to not be as self-sacrificing for the sake of his children as his parents were, a growing belief in the necessity to help others (Li Donglong (#03 M)) and a greater realisation about the need to work smarter and harder, as Australians do, rather than relying on personal relationships (Lu Yang (#24 M)). The common theme here is that the students realise that satisfaction and happiness do not necessarily lie in material success, but rather in the ability to relax and enjoy life, providing that a reasonable standard of living can be attained. Again, these views are very strongly held, have come to form part of their core values, and are directly related to their experiences and perceptions of Australian life.

6.5 Being satisfied and content

This chapter has examined how in the process of coming to terms with life, school and university in Australia the participants in this study grew and changed. They believe they have become more independent and in control of their lives, they are able to think differently and more broadly about themselves and the world, and they have grown more mature, confident and outgoing. What they describe is a transformation of their habitus, their dispositions and how they view the world. The change in habitus is in many respects a direct outcome of living in and experiencing Australian culture and is as such reflective of Australian culture.

Their journey of growth mirrors their physical journal. Just as they have moved from China to Australia, so has their habitus transformed from embodying modern, achievement oriented values typical in developing countries such as China, to the individualist, self-defining, quality of life oriented values of post-modernity. They place a high value on quality of life and believing they

have achieved it or will achieve it, they are content. They are content with being in Australia, they are happy with the fact that they are able to adapt to the challenges of life in Australia, and they are happy with the people they feel they have become while living in Australia. Even those who faced more significant hurdles as a result of their decision to study overseas are satisfied with the point they have reached in their lives as a result. None of the participants look back with regret at the decision to leave China.

Even if the lives participants see for themselves in the future are different from what they may have previously envisioned (if they had thought about it) they prefer what they see and they believe the opportunities available to them are better than the opportunities if they had stayed in China. This sentiment was neatly encapsulated by Gao Yuanfang (#11 F):

I just feel more happy being here and actually, you know, more happier and then find my options and then found my interest in here, I found myself in here, I think.

Gao Yuanfang (#11 F)

The stories, however, indicate that the transformation is not a simple replacement of one set of values and dispositions with another. There is a clear relationship between the experience of Western culture in China and the attitude towards Western culture in Australia. Indeed, part of the reason the participants reported being content with their lives is associated with their personal relationship with Western or Australian culture, whether they believe they are naturally suited to it, have come to feel comfortable with it, or just enjoy being able to have a better understanding of it.

Here we can see that the habitus of the students in China had in some cases already come to exhibit characteristics which they identified as being somewhat Western, or at least there was an intrinsic curiosity about or disposition towards the West. Just as the small number of families discussed in Chapter Five who consciously sought embodied cultural capital reflective of their own global orientation were influenced by globalisation and the flows of global culture, so were most of the other participants. Although the impact their encounter with global culture may have been less conspicuous, or even subconscious, the affinity felt with life in Australia, the deep seated attraction

to it, and the level of contentment realised after living in Australia reveals that the other students' habitus were also influenced by the mass-mediated global culture that permeates the world in an age of increasing globalisation. For these students the development of habitus is therefore not simply a factor of the experience in a physically located field, but is also open to influence from afar.

The consequence of their experiences in Australia, however, is that their habitus has changed in a way so as to embody the post-modern values and attributes of the Western culture in which they have chosen to pursue their education.

7 Finding distinction: Life beyond an overseas education

While it is clear that the students have changed to varying degrees and that their habitus has developed to reflect the Western environment in which they are living, it is not a given that such change will be beneficial to them in the longer term. This is particularly the case if they return to a social context where prevailing values are different to those developed and embodied in Australia. This chapter therefore examines how the participants expect their lives will unfold in order to make an assessment of the 'value' of the capital they have developed while overseas, whether it was expected or not. I argue that such capital has real value in China, in Australia and transnationally.

Being overseas enables students to imagine different kinds of futures from those they would have imagined had they remained in China. They feel that they are no longer tied to living out their lives within the confines of a particular city, country, or network of family connections. New choices about where to live and what to do have opened up and are seen as realistic alternatives.

Moreover, these alternatives are realizable not only because of the academic qualifications, the institutionalised cultural capital, and the practical skills, objectified cultural capital, learnt abroad, but also because of the changes they have experienced within themselves and the cultural understandings they have developed. How the students' habitus has changed while studying overseas gives them embodied cultural capital which they believe is valuable, even if it does make life more challenging at times.

The changed futures that the participants foresee go further than career options. As discussed in Chapter Six, the study participants have developed a certain contentedness in their lives, and this carries through to how they would like to live their lives in the future. Few aim very high and most will be happy to achieve what their parents have in their lives – a comfortable lifestyle with enough money to cover both necessary and modest discretionary spending. Such a comfortable lifestyle, however, is generally not considered to have been possible without the improved or different career prospects arising from their overseas study experiences.

This chapter begins with an exploration of how the participants foresee their lives unfolding in the future in terms of where they will live, their employment options and the lifestyles they expect. It then turns to an analysis of how their Australian education and the transformations they have experienced provide them with the capital so they can achieve the visions they have for themselves.

7.1 Visions of the future: More opportunities for mobility and career

If I didn't go to the abroad, maybe I would never have lots of choice about career.

Shi Youlin (#06 M)

In terms of career, both the nature of what the participants believe they will be doing and how they are to achieve it is different than if they had stayed in China. In Chapter Five it was noted that many of the students and their families viewed studying in Australia as a way to avoid certain kinds of failure in China, and by the time of the interviews it is clear that all feel that this failure has been avoided. The failure dreaded in China consisted of being locked into a path characterized by unsatisfactory outcomes, a poor quality university leading on to few career choices, for example. In stark contrast to this view, however, is a new vision of the future characterized by more choice both in terms of where their career will unfold and what it will be. This section begins by addressing how the students view the issue of permanent residence (PR) and how PR relates to migration, goes on to explore how their career options have widened, and concludes with a discussion of how their overall levels of achievement in life will have improved as a result of studying in Australia.

Although many of the students could not describe in detail how they expect their future careers and lives to unfold, they are getting closer to the point where the prospect of a job is starting to become a reality. Most therefore have some idea about the kinds of jobs they prefer or dream of, and generally they do not doubt their ability to turn their plans into reality. They were able to outline the differences between what they hope for themselves and what they would have expected had they

not studied in Australia and they were able to articulate the reasons they believe their overseas sojourn makes a difference.

7.1.1 The possibility of permanent residence

Studying in Australia immediately means that there is one more major choice available, that of staying and taking up a career in Australia. The participants have proven themselves to be competent students (and avoided the prospect of being deported for failing their studies), and as a result the options for where they can live their lives has doubled, from 'China' to 'China and/or Australia', or even tripled to 'China and/or Australia and/or Somewhere Else'. Even if they do not have a strong preference for where they live, they feel that they now have the option of staying in Australia open to them.

7.1.1.1 Field of study and applying for permanent residence

Of course, being able to stay in Australia depends on how well participants are able to meet the criteria for immigration, and most believe the course they choose has a significant bearing on this. Bureaucratically speaking they are right, as completing a course in a field identified by the Australian Government as having labour shortages gives significantly more 'points' when it comes to applying for immigration, in many cases being the difference between qualifying and being rejected. And in this sense many of the students in the study, and anecdotally many Chinese international students more generally, recognise that their options of study (and hence immediate career) have been significantly narrowed by their decision to study in fields sought by the Australian Government. For example Huang Qi (#17 F) was pressured to study accounting, which carries high points for immigration, but it is not what she wanted to do:

To tell the truth, I don't want to be an accountant. Because I don't like accounting. My parents asked me to choose accounting, I just want to do some international business. At first I really wanted to choose international business and commerce, but they didn't allow ...

Huang Qi (#17 F)

Even though she does not like accounting, she expects to finish the course and go on to apply for permanent residency (PR) according to her parents' wishes, despite not having a strong preference for where she lives in the future. In this kind of case the choice of course was narrow and studying in Australia serves to reduce options rather than empowering participants to follow their own preferences. Nevertheless, participants such as Huang Qi (#17 F) do not see their careers solely in terms of their specialization at University. Huang Qi still harbours a desire to work in international business, as her father does, and hopes to study it in the future after her accounting course is completed. Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F) also studies accounting in order to qualify for PR, and she similarly plans to move on to what she is really interested in, law:

... I am going to graduate from my accounting degree at the end of next year and hopefully I will be able to apply for [...] permanent residence here in Australia, which I'm pretty sure I will, because [...] just to be honest, that's the only reason that I did accounting, because I need to apply for the PR...

Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F)

It should not be assumed, however, that all participants studying accounting make the choice for pragmatic reasons or are pressured into it. Yan Juanjuan (#33 F), for example, had been on track for a place at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music majoring in Piano ('It's so boring', she said), but in preference willingly came to Australia to study accounting.

For Huang Qi (#17 F), Ding Xiaoyu (#08 F) and others like them, having to choose a course they may not otherwise have chosen clearly does not represent the end of the line in terms of their future career choices. They are aware that what they study shapes what their opportunities will be in the future, but they still believe they will eventually be able to move into the areas they prefer. The discomfort of doing something necessary but not enjoyable in the short term did not herald the end of hope for the future for Zou Zhijian (#31 M) either, who already has a job driving a taxi and intends to keep it until he can find something better. His long term goal is to work in media, but even the low level, difficulty and distance that taxi driving is from his dream job is not seen as an impediment to his future success. It is simply something that has to be borne, an uncomfortable necessity.

In contrast to those who choose courses to increase their chances of getting PR, Zou Zhijian (#31 M) did not see the need to sacrifice his academic interests for the sake of migration. He chose to study media studies despite believing there will be limited job prospects for him in Australia – he also feels that his Chinese background and language skills will be a disadvantage in such a language and culture driven industry. Nevertheless by persevering through the difficulties he is confident that he can eventually find a place, and a satisfying career, for himself in Australia. Chao Xiaobo (#19 M), who is studying economics and finance, agreed that PR is not a good enough reason for him to have chosen a course he does not like, he said:

Many Chinese student, or many international student they are studying accountancy right now and one of the major reason, immigration reason. But I disagree with that, because they give up their dream just for a short sight, just for a short sight target. You know, if you really want to stay here there are lots of different approach, I don't think I will sacrifice my interests right now to meet these criteria. And accounting is one of the boring subject for me and I never think I will be an accountant to meet Australian standards to be a permanent resident, no. I can give up the permanent resident and I don't want to give up my dream.

Chao Xiaobo (#19 M)

Staying in Australia is a theoretical option for all international students, even if it is not something that necessarily seems attractive. Even students such as Zou Zhijian and Chao Xiaobo, mentioned above, who did not take courses providing the most benefit for immigration purposes feel they will eventually be able to stay if they want to (which they do). We can see in these examples how gaining the possibility of PR is an important part of the strategy of studying overseas, but not in all cases the primary concern.

7.1.1.2 Permanent residence and permanent migration

As discussed in Chapter Four, 34 out of the 39 participants (87%) said they will or might apply for permanent residency, even if they do not intend to stay in Australia in the medium or long term. The six who said they definitely will not apply for permanent residency had on average arrived in

Australia later in their educational careers and had spent less time in the country. These statistics raise the possibility that the longer Chinese students stay in Australia the more likely they will consider staying even longer. Peng Deming (#23 M) provided an explanation for this. He said:

[if] any Chinese spend more than three years in a Western country, doesn't matter America, [...] UK, or Australia, they can't stand it [living in China]. More than three years, after three years [abroad], no. They have to spend half a year to get used to the life [in China].

Peng Deming (#23 M)

This indicates that the way the students change and grow to embody elements of the culture they live in continues over time. Their habitus increasingly reflects the Australian fields in which they are positioning themselves to the point, perhaps, that they become ever less suitable for life in China.

The thinking surrounding whether or not to apply for permanent residency, however, is not always directly linked to a desire to permanently stay in Australia or permanently return to China. It seems to be more closely related to the desire to keep options open, to confirm the availability of the new choices that the students believe they have. For example, Duan Jialun (#36 M), who drives a taxi like Zou Zhijian (#31 M), is not concerned about exactly where he will live in the near future, but having the option of living in either China or Australia is clearly attractive:

Yeah, it's just another choice. You know [...] like after I got [get] my PR here I can stay here permanently, and I will go back to China, if I looking for a job, I got a job, if I feel good I will stay there for a while and if I feel frustrated I will come back. You know, do some other stuff.

Duan Jialun (#36 M)

Parents in particular encourage their children to apply for PR, even if the students themselves do not feel a strong desire to do so. In some cases PR is seen as part of the return on the investment in sending them overseas to study. Qin Xiaoli (#26 F) represents the strongest instance of this

situation. She never imagined that she would want to stay in Australia, but her parents, and in particular her mother, preferred that she did. Qin Xiaoli said her mother liked to travel and that she would have liked to stay with Qin Xiaoli overseas after she had permanent residency. She said:

but now I just think because my parents have been spend huge number, a huge money here, it's because my family is not very rich family, just have some, my parents had worked many years, so they have saving lots of money so I can come to here, they put too many money here, so if I not get a permanent resident, it's like, it's, I can't give the answer. I mean, yeah, so I must ...

Qin Xiaoli (#26 F)

The obligation Qin Xiaoli feels to her parents for their sacrifice for her is overwhelming, and this obligation has perhaps been heightened by the recent death of her mother. She explained:

But I still want to get the PR, because it's really spends too much money. ...because that money is they had to work like, their whole life and just spend that, so I must do that, but [it is] not [what] I really want.

Qin Xiaoli (#26 F)

Most of the students do not have very strong feelings about where they will live in the future. If they want to stay in Australia for a while, and then if they can get permanent residency, and then if they can find a job, then that will be fine. Otherwise, going back will also be acceptable. Moreover, those who have a strong preference for where they want to live are generally quite confident that they will be able to fulfil their wishes. Consequently, the location they will be living within the following few years, although uncertain, is not an issue that caused a lot of concern.

One unique case, however, sheds some light on the social pressures that might come to bear on decisions about where to live (if the participant is in a position to make a decision about such matters). For Lai Junbao (#38 M), returning to China would indicate that he had not been successful in Australia, and that the investment, and his and his family's sacrifice, had been wasted. Lai Junbao's concern is unusual, while Duan Jialun (#36 M)'s indifference (above) is much

more common. So, although almost all of the students said they will or might apply for PR, only ten are confident that they will stay permanently in Australia. Twice this number believes they will eventually return to China to live, and the rest are not sure. Here we can perhaps see them obliging their parents in the short term by gaining PR and staying in Australia, but taking an objective view about where they can have the most satisfying careers and lives in the longer term.

7.1.1.3 Permanent residency for convenience

Having PR is relevant not only for questions of where to live, work and carry out the wishes of parents, but also in terms of convenience. Being the first step toward gaining Australian citizenship, having Australian PR means that students will be closer to getting an Australian passport and the benefits that entails in terms of travel²⁵ (e.g. Wu Meiqi (#02 F), Chao Xiaobo (#19 M) & Jia Huilan (#30 F)), the possibility of receiving Australian social security (e.g. Liu Ruolan (#13 F)) and, even without Australian citizenship, the general prospect of a relatively peaceful life in Australia. Applying for PR is also closely associated with a desire to stay in Australia in the short term after graduation. In fact, at the time of the interviews it was necessary to have PR to do so. Wu Meiqi (#02 F) wanted to get her permanent residence for all of these reasons, she said

umm, because I think to tell the truth, it's not easy for [...] the Chinese passport holder to go overseas, so it's probably, if I got PR, so I think I can go overseas easier, umm, I want to go travelling, and I want to, I also want to study in Europe in future, but I'm not sure it's easier for Chinese passport holders, so maybe probably I will get PR [...] and I also want to get a job here, [...] I mean working experience, it's easier if I got PR. I think that a lot of what Chinese student want, but not everyone want to stay here, because tell the truth, for Chinese students, here is boring, but we spend lot of money come here, so if got PR and come back, I think it's good.

Wu Meiqi (#02 F)

Attitudes towards PR among the students can be divided into three main groups. First there are those who have a clear career plan mapped out for Australia, such as Lian Zhiren (#09 M) who is

²⁵ Chinese passport holders generally encounter more difficulties gaining visas to Western countries than Australian passport holders.

studying dentistry and expects to work as a dentist in Australia. Second are those for whom PR is a kind of insurance, a jam to keep the door to a life in Australia open. Third is the small group of 6 who at the time of the interview did not want to apply for permanent residency at all.

According to Australian immigration regulations the students would have had little chance of continuing to live and work in Australia had they not undertaken their education here as international students. This is because having an Australian qualification increases the 'points' available to an applicant in the points based application for PR, points which in many cases would have been decisive for their success. The participants' overseas sojourn provides the opportunity for choice and the possibility of getting permanent residency allows them to keep their choices open for longer, to delay their decisions about where they want their lives to be, and to continue moving between China and Australia if they choose to do so. Views about PR are therefore more indicative of a prioritisation of flexibility and the ability to be a border-crosser than a simple calculation of in which particular place their accumulated capital will have the most value. In this sense thinking about PR and future physical mobility is very much reflective of post-modern values.

7.1.2 The increase in career options upon return to China

Having studied and possibly worked in Australia, however, not only broadens the students' choices to living in either China or Australia, but also means they feel they have more choice about where they will be able to live within China upon their return, if they chose to go home. Being able to have a greater choice of where to work in China is closely related to how much the participants expect that they would have had to have relied on their families and their connections (*guanxi*) in order to obtain satisfactory employment had they not studied overseas. In effect, some believe that the independence and confidence they have developed in Australia, as outlined in Chapter Six, will carry on to their future lives and careers back in China.

The extent to which studying overseas removes the need to rely on *guanxi* for a career depends on a number of factors. The more the students would otherwise have needed to rely on *guanxi* the

greater the chance that studying overseas would change their path. Moreover, the extent to which a *guanxi* based career would have been likely in China is dependent on the expected level of academic success if overseas study had not been undertaken (the higher the achievement, the greater likelihood of an independent career), as well as the ability of a family to provide the necessary connections. Fifteen of the thirty nine participants feel that they will have less need to rely on their families and their connections after studying overseas. One of these was Sun Yan (#21 F), who, with her father as county head and mother as a primary school principal would have had no problems finding a job in her home town of Huohot in Inner Mongolia, now feels that she can do well without relying on her family's *guanxi*. When asked about how her career will be different having studied overseas, she commented:

[If I didn't study overseas] maybe my father will help me to find my first job, yeah, I think so. I think I will use the relationship from my father. But after I been to here and go back, sometimes I think I want to prove myself as a independent person and I learned a lot of things from overseas and I want to try to do things by myself, so I probably won't use the relations from my father. I think that's a difference.

Sun Yan (#21 F)

The connection between the independence mentioned by Sun Yan and not having to rely on family in the future clearly demonstrates how importance the students' new found independence and freedom is. Moreover, not having to rely on *guanxi* for a career means that they can conceive of success in places where their families do not have connections, in particular the major metropolises of Shanghai and Beijing. As Yan Juanjuan (#33 F) commented:

I think I will go to Shanghai or different cities, I won't stay in my city. So I have to find a job by myself.

Yan Juanjuan (#33 F)

Even if the level of career available after studying overseas was similar to that before studying overseas, more careers are now available. In this sense the various forms of capital expected from

an Australian education are of similar or greater value in the Chinese social space to the social capital, the *guanxi* which was available without leaving China. Moreover, the importance attributed to being able to achieve a career independently again reinforces the embodiment of the individualist, post-modern, values discussed in Chapter Two and Six. Studying in Australia therefore not only results in the development of new priorities and values, but also provides the capital to facilitate life to be lived according to those values, even in China.

7.1.3 Diversity of career choices

Beyond where they can work, however, the students believe they now have more career choices available to them than they otherwise would have, and think they can achieve more. At the most basic level the increase in career choices means that they expect that more or different choices of profession will be available to them when they enter the workforce. Such increased choice is a result of their being able to choose to undertake courses that they are more interested in (with the exception of those whose choices were constrained by permanent residency considerations) and having their eyes opened to options they would not have otherwise considered or would not have realised they were attracted to. Gao Yuanfang (#11 F), for example, found she had a strong interest in statistics and plans to pursue it in her career, something she believed she would not have discovered if she had remained in China. She said: 'I've got more options [now], I can do more things, I can. Yeah, I can discover my interests more'. Staying in China would most likely have seen her working in a TV station with a job obtained through her father's connections. Similarly Cui Lian (#40 F) chose to study midwifery whereas in China accounting would have been more likely. In China she probably would not have considered midwifery and would not have had the chance to realise that she liked it. For these participants their Australian experience has opened up new possibilities of profession and specialization.

Almost half of the students are enrolled in business related courses and they generally hope to pursue business related careers. Nevertheless, when delving into what they imagine their careers might entail, they saw a greater range of opportunities in the work that they would be able to successfully undertake than if they had not studied in Australia.

7.1.4 Working between Australia and China

The most common theme reported by in relation to careers is that participants will be able to do something in their careers involving, or between, Australia and China, or between 'the West' and China. Importantly, this is not something which could have been achieved without their overseas experience. Some examples illustrate this point. Li Donglong (#03 M) has an idea that working in tourism might be possible given his knowledge of English gained in Australia. Zheng Rangrang (#28 F), studying wine marketing, believes she can easily get a job in the Chinese wine industry, whether her job is internationally focused or otherwise. Zhou Jilong (#07 M) has a dream of being in a venture company, working with Chinese and Australian companies, and travelling between the two countries. Chen Xia (#15 F), Deng Tao (#22 M) and Peng Deming (#23 M) believe businesses trading between Australia and China will prefer people like them, with cross-cultural experience, and Bai Shanshan #34 (F) thinks that she will be in a good position to do something literally connecting Australia and China, such as in the transport business. Even if the students did not give clear examples of exactly how they will be better able to work between Australia and China, most of them believe they will be able to. This not only applies to those who plan to undertake careers in business, either other's or their own, but also to the participants with relatively strictly defined careers such as Cui Lian (#40 F), on track to being a midwife. She believes that if she returns to China she can get a job working with Westerners in China, in effect mediating between the West and China.

Indeed it is the new option to have careers built upon being between the West and China that underpins the participants' indifference or flexibility about where they will live in the future. They believe there is potential to succeed in both places, and living in one does not necessarily imply a complete rejection or abandonment of the other.

7.1.5 Social mobility, material wealth and class

The result of having more options about where to live and work is that most of the participants feel they will be practically better off than if they had not. In addition to this feel they will be able to live more enjoyable lives as a result of studying overseas. A typical example of the kind of worry-free standard of living desired by participants is encapsulated in the following from Tu Zhongzheng (#04 M):

I go to work, and I come back home I have a wife and we cook and eat and watch TV and that's it. When I want to buy a TV, I buy. When I want to buy a computer, I buy. When I want to buy a car, I buy. That's enough.

Tu Zhongzheng (#04 M)

During the interviews, as outlined in Chapter Three, participants were asked to describe on a simple 'social scale' the position they believed their parents and grandparents occupied. They were also asked to plot what they believed their 'social position' would be in the future in relation to their parents and grandparents and, finally, where they would have been in the future had they not studied overseas. The 'social positions' for all of the participants are included in Appendix 2 as graphs showing the students' perceptions of the intergenerational social mobility of their families, as well as the difference they expect study abroad will make on their own lives. On average the students reported that their parents had attained a relatively higher position than their grandparents. Given the economic development in China over the last half century, and their parents' current ability to fund their overseas study, this is, perhaps, unsurprising. More interesting is the difference between what they expect to achieve and what they believe they would have achieved if they had stayed in China. Not only did they indicate that studying overseas means they can achieve more than their parents, they generally expect that NOT studying overseas would have meant that they would have achieved less than their parents. On average, therefore, studying overseas is believed to have resulted in them avoiding social decline over the course of their lives. In this sense the overall aim of studying overseas, that is to avoid the negative consequences expected from remaining in China, was achieved.

7.1.6 Aiming for a comfortable lifestyle

Most of the students, however, did not place a high priority in gaining significant material wealth, although for most a standard of living below the level of their parents would not have been acceptable. What they described aligned very closely with typical middle-class aspirations of comfort. Few expressed a strong desire or need for a lot of money, but all want enough to be comfortable, to have a house, car, and to be able to purchase what they want when they want without having to think too much about the cost, as expressed by Tu Zhongzheng (#04 M) in the quote at the start of this section. The lifestyle they hope for seems to be at least what they believe their parents have, if not slightly better.

Only a very small number of participants are interested in moving to the top of the simple social scale used in the interviews. Of those who did, Zhou Jilong (#07 M) expressed it in the sense that if he works hard enough and holds on to his dreams then he might be able to achieve them, however unlikely it might be. For Long Sheng (#35 M) who had struggled and failed in school, and even attended a technical college in China before coming to Australia, his desire to move to the top is driven by his overwhelming need to move as far as possible away from the 'shadow' of his previous failure. He wants money and status and plans to continue working as hard as he can so he will never feel such rejection again.

For most other participants, however, a simple and comfortable life is what they hope for and what they fully expect to achieve with the experience and education they gain while overseas. Although they realise the importance of having enough money to sustain their comfortable lives, money is not the most important thing. In many instances the very fact of having the option to live in Australia means that they can imagine a life of relaxation in comparison to what they expect in China. Others described living in Australia as giving them the chance for excitement, travel, freedom or, as for Guo Tingwen (#12 F), having the chance to *not* live a standard Chinese lifestyle. These sentiments were most strongly expressed by those who felt they were already 'suited' to Australia, as discussed in 5.1.3, although they can be found from across the sample. It was not,

however, only students who see their futures primarily in Australia who believe they can achieve a comfortable 'middle class' lifestyle. Those who plan to return to China also believe they can accomplish it.

Students categorised as coming from a comparatively higher class, including those who felt more suited to Australia, generally reported that studying abroad would make less of a material difference to them than their less well-off counterparts. In effect, participants who are coming from a lower class family were more likely to have been facing the prospect of social decline, while those coming from the upper-middle and upper classes were less likely to have been. Chapter Five outlined how the decision to go overseas was arrived at in the context of avoiding the prospect of failure, be it failure within the education system, or failure of the system to provide for the students. This, however, indicates that the extent of the prospective failure differs between students from different class backgrounds. Students from richer or higher class backgrounds had relatively less to lose by staying in China in terms of material and social benefits. This again raises the possibility that students from higher status families *chose* to study overseas for less materialistic reasons than their lower status counterparts.

7.1.7 Embracing options and opportunity

This section has demonstrated that after studying in Australia the students expect to have more options about where they live and the work they do, and that they embrace these options. Although the act of studying abroad requires them to cross borders, after studying abroad the possibility of further cross border mobility seems to be part of their identity, it is who they are, part of their habitus. In this sense by studying overseas the participants have taken a leap into the rivers of globalisation, and they have learnt to swim. We know from Chapter Two that being a border crosser and having the flexibility to make the most of the myriad options and opportunities gives great advantages in a fluid, post-modern, globalising world. We can see from these students' stories that their experience of studying in Australia has left them in a position to capitalise on these advantages and to take social positions higher than their parents and higher than if they did not

come to Australia. The next section addresses how their experiences and the capital they gain while overseas makes this possible.

7.2 Achieving the vision: Communicating, understanding and becoming

We saw in Chapter Five that the primary reason most of the students and their families decided that studying in Australia would be worthwhile was related to gaining academic qualifications and skills which would not have been obtainable in China. A smaller number, mostly better-off families, also hoped that studying abroad would provide an opportunity to be in an environment more reflective of their own values. The goal of gaining institutionalised and objectified cultural capital, however, was dominant. As discussed in Chapter Six, however, the students changed, grew and developed in ways they had not imagined before they came to Australia, with their orientations increasingly reflecting the Western, more post-modern, society they are living in. Moreover, almost all of them reported changes in this regard. In addition to institutionalised and objectified cultural capital, these changes represent the development of a unique kind of embodied cultural capital of substantial value to the students, particularly as they take up positions in transnational, globalised, fields. This section begins with a brief discussion of institutionalised and objectified cultural capital before moving on to the embodied cultural capital arising from their newly developed interculturality.

7.2.1 The value of an Australian qualification and speaking better English

Whilst in the midst of the pressures of the Chinese education system the possibility of getting a degree from overseas and the commensurate English language skills was seen as being of primary importance for most of the participants and their families. Moreover, they viewed the value of such institutionalised and objectified cultural capital as relatively unproblematic: having it would simply be more beneficial than not. All of the students are now on the path to getting their Australian undergraduate or postgraduate degree, and, despite some difficulties, their English skills are probably improving more than if they had remained in China. The cultural capital expected from

studying in Australia is now being realised. Nevertheless, the students are more circumspect and, perhaps, realistic about the overall value of this cultural capital.

The ability to communicate better and more fluently in the English language and with Australian, or Western, people was the most commonly cited, crucial, and enabling skill learnt in Australia. It is clear that being a fluent English speaker is a necessity to be able to work in a Western country such as Australia. Without experience living in Australia the participants in the study believe that they would not have been able to reach the level of English that they hope to obtain by the time they enter the workforce. On returning to China, too, the ability to speak English is a major factor in giving the participants the confidence to expect they can get good, often Western focussed jobs. Indeed, regardless of whether or not their English ability will practically help the participants undertake their work responsibilities better, there is a belief that employers prefer to hire people with better English language skills, as Zheng Rangrang (#28 F) pointed out:

But a lot of boss[es], even though company have no business with any foreigners, they still, if you can speak English, they still like, prefer the person who can speak English. [...] It's always better if you know more things than less.

Zheng Rangrang (#28 F)

The skill of speaking English thus acts as a kind of objectified cultural capital as it has clear value on the labour market. Many participants believe, however, that the value of their English skills upon their return to China is being undermined by the high number of Chinese students studying abroad, many of them seemingly destined to return to China with only marginally improved English. In this environment they understand that they need to further distinguish themselves from the competition, either by gaining higher degrees or work experience.

A similar situation applies with regards to the institutionalised cultural capital of an Australian qualification. Its value is also seen as being eroded by the large numbers of students returning with foreign degrees, but without special qualities or abilities to go with them. For Lu Yang (#24 M) and Dai Dai (#25 F), both accounting students, this was expressed in terms of supply and demand:

[*in Chinese*] [If] there are more and more overseas students, then people won't say they are so good.
 [*in English*] If there is only one or two students get the foreign certification, they will think it is very high value, but now ...

Dai Dai (#25 F)

In the case of the certificate, however, whatever it is and whatever it is worth, it is still a necessity and better to have than not to have. Even if the students express indifference about the importance of the qualification, 'I don't care [about] the certificate' (Lu Yang (#24 M)), they understand that in order to get a job, to get their foot in the door to a good career, they have to have one. Moreover, the qualification from Australia is most likely to still be better or more useful in China than what they would otherwise have been able to get had they not come to Australia, as Jian Ru (#05 F) commented:

it was very useful, I mean the overseas degree, like a few years ago if you've got a degree from a overseas university you would be guaranteed to go to a good company to get a good high salary, but nowadays because a lot of people came back with ... an overseas degree, so it's not a guarantee any more, yeah, but it's still much better than the degree from the universities that are not good in China.

Jian Ru (#05 F)

A small number of the students can see both potential positive and negative consequences of having overseas qualifications when looking for a job in China. For example, Jia Huilan (#30 F) thinks that an overseas degree can indicate to Chinese employers that the holder has been unable to get into a Chinese university and will therefore be of low quality. Similarly, Zheng Rangrang (#28 F) argues that employers, knowing that it is easy to gain entry into foreign universities, will place a low value on foreign qualifications, believing that they, too, have been easily gained. On the other hand, they think the qualification can also indicate to employers that they have good English skills or will be useful workers because of their overseas experience. The reasons participants undertake postgraduate programs in Australia arise from these issues. They think that

their higher level qualification will give them even more advantage over the competition, particularly in an environment where the value of an overseas undergraduate certificate is apparently on the decline.

This perception of a decline in the value of overseas qualifications in China reinforces Bourdieu's view that those who attempt to get the same benefits from education as experienced by previous generations may be disappointed (Bourdieu 1984, 143). Moreover it reflects the broader decline in value of qualifications which has occurred in China in conjunction with the increase in enrolments in Chinese universities (Bai 2006), as discussed in Chapters One and Two. This indicates that the value of foreign qualifications as institutionalised cultural capital will vary over time even, as we have seen in the comments above, between the time the decision to study abroad was taken and the time of graduation.

Another indication of the decline in value of their Australian degree is that many of the students thought it necessary to supplement their qualification with work experience in Australia before returning to China. The undergraduate degree itself was not enough to ensure a good job on their return. Part of the reason for this is their observation that many students they know studying in Australia have not improved their skills significantly and as such will eventually lower the perception in China of an overseas education as a marker of competency. In this environment they expect that overseas working experience is, and will become, a very important attribute that future employers will value. This way of thinking is evident in the number of students who are very keen to get some work experience in Australia after graduating, even if they see themselves living in China in the medium to long term. Liu Ruolan (#13 F), whose father had studied in Sydney for a short time and subsequently saw the benefits in his own career, thought that:

If I have [...] work experience in Australia, that's, I will more easy to get a job and higher salary as well.

Liu Ruolan (#13 F)

In terms of employment the students also reported that beyond their language skills and qualifications, people with overseas experience are simply looked at differently and more highly valued than people who did not study overseas.

In terms of looking at a career in Australia, the Australian qualification is seen to be of such paramount importance that its value was unquestionable and so obvious that it is hardly worth mentioning. Having a degree is a necessity for both Australian residency and employment, as discussed previously. In an Australian social field a qualification from Australia is of unparalleled institutionalised cultural capital for these students.

The level of importance participants attribute to their soon to be gained qualification depends on whether the participants are looking at their career possibilities in the sense of simply finding a job or their ability to maintain a high performance within their job. Most think their overseas degrees will help them get better jobs, making them appear special in the eyes of prospective employers (e.g. Dai Dai (#25 F)), giving them a higher platform to start their careers on (e.g. Li Donglong (#03 M)), or simply because employers and human resources officers like them (e.g. Chao Xiaobo (#19 M)). For those who are more focused on what they can achieve after getting their jobs, however, the certificate is of subsidiary importance to other outcomes of studying overseas, their newly found skills and abilities, and the ways they have changed.

Nevertheless, the families who prioritised the acquisition of a degree and learning English as the main reasons for an overseas education achieved their goals. The students have avoided the prospect of failure in the Chinese education system and the institutionalised and objectified cultural capital they are developing will assist in their careers, helping them to find and keep jobs. This capital was expected and its accumulation was part of the parents' strategies to overcome the deficiencies of the Chinese education system and underperformance of their children within it. As we saw in Chapter Six, however, the students' experiences in Australia have changed them more, and in different ways, than had been expected. These changes can also be seen as providing valuable, albeit unexpected, cultural capital.

7.2.2 The embodied cultural capital of interculturality

This unexpected cultural capital is a kind of embodied cultural capital which arises from the changes in habitus discussed in Chapter Six. It is this capital that enables them to grasp the different options arising out of their overseas studies, allows them to foresee themselves moving between Australia and China, and means that they can understand more than simply the words they hear, but instead can understand the people they are communicating with. Being able to develop this capital is what makes the work experience they have in Australia so valuable when they go back to China, and having it is the presumption on which some employers place a higher (albeit declining) value on their overseas degrees. This embodied cultural capital is the ability to understand and move between the Australian and Chinese cultures, it is being able to be intercultural. It is the ability to effectively deal with Westerners if working in China and the ability to deal with Chinese if working in Australia. It is the reason behind the indifference participants have towards where they prefer to be living – they think they can survive and succeed in both because, in fact, they feel they can live comfortably in either. Peng Deming (#23 M) who plans to move back to China after working for some time in Australia summed this up when he said:

That's the main thing I think I learnt, not only the Chinese way, but also the Australian, the Western way. And if you can combine those two, you do not understand one but you understand lots of stuff and [...] I can be the intermediary of Chinese and Australia, as when they doing business I can show them my expertise of what Australians think and what China think and maybe make their business moving from there.

Peng Deming (#23 M)

Similar ideas were expressed by most of the participants in the study to varying degrees. They believe that by living in Australia they have learnt about Western culture and have learnt how to communicate with Westerners. This, they expect, will allow them to do different things, and go further with their careers, either in China or Australia, than they would otherwise have been able to. Having this ability is why the choices discussed in the first section of this chapter are now seen to be realistic whereas before the participants came to Australia they were not.

At the most basic level participants' views about the benefits of their interculturality align with why they believe their future employers will prefer them over others. That is, having lived overseas they will be able to better deal with and understand foreigners than their counterparts who do not have this experience. This means they can not only get, but also perform well in jobs that rely on this ability. Part of their ability to operate interculturality arises from how they believe they have grown and changed while living in Australia, as discussed in Chapter Six. The new maturity they develop includes learning how to communicate with people respectfully, as adults, and knowing how to deal with different kinds of people. Moreover, their independence means they are able to survive and thrive in different environments and with different people. When related to their future careers, however, these attributes are valuable specifically because of the Western context in which they have been developed. Independence and maturity might also have been developed if the participants had been studying in Africa, for instance, but knowledge about Africa would have been much less useful than knowledge about the West.

Having the ability to communicate with Westerners in their future jobs, while also retaining their understanding of Chinese culture and Chinese people means that participants can position themselves 'between' China and the West, or as Peng Deming (#23 M) put it, as an 'intermediary'. Other participants, such as Lian Zhiren (#09 M) and Cheng Wanling (#39 F) expressed this as being a 'bridge' between China and the West. Occupying this position is seen as practically beneficial for business, as Yang Mingxia (#16 F) explained:

[I can] start to communicate with them [people from different cultures], just like make them feel that you can understand them, because you know their culture or many thing, so I think during the work there will be less barrier between you and them.

Yang Mingxia (#16 F)

These are the qualities developed by the students that lay the foundation for imagining a career in this space between cultures, and they recognise that China now has a need for such qualities. With the increasingly outward focus of the Chinese economy it is anticipated that skills which are

able to be applied in the intercultural space will be valuable. In the early 2000s, when many of the participants were considering their decision to study overseas, there was a lot of discussion within China about its entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the changes that would entail for China. This, and the obvious and rapid growth of the Chinese economy, reinforced the idea of the importance of knowing the West, and those who imagine a career in the business world are most able to specifically draw the connection between their understanding of Westerners and Western culture and their careers. They see themselves working for companies or in their own businesses in positions which require them to communicate directly with foreigners. As mentioned in 0 four of the participants (Lian Zhiren (#09 M), Yang Mingxia (#16 F), Sun Yan (#21 F), Long Sheng (#35 M)) explicitly mentioned China's entry into the WTO as a contributing factor to either their decision to go overseas or the value of the skills they gain while studying in Australia. Lian Zhiren said:

China already joined the WTO and there is lots of enterprise and those company will go to China, they are going to find some people who is familiar with the system of Western company or Western cultures as well as Chinese cultures. So we [international students] come, we basically fit the positions. We have overseas experience and we know how they work in overseas, however we are born in China, we know how people function in China. Because [...] those two society function in different ways, so we [...] basically as the bridge to connect those both companies, taking up advantage positions.

Lian Zhiren (#09 M)

As discussed in the previous section, however, it is not just in trade and business that the ability to understand and communicate with Western people can be valuable. Students in the study such as Cui Lian (#40 F), aiming to be a midwife, Li Donglong (#03 M) who thinks he might work in tourism or Wu Meiqi (#02 F) who aims to get a job in media, all think they can do better and go further based on their understanding of the West and their ability to position themselves between it and China. Wu Meiqi (#02 F), for example, realises that all media in China will have some foreign connections:

I think, nowadays, Chinese media market also have some, ah, relationships with Australia company, and also America, so, yeah, the English is good, you should know the culture [...]

Wu Meiqi (#02 F)

The participants who highlighted this aspect of the benefits of studying overseas are clear that it is not just being able to communicate in English that means they can do this, it is their understanding of the people they are dealing with that means it mattered. For Chao Xiaobo (#19 M), for example, he will not only be able to understand what his Western counterparts are saying, but also the 'style of [what] they are saying'.

The value of a greater intercultural understanding is not only relevant to those who expect to return to China. An intermediary, by virtue of being between two places, can be valuable for either side. Even if based in Australia their unique cultural perspectives can still be valuable as understanding Chinese culture can be just as useful when operating in the Australian context as understanding Australian culture in the Chinese context. One example of this that had already begun at the time of the interview was Peng Deming (#23 M) who had already established a wine exporting business to China with an Australian friend. To do this he needs to know how to work with Australian people and in Australian culture, something he is keen to further his knowledge of, he said:

I want to see what other people are doing in business, here. And I learn from my dad, because he is already running a business in China. So learn from both side, combine them, work out a better way.

Peng Deming (#23 M)

We can see in this quote that understanding the West and Westerners is more useful than simply being able to act as an intermediary between people without knowledge of the West in China and people without knowledge of China in the West. Some of the students are also quite clear that as they have come to have a better understanding of the Western way of thinking and Western ideas they are in a unique position to 'combine them, work out a better way', as Peng Deming (#23 M)

said, with their Chinese understanding to develop new solutions to problems. These solutions will further add to the value of their experience in the employment market in the future.

Learning about the Western way of thinking, as discussed in Chapter Six, is, therefore, of clear value to the participants when they consider their careers. Not only does it help them understand the Westerners they will be dealing with, but it also helps them to solve problems in ways that people without their experience would not be able to do:

I can refer to Western thinking and my own Chinese thinking, sometimes can be combined, better, it will be possibly to come up with a better method to solve the question.

Long Sheng (#35 M)

Again, the ability to combine the Western and Chinese 'ways' to help do better in their work does not only apply to the participants' careers in China. Participants such as Zhou Jilong (#07 M) also believe that their understanding of Chinese people and culture will also find an application in Australia:

For example if I work in Australia I can use my Chinese background or Chinese [thinking] pattern to compare [how I] can bring the new ideas or new thoughts into the Australians' working style or a thought pattern, yeah. If I [...] ever find a job in China or if I go back to China after I finish study, I can also bring the skills of to analysis or to learn what's the benefits of Australian thinking pattern and to bring them into China, into my job, into my future development.

Zhou Jilong (#07 M)

In these ways the experiences of the students provide them with embodied cultural capital, this interculturality, which they see as having real value to them as they position themselves in social fields in the future, be they in Australia, China or in between. Their experiences in China and their experiences in Australia have combined to allow them to take unique positions in Chinese, Australian and transnational fields. Such embodied cultural capital was unexpected, but is now viewed as being very valuable indeed.

7.2.3 Interculturality as personal transformation

Nevertheless, embodying this interculturality also brings challenges, and these challenges mean that its value can be contested and difficult to realise. As it is embodied, interculturality goes further than being a practical skill. It arises from and is reflective of the personal transformation experienced by the students, so being intercultural means they can no longer be who they were before or who they would have been had they stayed in China. Being between two cultures, the participants have become distinct from their counterparts in China who had not shared their experience overseas. An indication of this is seen with those who try to downplay their distinction when they return to China by trying to re-adopt the mannerisms and conversation topics of their friends. Liu Ruolan (#13 F), for example, commented that 'in conversation [with friends], sometimes you can avoid to talk about things that makes [...] other people [feel you are] different'. Even if they do not feel different, their friends think that they are, as was the experience of Dai Dai (#25 F):

But when I go back to China [in Chinese] my friends will think I'm already different. [...] So, I just, say, I'm very careful, I don't want make them to think she is not 100% Chinese and become more and more Western.

Dai Dai (#25 F)

A large part of this distinction stems from the changes the participants feel in themselves, as discussed in Chapter Six. They are more independent, more confident, and they have a broader view of the world. They are more realistic (so they think) about their plans for the future, and they simply have had more and different experiences. This distinction can go further, however, than their changes in relation to who they were before they came to Australia, or even in relation to who they might have been had they not. They are distinct, therefore, not only from their alternative selves, but from both the people and cultures in which they have lived. Being a 'bridge' between two cultures means that the participants need to learn to identify partly with each, finding room within themselves for their understandings of both cultures to coexist.

The extent to which the participants' understanding of and fluency in Western culture and Western ways of thinking needs to be accommodated within perceptions of their own identities varies. Some identify themselves clearly 'between' Australia and China, believing their identities contain aspects of both, very much in the model of the 'third culture' or 'third place' described by Useem and others (Kramsch 1993; Useem & Downie 1976). They demonstrate the hallmarks of classic 'hybrid' identities, describing both the challenges and benefits associated with being in such a place. Chen Xia (#15 F), for example, said:

[...] I will not belongs to Chinese culture, I will not belongs to Australian culture. I don't know where I belongs to. Like, the people in China, I will not be able to talk about what will happen in China because I missed one year. The people in Australia, I missed 19 years, so I will not belongs to those two countries.

Chen Xia (#15 F)

Chen Xia, however, like others discussed above, believes this equips her to work for companies who need people with intercultural skills, as does Lu Yang (#24 M), who said that he can't separate in his mind what was Chinese and Western. We can also see this self-positioning between the cultures in the idea of being a 'bridge' as discussed above. Another example is Deng Tao (#22 M), who, when discussing why he would be of benefit to Chinese employers, described himself as a 'double background person'. By doing so he is making it clear that he is not simply a Chinese person who has learnt the skill of understanding and communicating with Westerners. He is, in fact a person with two cultural histories, both Chinese and Western, and this makes him unique and distinct from others. The 'third culture' that he has developed is more than just the sum of Chinese and Australian culture; his interculturality makes him something more. We can see such sentiments when students describe themselves as 'international', rather than belonging to a particular culture or country, becoming 'part' of Australia (Dai Dai (#25 F)) or that Australia is a 'second home' (Li Donglong (#03 M) & Gao Yuanfang (#11 F)), or even that they will miss whichever of the two countries they are not in (Cui Lian (#40 F)).

The distance students feel they have moved away from being typically Chinese is also evident in the difficulties many of them expect if or when they return to China to work. Most expect to go through some kind of readjustment phase, and for some this is based on their experiences going back to China for their breaks from study. As mentioned in Chapter Six, the habits of Chinese people on the streets (such as Peng Deming (#23 M)'s criticism of people dropping rubbish and not waiting for lights to change at pedestrian crossings) and other customs such as how to pay for a group dinner in a restaurant (Jia Huilan (#30 F)) are expected to cause frustration. Of greater perceived difficulty is the prospect of having to readjust to the difficult and complex personal relations present in Chinese society and working environments. By living in Australia such problems have been avoided and the students seem to have got used to avoiding them.

Some feel that their changed ideas and thinking styles, however, pose the greatest challenge. Although, as discussed above, having such ideas can be of great benefit when living or working 'between' Chinese and Western cultures, they are also foreseen to bring trouble. Li Donglong (#03 M) expects to be 'criticised' or 'attacked' because of his different ideas, and expects to 'just have to live with it' when this happens. Shi Youlin (#06 M) expects 'conflict' in his workplace for similar reasons. Others expressed similar sentiments but the general consensus was that despite the difficulties, having different ideas and thinking methods will be advantageous overall.

An example of how having different thinking styles can be difficult but helpful was given by Xiong Qizhi (#32 M) in relation to his wife, a former Chinese international student, who had already returned to China to work. He described how her manager in the shipping company where she worked found her 'very different' from the other employees who were graduates of good local universities. He described how her colleagues did not help her, yelled at her, and gossiped about her, criticizing the unknown university she had attended (The University of Adelaide). According to Xiong Qizhi, however, his wife's boss preferred her, thought she was very nice, and where the local graduates relied on a script for their telephone conversations with foreign customers, she could communicate naturally, without the script. Xiong Qizhi related his and his wife being 'nice' to their overseas experience making them different from the people his wife had been working with, people who had not been overseas, he said:

see the difference? I'm not saying I am a nice person, if I am in China, I got the same situation as them, maybe I will change to another [...] to that style.

Xiong Qizhi (#32 M)

Xiong Qizhi also described how his wife always thanked the cleaner who emptied the bins in her office, a habit no one had before her arrival. After she started doing it, however, the competitive office environment meant that everyone did. His wife faced some of the challenges expected by others in this study, but she also held on to the methods and values that were different to her colleagues. Some of these, such as her communication ability, enabled her to do her job better, and others she held on to simply because they are now part of who she was. Xiong Qizhi expects that if he works in China he will face a similar situation to his wife, and he, like his wife, will try to hold on to the style of doing things that he has developed during his time in Australia, even if this means that other people think he is 'a bit stupid'.

7.2.4 Maintaining transformation and maintaining Chinese identity

We can see from these stories that the embodied cultural capital of interculturality can both help as well as be a hindrance. The ability to act between cultures, however, arises from deep changes within the students, changes that they are very happy with and want to hold on to. Even in light of projected difficulties participants such as Li Donglong (#03 M), Shi Youlin (#06 M), mentioned above, and others want to hold on to their changed ways of thinking. Even though they know they will need to go through some kind of readjustment process on their return, it is important to them that they are able to keep the changes they see in themselves. This is the case whether they believe their changes to be useful for their careers or just because they represent who they have become.

Although the students wish to hold on to what makes them different from other Chinese people when they go back to China, they also want to hold on to what makes them Chinese. Indeed, although most think they have changed, become somehow different to other Chinese people, and

in many cases they do not want to return, the vast majority strongly identify as being Chinese. Even if they admit to being a little bit 'Western', this was most often expressed as being in addition to their Chinese identity, not inimical to it, as Lu Yang (#24 M) commented, 'because [you are] a little more Western, in the meantime doesn't mean less Chinese' Lu Yang (#24 M). This sentiment was also expressed by Yang Mingxia (#16 F) in the following extract:

I love China.

But you don't want to live there?

No.

Yang Mingxia (#16 F)

In fact, on average, the participants feel themselves to be just as 'Chinese' or even more 'Chinese' than they were before they came to Australia.

Indeed, not all participants described the change they feel in themselves as a result of studying in Australia as placing them in a position between the two cultures they have experienced. Some feel that there will be absolutely no problems fitting back in to Chinese life after they returned. Others, such as the twins Wang Bin (#10a M) and Wang Yi (#10b M), feel that the changes they feel in themselves, in particular the critical thinking skills they developed overseas, are not something foreign to Chinese life, just harder to achieve in China. They said that their teachers had been trying to teach them such things in their schools in China, and that armed with their skills and understanding they don't see trouble, just that they will be more 'outstanding'. For Wang Bin (#10a M) and Wang Yi (#10b M), then, even though they may not necessarily identify as partly Western or as occupying a place between the two cultures, they will still be different and distinctive when and if they return, and with such distinction can achieve more than others and more than they would have if they had not come to Australia.

7.2.5 Interculturality for social change in China

We have already seen, as argued by Reay in Chapter One, that the encounter between habitus and new social fields can cause 'change and transformation' (Reay 2004, 436) in the lives of the students: their experience in Australia has left them transformed. Habitus, of course, is not only structured by fields, but in turn structures fields (Postone et al. 1993, 4). When the changed habitus of the Chinese students re-encounters Chinese fields, then, we can expect further change and transformation in the fields themselves. This was the case with the early twentieth century overseas students who returned to China and contributed to modernising certain fields of Chinese society. Even the example of Xiong Qizhi (#23 M)'s wife thanking the office cleaner demonstrates the potential for social change. The intentions of the students in this study indicate that more change and transformation may be forthcoming as they return to China.

A number of the students said that it was their intention to utilise their ability to combine Western and Chinese methods, or apply Western methods and ideas to the Chinese context, in order to help, improve or change China. Their perception of their ability to help China is very clearly based on their experience living in Australia and their desire to apply the ideas they learn from the West to the Chinese context. Li Donglong (#03 M), for example, who had a very difficult and pressure filled experience during his schooling in China is determined to do something to change the education system when he returns. He wants to change parents' and teachers' attitudes towards children so they will be more encouraging and supportive. He thinks parents' and teachers' attitudes are 'suppressing students' personality', and he wants to change it. His experience of the different styles of learning and teaching in Australia as discussed in 6.1.2 has sparked his desire to do something about the problem, as he commented: 'after I arrived in Australia, I think [about] it more, compare how the students were treated here [with] how the students treated in China. Its big difference...'. It is for this reason that he is also considering studying for a teaching qualification after his graduation, if he does not manage to quickly find a job in China.

Another case is Gao Yuanfang (#11 F) who became interested in caring for the community while studying the International Baccalaureate in high school in Australia, and wants to carry this work on

after her return to China. Slightly different is Lu Yang (#24 M) who, being very aware of the problems in China such as corruption, wants to eventually be 'involved in the political issues, maybe work in the government', in order to try to fix them. His relatives are sceptical about his ability to achieve anything, but he justifies his belief by referring back to his understanding of Western culture, in this case with examples drawn from the animated movies *A Bug's Life* and *Ants*. He said:

In Western culture, some movies, like *Bug's Life*, *Ants*, there's many, many people say 'oh, you can't do that, you just a little bug' or 'you just a little ant, you can't change the world', but like [they] still have their dreams and they do what they like, or they do what [...] his responsibility is. That's interesting, and in the end he is successful, he becomes a success. [indistinct] it's myself, I consider that.

Lu Yang (#24 M)

For Lu Yang, his exposure to Western culture resulted in him believing he can work within China to change it for what he considered to be the better. For others such as Long Sheng (#35 (M) this desire to help was expressed generically as wanting to 'improve' China, by bringing 'different ways and better ways' from the West.

Even the participants who plan to stay in Australia think that they have learnt things in Australia that could help China *if* they go back. Jia Huilan (#30 F) thinks the medical system in China can be improved following the Australian example, and she is interested in this area from her personal experience. During high school in China she had been very sick and spent a considerable amount of time in hospital, and in Australia and in her studies towards her career in the medical field she has learnt that a better way is possible:

If I was in China I may not, I don't have any idea what a better medical system will be. But now [I'm] here I know there is still many people not happy with the medical system but it's still better than in China. So I know what it should be looks like, and how better it will be, so it's a better idea. Because I see it myself.

Jia Huilan (#30 F)

Whether for their own careers or for the good of China, these participants believe they are in a unique position to apply the Western knowledge and understanding they have learnt while studying in Australia to China, or combine it with their knowledge and understanding of China. Admittedly, having so many things to think about does not necessarily make things easier:

I have many ways to think about one thing and maybe more than others, but it's maybe not good, you know, because if you have only one way to do it than you have to do it, then you can do is good, but you, then you have many ways to do it, then, especially when you don't know which way is good, is better, is the best, so [laughs] it will confuse you one day.

Kong Liling (#37 F)

In all of these cases we can again see that the embodied cultural capital of interculturality, being able to combine Western and Chinese culture and ideas, lets the students live out the new ways of looking at the world that they have developed while overseas.

7.2.6 Conclusion

This section has outlined how the capital gained by the students as a result of their overseas studies has value for them in the future. If they live in China, Australia, or are occupying spaces 'between' cultures, they think their studies have given them qualities which will help them stand out and to be distinct from their competition. Not only have they accumulated the institutionalised and objectified cultural capital that their families expected of them, they have also developed embodied cultural capital as a result of their interculturality. Although being intercultural has its challenges the

students are happy that they are, and being so can now imagine futures for themselves which were otherwise unobtainable, unforeseeable, or unlikely.

8 Conclusion

As educational achievement continues to be a key pathway to success in Chinese society, pursuing studies overseas provides an avenue to escape from the intense competition of its education system. As in the past it remains highly regarded and is a means to both contribute to modernisation and benefit personally. The stories in this study have shown that the families sending their children abroad were most concerned with gaining quality qualifications and skills to make them more competitive, as well as the prospect of providing their sons and daughters more options about where and how to live their lives. In Bourdieu's terms these families aimed for institutionalised and objectified cultural capital, and even before they have finished the students think these aims have been met. They will get their foreign degrees, their English will improve, and they are looking forward to a better life than if they had not studied overseas.

We have also seen that the cultural capital they develop is valued differently in Chinese and Australian social fields. Significantly, this variation reinforces the importance of the assertion of Weiss (2006) that when utilising Bourdieu's concepts in transnational contexts 'we must determine where [transnationalised persons'] resources (e.g. qualifications) are acknowledged' (para. 16). The institutionalised cultural capital of an Australian degree, for example, is valuable in China and Australia albeit for different reasons, as are English skills. What is striking is that this study has found that the cultural context of this international education has resulted in it affecting the students' lives in many ways which stretch beyond their initial materialist and instrumentalist goals. This additional complexity requires a further reconsideration of Bourdieu's conceptual framework in at least five areas.

First, for most students the major benefits from studying in Australia were neither part of a capital accumulation strategy nor reflective of their pre-existing habitus: they were unexpected.

The students reported that they have changed, indeed transformed, in ways and to an extent neither they nor most of their families could have envisioned. Yet it is precisely these unexpected transformations, their new independence, broadmindedness and thinking skills, their ability to see

and accept different points of view about the world, and their greater emphasis on achieving a better quality of life than financial gain, that they feel are now most important to them.

Some students indicated that issues of quality of life and self-expression were important to them before they left China, but after living in Australia almost all of them thought this way. Even though they view these transformations as good and worthwhile in and of themselves, it is clear that they also have real value in a number of ways and will contribute, perhaps significantly so, to their chances of future success.

Armed with their transformed habitus this group is now empowered to forge their own identities, to see options on a global scale, and to confidently move across borders to grasp them. They are now intercultural; they have the ability to communicate with, combine and find the best from different cultures. This, they think, will stand them in good stead wherever they are. Their habitus now provides embodied cultural capital which, although unexpected, they now value more highly than the other institutionalised and objectified cultural capital gained from studying in Australia.

These values and attributes are those identified by Bauman (2000), Beck & Beck Gernsheim (2002), Inglehart (2000) and others as both reflective of and necessary to succeed in the new culturally fluid, uncertain, post-materialist globalising world discussed in Chapter Two. The decision to study overseas, to become border-crossers, and the experience of living in a globalising, post-modernising society have resulted in these students transforming to become more post-modern and worldly. They have embodied border-crossing and their identities are now defined by their cultural in-betweenness as much as they are by their culture of origin. They think transnationally and do not feel the need to align themselves with any particular place at any particular time. They have embodied the idea of individual self-determination as they deconstruct and reconstruct their identities in response to the challenges they experience. It bears repeating that in light of the predominantly materialist advantages expected of studying abroad, such a dramatic shift in understandings and transformation could not have been anticipated but is now nevertheless very much welcomed for both the self-realisation it embodies and the instrumentalist gains it promises.

Second, the experience of unexpected transformation in Australia is framed by the influence of Western culture on the students' habitus in China.

It is not a simple dichotomy of a modern(ising)/developing/materialist China contrasted against a post-modern(ising)/developed/post-materialist Australia, and by coming to and experiencing the latter, modern Chinese values and attributes are replaced with post-modern Australian ones. In some cases students were discontented with China because even before they went abroad, they were aware that Chinese society, and particularly its education system, failed to reflect their own values. Only by coming to Australia could they grow, change and become the people they subsequently discovered they had always wanted to be.

That this self realisation is so important to these students supports Arjun Appadurai's (1996) proposal that the dispositions constituting habitus are no longer only structured by the experiences within particular social fields, but reflect the 'imagined vistas of mass-mediated master narratives' (pp. 55-56). The students who felt 'Western' already, or who discovered themselves and their 'true' personalities after arriving in Australia were already under the influence of the flows of global culture before they left home. By coming to Australia their habitus was activated as much as it was transformed. Even those who did not express any explicit identification with the West before they left found that they have grown and changed in ways that they like, indicating a probable pre-existing subconscious but strong inclination towards post-modern values.

To keep Bourdieu's ideas as relevant as possible in light of the myriad complex influences of globalisation, i.e. to give them a transnational perspective, we need to do more than just understand how the value of capital varies depending on in which nation-state it is used. This point has been made by Weiss (2006) but the evidence of the previous chapters provides even more impetus to build in this sort of qualification into Bourdieuan perspectives.

We also need to recognise that the habitus of immobile people, such as the students before they left China, are also subject to being influenced by and hence also reflect global culture. This

influence affects their ability to position themselves in social fields at home, as well as their ability to be comfortable and/or successful in fields in different countries such as Australia or in transnational fields if and when they do become mobile across international borders for work and further study. The participants' stories demonstrate that globalisation adds a common element to habitus developed in geographically distant fields. Due to the Western-centric nature of global culture, however, this common element reflects more Western than Chinese culture, hence the discomfort the participants felt in China and the release they felt when they 'found' themselves in Australia.

Third, the unexpected transformations signify an alternative source of habitus to that described by Bourdieu, and outlined in Chapter Two.

We have seen that it is not just the embodiment of Western culture and post-modern values that is valuable for the students, it is their unique mix of experiences of both Chinese and Australian culture that makes them distinct and gives them confidence in their own futures. This study has shown that through their unique personal histories encompassing two cultures and mediated by the global, the habitus they develop provides embodied cultural capital of value in transnational fields and fields which are influenced by globalisation.

This finding demands a partial re-interpretation of Bourdieu's model of how habitus is developed. In this example rather than habitus arising from the embodiment of the characteristics of a particular field, habitus is also developed as a result of intense experience not directly related to the nature of the field encountered. The students became independent and learnt to solve problems partly because of needing to learn in an education system where independent self-directed study and problem solving are valued, but also because they had no choice but to live independently and learn to solve problems by themselves and without their families. They became more broadminded, open to different viewpoints and intercultural partly because this reflects the values of the society they are now in, but more because they needed to reconcile living in and between cultures with very different beliefs and values.

A uniquely transformed habitus is thus developed through the internalisation of practical responses to difficulties of surviving in a new environment as much as it reflects that environment. Reay's (2004) comment that 'when habitus encounters fields with which it is not familiar, the resulting disjunctures can generate change and transformation' (p. 436) holds, but when the unfamiliarity of fields is magnified by the cultural distance between them, such as when the fields are in different countries, the level of change and transformation is also magnified. The habitus of these students has transformed to encompass even more than a combination of the attributes and values they encountered in Australian or Chinese fields. The nature of their transformation is therefore difficult to predict and, as we have seen, unexpected.

For the students in this study, their personal transformation in response to their experience of cultural difference and adaption does in fact reflect the values and attributes of value in a globalising, post-modern world. This may simply be luck, as the unexpected transformations resulting from movements between different countries and/or at different times in history may not have resulted in attributes and values of use. It may also presage future reintegration difficulties. As hinted at by the expectations of difficulties fitting back in to China upon return, it remains possible that at least some students may find their unexpected transformations of less value in Chinese fields than they now expect.

Fourth, the embodied cultural capital arising from the students' transformed habitus is valuable due to the cultural differences (modern, post-modern) between Australia and China.

Although I argue that the experiences of study abroad result in the development of valuable embodied cultural capital, the difference having such capital makes to the individual is greatest when opportunities for developing it in their home country are fewer. For example, study abroad between Europe and North America has been shown to result in a certain level of increased intercultural awareness (Kehl & Morris 2008; Savicki et al. 2008), but the likelihood of fundamental change is less as both the sending and receiving countries already share many cultural traits. Even if Chinese culture is under a certain influence from globalisation and global culture, the prevailing values in China remain oriented toward achievement and material gain (Wang 2007).

Nevertheless, China is changing, and, if Inglehart's (2000) theory holds, will come to increasingly reflect post-modern values the more it develops. Through providing the possibility of developing post-modern attributes and values, studying abroad is therefore a way to quickly move ahead of the competition back home, and the stories of the participants indicate that their transformations will be of real value in China, even if they may face challenges as well.

The outcomes for these students mirror the advantages experienced by those of the late nineteenth century. By being at the vanguard of China's modernisation they too were able to reap the benefits. The amplified individual benefits accruing from study abroad being undertaken in a post-modernising country apply even if students do not return to China. Without developing the embodied cultural capital reflective of and necessary for survival in Australian social fields, contemporary students would have been unlikely to have expected success in those fields, and studying abroad has been key to this. Of course, institutionalised cultural capital and objectified cultural capital are also important and necessary to achieve success in Australia.

Fifth, the nature of the unexpected transformations increases inequality between those who can and cannot afford to study abroad, and decreases it among those who can.

We have seen that the students believe that as a result of their overseas education experience they will achieve more highly in their lives than if they did not study overseas. This belief holds despite the fact they now place less emphasis on the importance of high achievement. The opportunity to study abroad was gained as a result of the students' families having enough economic capital to fund their overseas education and the cultural capital to understand its worth. Families without such resources are unable to access the benefits available from studying overseas. They do not have the opportunity to develop institutionalised and objectified cultural capital, nor are they able to develop the embodied cultural capital arising from the students' unexpected personal transformations. Students who study overseas gain cultural capital of greater value in China than they could have expected if they did not. Study abroad therefore has the

potential to contribute to inequality in China as it facilitates the acquisition of (expected and unexpected) cultural capital by the rich to the exclusion of the poor.

The inequality and stratification arising from investments in overseas education are different from investments in elite domestic education. The key transformations experienced by Chinese students overseas are generally not expected, and so their education, rather than reinforcing the habitus of their families and assisting to cement their position in given social fields, results in the development of *different* habitus. This habitus does provide valuable embodied cultural capital, but it is not embodied cultural capital reflective of the family's and it may not be useful in the social field occupied by the family. We are therefore not seeing simple cultural *reproduction* in these processes, but rather new and original cultural *production*. New social formations are developing, the consequences of which remain unknown, both for China and Australia.

Yet, as a result of this cultural production there is also an element of risk in these educational investments. By stepping out of the nation-state the families are exposing their children to fields which do not reflect their own habitus in the hope or expectation that the net benefit will outweigh the costs. At present though, at least in the case of the participants in this study, their risk seems likely to pay off.

A very small number of families were clear that the environment expected in the West reflected their own values. These families were more likely to be from the upper class and/or had international experience themselves. In these cases the decision to study overseas did represent a clear strategy for cultural reproduction. A Chinese education was not able to provide the kind of embodied cultural capital they considered important, the dispositions and outlook necessary to succeed in their fields, and an overseas education was the obvious option. These families appear to have a habitus which already reflects some post-modern values, they may already be at the vanguard of China's social change, and their high social position indicates they are doing well because of it. As pointed out by Michael Pinches (1999) and Aiwah Ong (1997) having a global orientation is a valuable resource for wealthy Asian families, and this research indicates that investing in overseas education is a strategy for similar Chinese families to maintain their social

position. In other words, it is possible that this small number of elite families have more or less anticipated what we call 'unexpected transformation' as a bi-product of their children studying abroad.

For the majority of the students and their families in this study, however, the transformation was genuinely unexpected. Such students whose families were initially focussed on success and material gain also reported a clear shift towards post-modern values. They too had the same revelations, self discovery and subsequently developed the same embodied cultural capital as the minority who had foreseen such changes. We can see then, that although studying abroad may increase inequality between those who can and cannot access it, among those who can there appears to be a lessening of the differences in the futures they envisage. Overseas study becomes a leveller for those who can pass the threshold of resources necessary to afford it.

As discussed in Chapter One, it is estimated that there some 440 000 Chinese students are currently studying outside China. This thesis suggests that studying abroad can provide the expanding upper-middle class with an interculturally focussed habitus and cultural capital in the form of values, qualifications and skills that will result in a powerful levelling effect among the elite and upper-middle class of Chinese society. This levelling affect may bring about *unexpected social transformation* supported by students who were empowered *unexpectedly* in the intercultural fields of studying abroad.

In light of this analysis we can see that if Bourdieu's conceptual framework is limited to a nation-state the transnational educational strategies undertaken by Chinese families cannot be adequately explained. In order to understand the transnational nature of capital accumulation it is necessary to determine the value of capital according to where it will be used. Moreover, the effects of globalisation need to be taken into account in terms of how it impacts on the production of habitus and the consequences this has for individuals as they struggle to find their position in fields which are more or less reflective of global culture and post-modernity.

The unexpected and transformative nature of the capital developed in the course of an international education also requires a greater flexibility and acceptance of uncertainty and risk to be brought into any Bourdieuan analysis. Finally, the different cultural values of the countries between which international education takes place is a key element in determining the likely value of cultural capital developed. If the values of the receiving country reflect what the values of the sending country may be in the future then the capital developed as a result of studying overseas has the potential to have further transformative affects, particularly in terms of the reproduction of inequality. While Bourdieu's theory needs to be adjusted to reflect the many complexities arising from globalisation it nevertheless still provides a powerful and robust conceptual tool to analyse the dynamics of individual and social transformations in an increasingly integrated world.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Index of references to participants

#01 - Xie Tianmei (F).....	111, 125, 240
#02 - Wu Meiqi (F).....	125, 129, 134, 149, 150, 179, 203, 218, 219, 240, 241
#03 - Li Donglong (M).....	116, 117, 120, 122, 148, 155, 193, 207, 215, 218, 222, 223, 224, 226, 241
#04 - Tu Zhongzheng (M)	120, 141, 142, 167, 171, 208, 209, 242
#05 - Jian Ru (F)	169, 213, 242, 243
#06 - Shi Youlin (M).....	114, 127, 152, 153, 175, 177, 197, 223, 224, 243
#07 - Zhou Jilong (M)	142, 143, 207, 209, 220, 244
#08 - Ding Xiaoyu (F)	114, 125, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 150, 155, 162, 185, 188, 189, 199, 244
#09 - Lian Zhiren (M).....	118, 119, 146, 148, 149, 153, 163, 170, 177, 182, 184, 185, 203, 217, 218, 245
#10a - Wang Bin (M)	88, 125, 140, 225, 245
#10b - Wang Yi (M)	88, 125, 166, 225, 245
#11 - Gao Yuanfang (F)	123, 152, 161, 166, 178, 185, 194, 206, 222, 226, 246
#12 - Guo Tingwen (F)	128, 147, 162, 209, 247
#13 - Liu Ruolan (F)	113, 115, 128, 162, 180, 181, 214, 221, 247, 248
#15 - Chen Xia (F).....	118, 119, 123, 146, 149, 163, 184, 207, 222, 248
#16 - Yang Mingxia (F).....	119, 120, 141, 142, 146, 161, 166, 217, 218, 225, 249
#17 - Huang Qi (F)	122, 136, 137, 174, 184, 198, 199, 249, 250
#19 - Chao Xiaobo (M).....	112, 113, 117, 181, 187, 188, 193, 200, 203, 215, 219, 250
#20 - Ma Zhiqiang (M).....	116, 123, 125, 140, 251
#21 - Sun Yan (F).....	114, 125, 146, 149, 184, 185, 205, 218, 251, 252
#22 - Deng Tao (M).....	113, 114, 120, 121, 122, 140, 141, 176, 207, 222, 252, 253
#23 - Peng Deming (M).....	116, 117, 120, 121, 122, 136, 144, 145, 160, 161, 162, 178, 179, 180, 182, 185, 188, 189, 201, 207, 216, 217, 219, 223, 253
#24 - Lu Yang (M)	116, 126, 193, 212, 213, 222, 225, 227, 254
#25 - Dai Dai (F).....	127, 136, 168, 169, 170, 184, 212, 213, 215, 221, 222, 254, 255
#26 - Qin Xiaoli (F)	123, 124, 125, 137, 147, 151, 155, 156, 180, 190, 201, 202, 255
#27 - Xia Zixi (F).....	89, 120, 122, 125, 156, 176, 181, 182, 184, 185, 256
#28 - Zheng Rangrang (F)	114, 129, 132, 133, 134, 135, 150, 173, 174, 178, 185, 189, 190, 207, 212, 213, 256, 257
#29 - Wei Li (M).....	180, 184, 191, 257
#30 - Jia Huilan (F).....	117, 128, 149, 162, 191, 192, 203, 213, 223, 227, 228, 258
#31 - Zou Zhijian (M).....	148, 149, 192, 193, 199, 200, 201, 259
#32 - Xiong Qizhi (M)	123, 124, 141, 142, 156, 167, 223, 224, 259, 260
#33 - Yan Juanjuan (F).....	170, 176, 177, 191, 199, 205, 260
#34 - Bai Shanshan (F)	145, 171, 207, 261
#35 - Long Sheng (M)	115, 116, 141, 142, 146, 168, 209, 218, 220, 227, 261
#36 - Duan Jialun (M).....	115, 143, 148, 159, 186, 190, 201, 202, 262
#37 - Kong Liling (F).....	126, 127, 144, 168, 191, 192, 228, 263
#38 - Lai Junbao (M)	149, 186, 187, 188, 202, 263, 264
#39 - Cheng Wanling (F).....	128, 143, 185, 187, 188, 217, 264
#40 - Cui Lian (F)	148, 160, 161, 206, 207, 218, 222, 265

Appendix 2: Biographies of participants

This appendix provides a brief biography of each participant interviewed in this study. The graphs represent the past and predicted future 'social mobility' of the participants and their families, based on data gathered during the interviews as outlined in section 3.3.

NOTE:

This appendix is included on pages 240-265 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Appendix 3: Table of parents' occupations by class categorisation**NOTE:**

This appendix is included on page 266 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Appendix 4: Participant information sheet in English and Chinese



CENTRE FOR ASIAN STUDIES
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Mainland Chinese Students in Australia: Perceptions of international education and social mobility

Participant Information Sheet

My name is Glen Stafford. I am undertaking research as part of a PhD in the Centre for Asian Studies at the University of Adelaide. My study looks at why Mainland Chinese students choose to study in Australia and how they think it will benefit them in the future. I am hoping to interview students from the PRC who are currently studying at the University of Adelaide. The results of my study may help to improve education for Chinese students in Australia, although I cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefit from participating.

This study is completely confidential, so nothing that you say will be reported in a way that will identify you. Unless you prefer to be identified, no personal or identifying information about you will be used. I will use an invented name to attach to your interview notes.

I will organise a time and place for the interview that is convenient for you, at the University (or in a public place). The meeting may take more than an hour and will be more like a conversation than an interview. I would like to record our conversation if that is ok with you. If you do not wish to be identified, your real name will not be connected with the recording. If you wish to check a copy of my transcript before I use it in my study, please indicate this on the attached consent form.

If you decide to participate in the study you are free to change your mind and withdraw at any time before the study has been completed. Also, you do not have to answer any questions or discuss any issues that you do not wish to discuss. You are free to withdraw your interview material up until the time that I have finished all the interviews. You do not have to give me any reason if you decide to withdraw from the study or if you don't want to answer particular questions.

Your participation or non-participation in this study will in no way affect your academic standing at the University of Adelaide.

If you would like some information about the findings of my research, please indicate this on the consent form.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you want any more information about this study. If you have concerns that you don't want to discuss with me directly, please contact my supervisor, Dr Shoko Yoneyama.



Contact Details

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B.A. (Asian Studies) Hons

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中国大陆学生在澳洲:对国际教育和社会流动的看法

对研究参加者的说明

我的名字是 Glen Stafford。我是阿德莱德大学亚洲研究中心的博士生。我目前在研究中国学生选择澳洲教育的理由以及对将来的益处。我希望访问中现在在阿德莱德大学就读的中国学生。我的研究结果也许会对提高中国学生在澳洲的教育有帮助,不过我不能保证您对这次项研究。。。参与会给您直接带来任何好处。

这项研究是完全保密的,所以您所提供的资料不会被任何他人知道。除非您愿意我把您的姓名刊登出来,这项研究将不会有显示出任何关于您的资料。我会用别名作为访问笔记。

我将安排方便的时间和地点来采访您,(如在大学或在一个公共场所)。采访会长达一个小时,其形式象交谈一样。我希望您能批准我录下我们的交谈内容。如果您不希望被辨认,您的真名不会在录音上显示。如果您希望检查我进行研究之前的抄本,请在表格上表明。

如果您决定参与这项研究,您有权利改变主意和在任何时候退出。并且,您不需要回答任何您不想回答的问题或讨论您不想讨论的问题。在我完成所有的采访之前您有权利撤出您所提供的资料。您不需要解释您推出采访或不想回答问题的原因。

您是否参加这项研究都不会影响您在阿德莱德大学的学习结果。

如果您想知道我的研究结果,请在表格上表明。

如果您想了解更多关于这项研究的资料,与我联络。如果您有难言之处又不想直接与我讨论,请与我的导师, Dr Shoko Yoneyama 联系。

联络资料

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Appendix 5: Consent form in English and Chinese

Consent Form						
<p>I, (print your name) _____</p> <p>consent to take part in the study titled: <i>Mainland Chinese Students in Australia: Perceptions of international education and social mobility</i>.</p> <p>I acknowledge that I have read the attached <i>Information Sheet</i> that describes the aims and purpose of this study. I confirm that I have had the study, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the researcher, Glen Stafford. My consent to be interviewed for the purpose of this study by Glen Stafford is freely given.</p> <p>Although I understand that the purpose of this study is to better understand why Chinese students study in Australia, it has been explained to me that my involvement in the study may not be of any benefit to me or my community.</p> <p>I understand that I can request my name not be connected with any information that I provide and that, if I do not wish to be identified, Glen Stafford will create a pseudonym (different name) for me.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I do / do not (circle one) wish to be identified.</p> <p>I also understand that, if I do not wish the interview to be recorded, Glen Stafford will only take notes of the interview.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I do/do not (circle one) wish to be recorded.</p> <p>I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am free to withdraw the information that I provide at any time during the information gathering stage of the study • I do not have to give reasons for withdrawing the information that I provide • I am under no obligation during the interview to divulge information or to discuss issues if I do not wish to do so. <p>I understand that I can request to check the transcript of the interview before it is used in the study.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I do / do not (circle one) wish to check the transcript of the interview.</p> <p>I understand that I will be provided with information about the results of the study if I wish.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I do / do not (circle one) wish to be provided with information about the results of the study.</p> <p>If you answered in the affirmative to either of the above questions, please provide your contact details:</p> <p>In Australia:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Address _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Phone _____ Email _____</td> </tr> </table> <p>In China:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Address _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Phone _____ Email _____</td> </tr> </table> <p>I am aware that I should retain a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the attached Information Sheet.</p> <p>(Please sign other side)</p>	Address _____	_____	Phone _____ Email _____	Address _____	_____	Phone _____ Email _____
Address _____						

Phone _____ Email _____						
Address _____						

Phone _____ Email _____						

我，（请写姓名）_____

愿意参加这项研究，题目：**中国大陆学生在澳洲：对国际教育和社会流动的看法**

我证明我已经仔细阅读过这项研究的说明，我证明 Glen Stafford 把这项研究及涉及我个人方面的情况解释得很清楚，我同意接受采访。

虽然我知道这项研究的目的是更进一步了解中国学生来澳洲学习的原因，但是 Glen Stafford 也解释说我的参与不一定会对我或我的同学带来直接好处。

我完全明白我有权利不公开我的姓名，而且如果我不想让人辨认我，Glen Stafford 会给我一个别名。

我 批准 / 不批准 （ 一个）用我的真名。

我完全明白假如我不想用录音带记录采访，Glen Stafford 将会用笔记录我们的采访。

我 批准 / 不批准 （ 一个）录音采访。

我完全明白这项研究是自由参与的，我也明白：

- 我有权利随时退出在 Glen Stafford 完成所有的采访之前。
- 我不需要解释退出原因。
- 我不需要回答任何我不想回答的问题或讨论我不想讨论的问题。

我明白我有权利权力检查 Glen Stafford 进行研究之前的采访记录。

我 想 / 不想 （ 一个）检查记录。

我明白我可以收到研究结果的资料。

我 想 / 不想 （ 一个）收到研究结果的资料

如果你想检查记录或收到研究结果的资料，请填写你的通信联络资料。

在澳洲：

地址	_____		

电话	_____	电邮	_____

在中国：

地址	_____		

电话	_____	电邮	_____

我明白我应该保留一份已填的表格副本和研究家的说明。

Signature (participant) _____ Date _____
 签名（参与者） _____ 日期 _____

WITNESS

I, Glen Stafford, have described to (name of participant) _____
 the nature of the interview to be carried out. In my opinion she/he understood the explanation.

Signature (interviewer) _____ Date _____

Appendix 6: Complaint form

THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Document for people who are participants in a research project

CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION ON PROJECT AND INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Human Research Ethics Committee is obliged to monitor approved research projects. In conjunction with other forms of monitoring it is necessary to provide an independent and confidential reporting mechanism to assure quality assurance of the institutional ethics committee system. This is done by providing research participants with an additional avenue for raising concerns regarding the conduct of any research in which they are involved.

The following study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee:

Project title: Mainland Chinese Students in Australia: Perceptions of international education and social mobility

1. If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the project co-ordinator:

Name: Dr Shoko Yoneyama
telephone: 08 8303 5187

Or

Name: Mr Glen Stafford
telephone: 08 8303 5791

2. If you wish to discuss with an independent person matters related to
 - making a complaint, or
 - raising concerns on the conduct of the project, or
 - the University policy on research involving human participants, or
 - your rights as a participant

contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretary on phone (08) 8303 6028

Appendix 7: Original participant recruitment poster

你是从中国来的吗？

Are you from China?

你是阿得莱德大学的留学生吗？

Are you an international student studying at the University of Adelaide?

如果是的话，我想跟你谈谈。

If so, then I would like to talk to you.

我叫 Glen Stafford 是阿得莱德大学亚洲研究中心的博士班研究生。
My name is Glen Stafford and I am a PhD student in the Centre for Asian Studies at the University of Adelaide.

我的研究课题是在澳大利亚的中国留学生的情况。
My research is about Mainland Chinese international students in Australia.

我希望了解你为何选择来澳大利亚留学。你认为这个抉择对你的前途有何帮助？

I would like to interview you about why you chose to come to Australia and how you think it will benefit you in the future.

如有兴趣或查询，可到 [Ligertwood 410](#) 找我或电邮致
《glen.Stafford@adelaide.edu.au》。

If you are interested, please look for me in [Ligertwood 410](#), or email me at glen.stafford@adelaide.edu.au and I can give you more information.

Appendix 8: Revised participant recruitment poster in English and Chinese

Advertisement recruiting Chinese international students to participate in a doctoral research project
Adelaide University Human Research Ethics Committee Project No. H-094-2005

Chinese international students

Do you want a chance to practice your English?

If you are a second or third year undergraduate international student I would like to invite you participate in a research interview discussing your thoughts and hopes.

My name is Glen Stafford, I am a PhD student at the University of Adelaide's Centre for Asian Studies. My research is about Chinese international students in Australia.

I would like to interview you about why you chose to come to Australia to study and how you feel it will help you in the future, etc.

The interview is very relaxed and may take more than an hour.

If you are interested or would like more information,
Please email: glen.stafford@adelaide.edu.au
Or phone: 8303 5791 or 0405 717 516.

After exams is ok too!

中国留学生

你想要一个说更高水平英语的机会吗？

如果你是大学本科二、三年级的留学生，我想请你参加一个研究访谈，说说你的想法和希望。

我叫 Glen Stafford 是阿德莱德大学亚洲研究中心的博士班研究生，我的研究课题是有关澳大利亚的中国留学生的情况。

我希望了解你为何选择来澳大利亚留学，你认为这个抉择对你的前途有何帮助，等等。

访谈以轻松的形式进行，可能持续一个多小时。

考试以后
也可以！

如需要更多信息或有兴趣，
请电邮致：《glen.stafford@adelaide.edu.au》
或请电话联系：8303 5791 或 0405 717 516。

Appendix 9: Original interview protocol

Interview Protocol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Sheet • Consent form • Recording? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Biographical information</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Name ○ Age ○ Family structure ○ Where from in China ○ Kind of accommodation in China ○ Length of time in Australia ○ Course ○ Pathway ○ Accommodation ○ Finance/work ○ Current intentions • <u>How decision to study in Australia arose</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When and how first arose ○ Influences that contributed to decision ○ Pros/cons of decision versus other options ○ Perceptions of benefits of studying abroad at time decision was made • <u>Perceptions of studying abroad</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ ○ among peers, in China ○ at different levels of education • <u>Educational experience in China and Australia, including</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ ○ Levels of education (and success or otherwise) in China ○ Perceptions of school in China (teachers, exams, pressure, peers, opportunities, university entrance etc) ○ Levels of education (and success or otherwise) in Australia ○ Perceptions of school in Australia (teachers, exams, pressure, peers, opportunities, university entrance etc) • <u>Experience of university in Australia</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General description – tell me about your life at Adelaide Uni? ○ Classes ○ Friends ○ Social activities ☆ • <u>Family background, including</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Education and employment of parents and grandparents ○ Family members with overseas/international experience • <u>Perceptions of benefits of studying abroad at time of interview</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Any changes to perceptions at time decision was made ○ Reasons for these changes ○ Relationship between changes and experience in overseas education • <u>Perceptions of future options</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Imagine you didn't come to Australia....? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ [If had not studied abroad] ○ After studying abroad ○ Relationship between studying abroad and changes in options • <u>Differences between having studied abroad and friends who haven't studied abroad</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Career ○ Outlook (international or otherwise) ○ Future mobility ○ Social status
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Appendix 10: Revised interview protocol

Interview Record	Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____
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#: _____ Name: _____ M / F Age: _____ Arrived: _____

1st level: _____ Current course: _____ Hometown: _____


#1 – Story of leaving China:
 Decision: when, whose, how – influences – easier, harder in Australia?
 Why Australia/Adelaide?
 Other options available, not available: pros/cons – why o/s best?
 Benefits of studying o/s: parents, student – (cert, English, independence, contacts, other cultures, travel?)
 -
 School life in China:
 Pathway: performance – success, failure
 Learning styles: competition – stress, pressure – exams
 Friends: Social life – attitudes to o/s study
 Parent's involvement: expectations – attitudes to study, life – studying o/s (early o/s intent?)

#2 – Story of life in Australia:
 Life: adapting, adjusting, difficulties (most difficult thing?) – feelings – compared to China
 Education: expectations – performance – success, failure – teachers, exams, learning styles
 English: difficulties – importance? – friends
 Pathway: current course (why?) – going to change?
 Changes: independence – motivation – confidence – communication – problem solving
 Deep changes: difference, acceptance, tolerance, responsibility, broadened mind?
 Accommodation: 1st _____ now: _____

#3 – Projections of future:
 Benefits of o/s study: changes in perception
 Career/life goals: changes from before
 PG study? – employment – short/medium terms – mobility
 Benefits of o/s study in Career: cert, English, communication skills, western culture, thinking, choices
 Differences to people in China – advantages over
 Intangible benefits – other benefits – why o/s edu is good to have done?
 Importance of deep changes
 -
 Can do now that couldn't do if no o/s or took other paths: higher? – place?
 Long term: place – mobility – career – life style, family – importance of o/s study

#4 – Story of Family
 Parents/Grandparents: career, education – o/s experience
 Role(model)/influence of parents – memories of childhood (family life)
 Class: parents[1] – likely to achieve?[2] – if no o/s?[3]
 Social status: importance – why not? – o/s study = higher?

#5 – other comments?



Mainland Chinese Students: perceptions of international education and social mobility

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